

# Asking and answering: A contrastive study of English and Swedish basic communication verbs

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## Abstract

This article presents a contrastive study of the English verbs *ask* and *answer* and their Swedish correspondents based on data from the English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC), which is bi-directional and contains Swedish and English original texts and their corresponding translations. As a background, a short overview is given of Verbal Communication Verbs (VCVs) in general with brief discussions of speech act theory (Searle), direct and reported speech and conceptual frames (FrameNet) and their syntactic realizations. The contrastive study is concerned with networks of polysemy and the relationships of various senses with differing syntactic realizations across languages. The senses of *ask* are primarily distributed between two verbs in Swedish: *fråga* 'ask a question' and *be* 'request (politely)' but even some verbs with more specific meanings are involved. The concept of answering forms a conceptual network which is similar in English and Swedish but contrasts with respect to the way meanings are divided up between various verbs. English has a number of verbs such as *answer*, *reply*, *respond*, *correspond*, *retort* and *rejoin*, whereas Swedish to a great extent relies on one verb (*svara*) and its morphological derivations: *besvara*, *ansvara*, *motsvara*, *försvara*. In the Conclusion, pedagogical applications of the study are briefly discussed.

**Keywords:** corpus-based contrastive study, lexical semantics, FrameNet, English, Swedish, Verbal Communication verbs

## 1. Introduction

This paper is one in a series of studies of Swedish Verbal Communication Verbs (VCVs) with a special focus on the most frequent verbs. In spite of the fact that there are around 400 Verbal communication verbs in the Swedish SUC-corpus (1 million words, mixed written genres), the most frequent verb *säga* 'say' accounts for 22% and the 10 most frequent verbs belonging to the field account for close to 50% of the textual occurrences of VCVs in this corpus. The most frequent verbs are also the most varied with respect to the range of constructions they can appear in and the patterns of polysemy that characterize them. An earlier study (Viberg 2016) analyzed verbs of saying, talking and telling based on the concept of the linguistic action scene (Dirven *et al.* 1982). This paper will present a case study of verbs

of asking and verbs of answering. These two groups of verbs have been extensively described in English. Rudzka-Ostyn's (1989) study of *ask* accounts for a number of different meanings which are primarily distributed between two verbs in Swedish: *fråga* 'ask a question' and *be* 'request (politely)'. The wide network of meanings of the verbs of answering in English is described in (Rudzka-Ostyn 1995). In Swedish, the corresponding network is built around the verb *svara* 'answer' and its uses as a derived and prepositional verb.

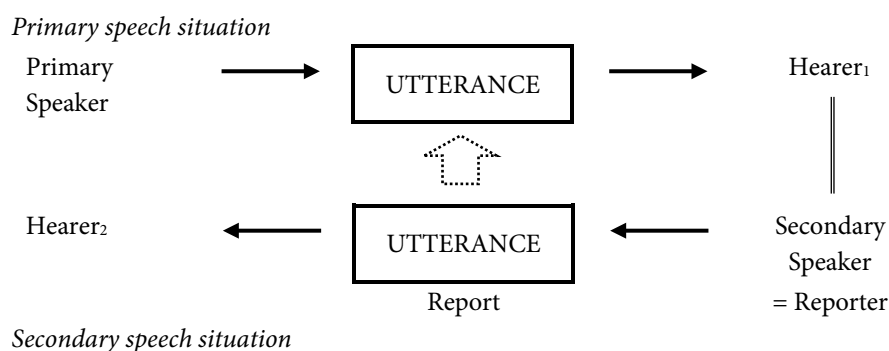
The database for the earlier study and for the present one is the English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC), which contains Swedish and English original texts and their corresponding translations making it possible to carry out a corpus-based contrastive study (Altenberg and Aijmer 2000, Electronic sources). The texts are divided into two broad genres: Fiction and Non-fiction with several subcategories. The original texts in each language comprise around 700,000 words relatively evenly distributed between the two genres. Following Johansson (2007), parallel corpora can be divided into translation corpora containing original texts and their translations and comparable corpora containing texts in two or more languages which are as similar as possible with respect to genre, time of production etc. The ESPC combines the functions of both these types of parallel corpora. The lexico-grammatical analysis of the verbs of asking and answering in English and Swedish will be based on the ESPC as a comparable corpus by extracting concordances of all the occurrences in original texts of each verb. In this way it is possible to identify a set of uses of each verb. (A use combines aspects of the meaning of the verb and the grammatical constructions in which it appears.) Only in a second step will the ESPC be used as a translation corpus by looking at the translations of each use. In this way, it is possible to make comparisons based on the translation patterns in combination with comparisons that are based exclusively on original texts in both languages.

The rest of the paper is structured in the following way. Section 2 gives a brief overview of VCVs in general. Section 3 is concerned with *ask* in its use to report questions and its Swedish correspondent *fråga*, whereas Section 4 describes the use of *ask* to report polite requests. Section 5 is concerned with *be* and other Swedish verbs used to express polite requests. Section 6 is devoted to the verbs of answering in English and Swedish and the semantic network that these verbs are connected to. The result of the study is summed up and discussed in Section 7 Conclusions.

## 2. Verbal Communication Verbs: An overview

### 2.1. Reported speech

The VCVs are primarily used to report speech. A sentence such as *Peter told me to open the door* involves two speech situations as shown in Figure 1. A primary speech situation where someone called Peter acts as Speaker and makes a request, for example *Open the door!* and a secondary speech situation, where a second speaker (the Reporter) reports the utterance made by the first speaker, for example *Peter told me to open the door*. The function of this sentence is to give information about what Peter said, not to make a request.



**Figure 1:** Reported speech

The present paper will deal with speech act verbs used to report speech. Such reports can be direct and report the actual wording of the primary utterance or be indirect and report only the contents of the utterance in a more or less summary fashion. In English and Swedish, indirect report also triggers adjustments of tense and deictic markers which can follow different rules across languages and cause learning problems for second language learners (Hammarberg and Viberg 1976).

Since the terms direct and indirect are used also with reference to primary speech acts, the terms are compared in Table 1. A direct speech act has a form that explicitly expresses what kind of act it is, whereas an indirect speech act expresses this only implicitly, for example by using a question to make a request.

**Table 1:** Primary and reported speech acts

(PRIMARY) SPEECH ACTS		
Direct speech act		Open the door!
Indirect speech act		Can you open the door?
REPORTED SPEECH (SECONDARY SPEECH ACTS)		
Direct report		“Open the door!” Peter said. “Can you open the door?” Peter said/asked.
Indirect report	Clausal complement	Peter said that I should open the door. Peter asked me if I could open the door.
	Infinitive complement	Peter told me to open the door. Peter asked me to open the door.
Narrative report (condensed, non-clausal)		Peter asked me for help.

The term Narrative Report refers to cases where the speech act is realized in a condensed, non-clausal form. In this paper, the term will also refer to cases where a speech act fails to appear, as in: *But she asked no questions about his past life and told him nothing about hers.* (PDJ)

## 2.2. Frame semantics

The semantic description will be based on an eclectic combination of frame semantics and speech act theory. In frame semantics, verbs (and other relational words) evoke frames – schematic structures of recurring situations (Fillmore 1982). Frame semantics is the

theoretical foundation of FrameNet, a large lexical computerized database for English (see Fillmore *et al.* 2003).<sup>1</sup> In FrameNet, the frame Communication is defined as follows: “A Communicator conveys a Message to an Addressee; the Topic and Medium of the communication also may be expressed.” Communication is a general frame that covers any type of communication such as speaking, writing, signing or gesturing. In the following, reference will be made to a Speaker since only verbal communication will be described. (Speaker will also cover Writer in the few examples where it is relevant.) Table 2 shows the relationship between the conceptual frame and the canonical syntactic realization with some idealized examples. It should be noted that the syntactic realizations only show the realization of individual frame elements. In principle, word order and other aspects of clausal structure are regulated by the general grammatical system of the language.

**Table 2:** Verbal communication: From conceptual frame to syntactic frame

<i>Frame elements</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Linguistic action</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Addressee</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<b>Syntactic Realization</b>	NP	Verb	NP That-S Wh-S	PP NP (object)	PP	PP
	Ann	said	a few words	to Peter	about it	over the telephone
	Ann	asked	who was coming			
	Ann	asked		Peter	about it	

### 2.3. Speech acts

As discussed earlier for verbs of motion (Viberg 2015a,b), FrameNet needs to be complemented with a more detailed description of the semantic composition of the verb itself. Such a description is important to describe the *semantic differentiation* between verbs evoking the same frame and to characterize and explain several aspects of the *patterns of polysemy* of the verbs. For speech act verbs, a natural point of departure is Searle’s (1976) classification of speech acts (or illocutionary acts as he called them), which has been further elaborated and applied to the analysis of German communication verbs in Harras *et al.* (2004, 2007) and in the contrastive study by Proost (2007).

Table 3 presents the major types of verbs used to report speech acts. The classification is based on Searle’s (1976) classification, which has been criticized as a classification of direct speech acts, but serves as a good starting point for the lexical analysis. The verbs that will be analyzed in this paper are primarily used to report speech acts. Only in a few cases are they used to perform the act that the verb describes (i.e. performatively). For example, *Peter ordered Harry to come* is not an order but a report that describes the content of Peter’s utterance. The Reporter also performs a speech act, but that is rather what will be referred to as a Representative speech act. (The Reporter can also perform a request for information: *Did Peter order Harry to come?*)

Representative speech acts are used to describe the world and can be reported with two types of verbs: Assertive verbs, which report what is regarded as an opinion by the Reporter,

<sup>1</sup> The FrameNet database can be accessed at: <http://www.icsi.berkeley.edu/~framenet/>

and Information verbs, which report information that the Reporter more or less accepts as a fact. If someone called Peter said: “The prisoners have escaped”, this can be reported either with an assertive verb as *Peter claimed that the prisoners had escaped* or with an information verb as *Peter told me that the prisoners had escaped*. When *tell* is used, the reporter takes for granted that the information is correct (or at least the correctness is not regarded as an issue). By using *claim*, the Reporter signals that the information is regarded as an opinion (true or false) held by the primary Speaker.

**Table 3:** Verbs used to report Speech acts

Type of reported speech acts	Type of VCV	Verbs
Representatives	Assertive verbs	claim, assert
	Information verbs	tell, inform
Directives	Directive verbs	ask, order, request
Commissives	Commissive verbs	promise, guarantee, vow
Expressives	Verbs expressing emotions	apologise, thank, rejoice, complain
	Verbs expressing evaluations	praise, criticize
Declarations	Declarative verbs	baptize, declare war, fire (from employment)

Directive speech acts are carried out in order to get the Addressee to do something and are reported by using verbs such as *ask*, *order* or *request*. Commissive speech acts commit the Speaker to do something in the future and are reported with verbs such as *promise* and *guarantee*. Expressive speech acts are said to express the Speaker’s psychological state and are often realized as social routine utterances such as *I’m sorry* or *Congratulations, Harry!*, which can be reported as *He apologised* and *He congratulated Harry*. Declarations refer to speech acts that immediately change some institutional state of affairs if carried out by the right person in the right situation. Such verbs are often used performatively to carry out the act, for example *You’re fired!* (or the canonical performative utterance: *I fire you*), but can also be used to report the act: *NBC fires Donald Trump after immigration remarks* (headline).<sup>2</sup>

There are some VCVs that do not report a specific type of speech act, for example the nuclear (most general) verb of the field *say* that can be used to report any type of speech act. Another feature that is not accounted for in Table 3 is the place of the speech act in the developing discourse. An important such feature is +/- Reactive (e.g. Proost 2007). Certain speech acts such as *answer* (see Section 6) and *deny* and *reject* presuppose an earlier speech act (such as a question or a claim or a proposal).

### 3. Reporting questions in English and Swedish with *ask* and *fråga*

If the English verbal communication verbs are ordered in descending frequency, *ask* comes third after *say* and *tell*. *Ask* has two major meanings, which have two separate major translations in Swedish: (a) request information, ask a question, translated with *fråga* and (b)

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps *baptize* is a clearer example of an institutionalized, performative use of a declarative verb: “The requisite and sole valid form of baptism is: ‘I baptize thee (or This person is baptized) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’” (The Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm>)

a polite request, asking the Addressee to do something, translated with *be*. Table 4 gives a brief overview of the use of *ask* in the English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC), which shows that *ask* in the sense ‘ask a question’ is practically three times as frequent in Fiction as in Non-Fiction. The two major senses of *ask* will be treated in the two following sections.

**Table 4:** *The two major senses of ask in the ESPC*

	Fiction (F)	Non-fiction (NF)	Total	Dominant Swedish translation	
Question	307	103	410	fråga	322
Polite request	78	65	143	be	86
Total	385	168	553		

### 3.1. The use of *ask* to report a question

The first sense ‘ask a question’ (*ask<sub>Q</sub>*) will be treated rather briefly in spite of the fact that it is the most frequent use, since English and Swedish are rather similar on this point. The uses of *ask<sub>Q</sub>* and their frequency of occurrence in the original English texts in the ESPC are summed up in Table 5 together with information about their Swedish translations.

**Table 5:** *The uses of ask<sub>Q</sub> and its major Swedish translations in the ESPC*

Type of Message	English construction		Swedish translations	
Direct report	ask “X”	191	fråga “X”	154
			säga “X”	15
			undra “X”	9
Indirect report (clausal)	ask if-S, ask WH-S	97	fråga om-S, fråga WH-S	86
			undra ‘wonder’ om-S, WH-S	3
Inner speech	ask oneself	7	fråga sig (Reflexive)	6
Non-Clausal message		17	fråga	9
No message		47	fråga	40
<b>Special uses of <i>ask</i></b>				
Support verb	ask a question	37	ställa en fråga ‘put a question’	27
Rhetorical uses		14		
	may I ask	3	om jag får fråga / får jag fråga	3
	if you ask me	9	om du vill veta (min åsikt...)	5
	Other	2		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>ask<sub>Q</sub></i>	410	fråga (Verb)	298

In almost half of the occurrences of *ask<sub>Q</sub>*, the verb introduces a direct report as in (1). This is particularly characteristic of Fiction (F: 159, NF: 32). The dominant Swedish translation is *fråga* used in a congruent structure. In both languages, the Addressee is optional and realized as a direct object.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In all examples from the ESPC corpus, the original version appears first followed by a text code, e.g. (DF1) in (1), the reference of which is listed on the homepage of the ESPC project (see Electronic sources). Literal translations and other comments are sometimes given within square brackets. The original text is provided on top, followed by the translation. That’s why there is a switch when Swedish original texts are quoted.

- (1) “Is there anyone else here?” I *asked* her.(DF1)  
 “Finns det någon annan här?” *frågade* jag henne.

The second most frequent translation is the nuclear verb *säga* ‘say’. This verb can be used to give a direct report of any type of speech act. In several of the examples – but not in all – *säga* is used when the question is rhetorical. In (2), the reported utterance is a reproach rather than a genuine question.

- (2) “How could you do such a thing?” she *asked* Edward.(AT1)  
 “Hur kunde du bära dig åt på det viset?” *sade* hon till Edward.

*Undra* is rather a verb of thinking (*I have always wondered what a sextant is*), but like its English correspondent *wonder*, it can also be used as a VCV to translate *ask*. In (3) the Addressee is not translated since *undra* does not allow an explicit Addressee, which is a sign that it is not basically a communication verb. It is used conventionally together with direct and indirect reports of questions but expresses a request for information only implicitly by saying that the speaker wants to find out something. For that reason, *wonder* is often felt to be less intrusive than *ask*.

- (3) What should we do? she *asked me*.(RDO1)  
 Vad ska vi göra? *undrade* hon. [wondered she]

The contrast between *ask* and *wonder* in its prototypical meaning can be seen clearly in examples such as (4), where *wonder* is used as a mental verb and forms an antonymous pair together with *ask*.

- (4) Is she, perhaps, a vegetarian, Evelyn *wondered*, but did not like to *ask*, fearing the answer would be negative.(MD1)  
 Är hon kanske vegetarian, *undrade* Evelyn, men ville inte *fråga* av rädsla att svaret skulle bli nekande.

When *ask* is used to introduce an indirect report realized as a full *if*-S or *Wh*-S clause, *fråga* is completely dominant as a translation (see 5). Indirect reports are more frequent in Fiction than in Non-Fiction (F: 57, NF: 40), but the difference is not as great as it is with respect to direct reports. *Undra* ‘wonder’ is used as a translation only three times.

- (5) I *asked* if by any chance Greville had made a will,(DF1)  
 Jag *frågade* om Greville händelsevis hade skrivit ett testamente,

There is a close relationship between VCVs and mental verbs. *Think* can be used to report direct and indirect thoughts with the same types of complements as *say*. With a reflexive object as in (6), *ask* refers to inner speech and is usually translated with the reflexive *fråga sig*. In this use, *ask* is not clearly a VCV any longer but rather a mental verb.

- (6) “What’s that?” he *asked himself*, and sneezed.(JC1)  
 “Vad är det här för någonting?” *frågade* han *sig* och nös.

Only in few cases (17 in all), there is a non-clausal message. It can consist of a pronoun (*Why did he ask that?*), a quantitative (*He asked a lot/He didn't ask anything*) or a single question word (*He only asked why*).

In combination with the noun *question*, *ask* serves syntactically rather as a support verb (cf. *give a speech*). In most examples, the message is not expressed (see 7). The dominant translation is *ställa en fråga* 'put a question'.

- (7) The man would only speak to **ask questions**, and having gained the information he desired, he would fall silent again.(RL1)  
Mannen yttrade sig bara för att **ställa frågor** /---/

In (7), no message is reported, so *ask a question* in this as in most examples functions as a speech activity verb like *speak* and *talk* (see Viberg 2016, Section 4). Like these verbs, *ask a question* freely takes an Addressee and a Topic: *ask sb a question about sth*. In addition to the majority of the examples with *ask a question*, there are 47 examples where there is no message. *Ask* by itself functions as a speech activity verb in many of the examples where there is no message but only a topic and in some cases – as in (8) – also an Addressee.

- (8) You can talk French to him, and **ask** him about Iraq.(MD1)  
Du kan tala franska med honom och **fråga** honom om Irak.

There are 12 examples where the topic is marked with the preposition *about* (usually corresponding to *om* in Swedish). In addition, there are 8 examples, where there is a topic without any marker, and this is an interesting option since there is no direct correspondence to this construction in Swedish. In (9), the topic marker *om* is simply inserted.

- (9) She called Becky at the travel agency to **ask** his flight number,(AT1)  
Hon ringde till Becky på resebyrån och **frågade om** flightnumret,

All examples with a Zero-marked topic are restructured in the Swedish translation. The simplest solution is to insert a topic marker as in (9) and in *ask directions* translated *fråga om vägen* ('ask about the way'), but in several cases a paraphrase is used: "Why do you ask my name?" (KAR1) *Varför vill du veta mitt namn?* ['Why do you want to know my name?'] All of the examples with a Zero-marked topic refer to specific information. Looking back at example (8) for comparison, it is obvious that a lot of different questions can be asked about Iraq. The examples where there is only a topic are included in the category No message in Table 5. In addition, there are examples where neither the message nor the topic is expressed. Actually, the only obligatory argument is the subject, but there are relatively few examples of this type. Often the message can be inferred from context, see (4) above, where the understood message of *ask* is related to the message of *wonder* in the preceding clause. Swedish and English are rather similar on this point. 40 of the 47 examples with no message are translated by *fråga*.

As will be discussed in Section 4, *ask* referring to a polite request has several interesting uses when it is combined with a spatial particle. There is only one such combination when *ask* refers to a question: *ask round*. This is an example of a condensed narrative report (see



Table 1 above). In example (10), the Swedish translation is a set phrase containing the verb *höra* ‘hear’, which has several uses referring to active request for information (see Viberg 2008: 149-151).

- (10) We’ll be *asking round* the village, anyway.(MW1)  
Men vi ska *höra oss för i* byn också. [hear us for in the village]

In practically all examples, *ask<sub>Q</sub>* is used to report a question. There are only a few examples where *ask<sub>Q</sub>* is used in a semi-performative way with a first person subject. Such examples are included in the category Rhetorical in Table 5 since they serve to modify and comment on the current utterance rather than to ask for information. In (11), the speaker does not wait for an answer to the question *may I ask*, which rather is used to signal an objection in this example.

- (11) “What’s wrong with watching the telly, *may I ask?*” the father said.(RD1)  
“Och vad är det för fel med att titta på TV, *om jag får fråga?*” sa hennes pappa.

Like most of the rhetorical examples, *may I ask* is a set phrase. This particular phrase has a close correspondent in Swedish *om jag får fråga/får jag fråga* ‘if I may ask’ / ‘may I ask’. Another rhetorical phrase is *if you ask me*, which is used as a kind of hedge to prepare the Addressee for controversial statements as in (12) or to add emphasis to what the speaker says as in (13) or express the speaker’s confidence in what is said as in another example, where *may I ask* is translated *jag är säker på* ‘I’m sure’.

- (12) That, *if you ask me*, is the main pleasure of adultery.(FW1)  
*Om ni vill veta vad jag tycker* så är det äktenskapsbrottets främsta njutning.  
[if you want to know what I think]
- (13) Too bloody long, *if you ask me*, he said.(DL1)  
Alldeles för förbannat länge *ska jag säga dig*, sade han. [shall I say you]

Set phrases with a semi-performative or rhetorical function is characteristic also of other basic VCVs (cf. Viberg 2016, Section 3.4 on Swedish *säga* ‘say’).

A special characteristic of *fråga* and of several other Swedish VCVs is that the Addressee cannot be passivized. One possibility to translate sentences with the Addressee as a passive subject as in (14) is to use a compound form of *fråga* with *till* ‘to’ (basically a preposition marking a destination or a receiver).

- (14) When Picasso *was asked* how he painted, he replied, “I do not seek, I find.”(DM1)  
När Picasso *blev tillfrågad* hur han målade, svarade han: “Jag söker inte. Jag finner.” [When Picasso became to-asked how...]

Another option is to use an active sentence as in (15), where an agent has been supplied from context and turned into a subject in the Swedish translation.

- (15) I remember when *he was asked* what the principal crop of Thailand was and he answered transistor radios.(JB1)  
Jag minns när *en lärare frågade honom* vad som var huvudnäringen i Thailand och han svarade transistorradior. [I remember when a teacher asked him what...]

### 3.2. The use of Swedish *fråga* to report a question

Swedish *fråga* corresponds very closely to *ask* in the sense ‘ask a question’. In no less than 325 cases (86%), *ask* is used as the translation (see Table 6). There are a few cases where *fråga* is translated with a more specific verb referring to the requesting of information: *inquire*, (*to*) *question* and *interrogate*. *Want to know* (or *hear*) as translation of *fråga* signals the request for information implicitly – like *undra* ‘wonder’ discussed above. The distribution of uses is very similar to that of *ask<sub>Q</sub>* shown in Table 5 above. Direct report and (clausal) Indirect report dominate completely followed by uses where there is no message..

**Table 6:** The uses of Swedish *fråga* and its major English translations in the ESPC

Swedish	English translations				
	Type of Message:	N	<i>ask</i>	<i>wonder</i>	<i>Other</i>
Direct report		163	140	2	say (8), inquire (1)
Indirect report		113	100	2	want to know (4), question (1) want to hear (1)
Inner speech		16	9	6	question (1)
Non-clausal		6	5		
No message		73	64	1	inquire (3), interrogate (1)
Other		8	7		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>379</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>11</b>	

There is one use of *fråga* as a particle verb worth noticing. In combination with the spatial particle *ut* ‘out’, *fråga* refers to repeated, more or less exhaustive questioning. This is reflected in translations such as *question* and *interrogate* (see 16 and 17).

- (16) Hela kvällen **frågade** han **ut** mig, hur jag hade kommit fram till mina slutsatser; om det fanns andra som tänkte som jag, och en massa andra saker i samma stil.(BL1)  
He **questioned** me all evening, asked me how I had come to my conclusions, if there were other people who thought the way I do, and a lot of other things like that.
- (17) Nu började hon **fråga ut** Edla.(KE2)  
She began to **interrogate** Edla.

Interestingly, *fråga* is sometimes translated with *ask* in combination with an infinitive construction that is characteristic of the use of *ask* as a request verb (see Section 4). In (18), the complement of *fråga* is constructed as an *if*-S clause that signals an indirect report of a question, whereas the complement of *ask* in the English translation is restructured as an infinitive that expresses an indirect request to do something.

- (18) Berra dunkade mig i ryggen och **frågade om jag ville berätta** mera om mittpunktsnormalen.(PP1) [and asked if I wanted to tell more about NP]  
Bert clapped me on the back and **asked me to tell** them a bit more about the perpendicular bisector.

Another example of a restructuring of a question into a request to do something appears in (19). The meaning of *fråga efter pigplats* [lit. ‘ask after (a) position as maid’] is hard to describe but rather means ‘ask if there was a position as maid’. If that is the correct

interpretation,<sup>4</sup> this is an indirect request in Swedish. The English translation as in the previous example is restructured and expresses a request to do something.

- (19) - Tror du jag vill ha din doter i mitt kök, din skettlurka! sa gästgivarfrun när Sara Sabina Lans kom och *frågade efter pigplats* åt Edla.(KE2) [asked after a position as maid for Edla]  
 “How can you imagine I’d want your daughter in my kitchen, you filthbag!” was the answer Sara Sabina Lans got from Isaksson’s wife when she came to ask her to take Edla into service.

Examples of this type show that there is a close relationship – and sometimes even an overlap – between the two major senses of *ask*.

#### 4. *Ask used to report a request to do something*

English and Swedish both have a rather large number of directive verbs that report a request, but there is a basic pair of verbs that are used to report a polite versus an informal request. In English, the verbs *ask* and *tell* contrast in this way when they are combined with an infinitive complement, whereas Swedish uses the verb pair *be* and *säga* ‘say’ with an infinitive complement. As a background to the discussion of the many uses of *ask* as a request verb that will be presented in Section 4.2, the next section describes the contrast between *ask* and *tell* as a request verb, since this contrast appears to be basic.

##### 4.1. *The report of polite versus informal requests*

When making a request, the Speaker wants the Hearer to know that the Speaker wants the Hearer to carry out a certain act specified in the Proposition (P) expressed in the Message. To report a request, the two basic VCVs *tell* and *ask* can be used in a special construction. In this function, *ask* refers to a polite request to do something, which the Hearer is not obliged to carry out, whereas *tell* refers to something the Hearer is obliged (or at least ought) to do. The obligation could be based on an obligation imposed by the Speaker in an informal way or based on general social conventions or be based on what is in the best interest of the Hearer (*I told him to look out for the car*). It may be noted that *ask* and *tell* typically correspond to different types of direct requests (cf. Rudzka-Ostyn 1989: 631). A sentence such as *She asked me to open the window* most accurately reports a request expressed as a question (*Can you open the window?*) or containing a politeness marker (*Please, open the window!*), whereas a blunt imperative (*Open the window!*) most accurately is reported with *tell* (*She told me to open the window*). In actual practice, there is a wide range of alternatives, but idealized examples of this type point in the right direction. In Swedish, the closest correspondent to *tell* as a request verb is the use of the most general (nuclear) VCV *säga* ‘say’ in combination with one of the stressed particles *till* or *åt* (derived from prepositions meaning ‘to’), see example (20).

<sup>4</sup> Another interpretation is that it represents a parallel to *ask for* as a request described in Section 4.2. In any case, the example shows the close relationship between a question and a request.

- (20) Then she **told** Mum to leave.(BO1)  
Så **sa** hon **till** mamma att gå.

The closest equivalent of *ask* to report a polite request is the special request verb *be* as in (21).

- (21) I **asked** her to look into some of the other boxes,(DF1)  
Jag **bad** henne titta i några av de andra lådorna,

The canonical structure used to report a request is shown in Table 7. PRO in the syntactic frame refers to the understood Agent of the infinitive clause and the index (j) shows that the action referred to in the message is controlled by the NP functioning as object of the request verb.

**Table 7:** The canonical syntactic realization of a reported request

Frame elements	Speaker	Linguistic Action	Addressee	Message
<b>Syntactic frame 1</b>	NP <sub>i</sub>	Verb (Particle)	NP <sub>j</sub>	PRO <sub>j</sub> to-VPinf => PRO <sub>j</sub> att-VPinf
	She	told	mum	to leave.
	Hon	sa 'till	mamma	att gå.
	I	asked	her	to look in the box.
	Jag	bad	henne	(att) titta i lådan.

That there is a close relationship between *ask* as a question and *ask* as a polite request can be observed in (22).

- (22) She knocked on his door and **asked if** he would be kind enough to show her the famous bird.(RD1)  
Hon knackade på och **frågade om** han ville vara så snäll och visa henne sin omtalade fågel.

It is conceivable that (22) might be a report of a speech act such as *Would you be kind enough to show me the famous bird?* Both in English and Swedish, this could have been reported also in the form of a request, which requires a shift to the verb *be* in Swedish: *She asked him to show her the famous bird / Hon bad honom visa (henne) sin berömda fågel.* There is also a very close relationship between the use of *tell* as an information verb and *tell* as a request. In (23), the English original text has a that-S complement that informs the Addressee what the speaker considers to be necessary to do signaled with a modal (*must*). The Swedish translation in this case has complement that is restructured into an infinitive complement of the type characteristic of requests.

- (23) Now that he had gained for them the treasure of land, they were willing to begin listening to him when he **told** them that they must stop the practice of burning trees, which had been going on for thousands of years.(LT1)  
/---/ när han **sade åt** dem att sluta bränna träd, [when he said to them to stop burn trees]

In English, it is possible to realize the message as an infinitive complement introduced by a question word (Wh) as in (24). This structure does not exist in Swedish and requires a restructuring of the complement into an *att*('that')-S complement containing a modal (usually a form of *ska* 'shall' with the past form *skulle*).

- (24) Even when he wasn't there, he'd **tell** her what to do in letters.(AH1)  
Till och med när han inte var hemma skrev han och **sade till** henne vad hon **skulle** göra.

When this complement is used with *ask* it refers to a request for instructions or advice and *fråga* could be used in the Swedish translation: *She asked him what to do => Hon frågade honom vad hon skulle göra* 'She asked him what she should do')

The translation pattern of *tell* used as a request verb is less complicated than for *ask* and is summed up in Table 8. The corresponding use of *ask* will be summed up in the following section together with its many other uses as a request verb.

**Table 8:** The translation pattern of *tell* as a request verb

	tell	Swedish translations			
Request Total	52	säga åt/till	be	uppmåna	tala om för
tell NP to-VPinf	44	21*	6	2	0
Tell NP Wh to-VPinf	8	4	1	0	3

\*) Two restructured translations: att-S [ska], Wh-S [ska]

The use of *säga till/åt* in Swedish originals shows that *tell* is the most frequent correspondent, see Table 9.

**Table 9:** The translation pattern of Swedish *säga 'till/åt*

	säga till/åt	English translations				
Request Total	28	tell	ask	instruct	say	Other
NP to-VPinf		10		1		
Other		8	1		3	5

When *säga till/åt* has an infinitive complement it practically always reports a request and is translated with *tell* in a congruent structure. Sometimes a request is also reported in a full *att* ('that')-S clause as in (25).

- (25) Han **sa till** mig att jag skulle skissa på tillbyggnaden.(CE1) [that I should sketch]  
He **told** me to sketch the extension.

In (26), *säga till* is translated simply with *say*. The that-S clause in this case does not tell the Addressee what to do, but describes what the Speaker wants in a way that by implication represents an indirect request not to disturb.

- (26) - Jag **sa** ju **till** att vi inte ville bli störda, sa Björk.(HM2) [that we not wanted be disturbed]  
"I **said** we shouldn't be disturbed," said Björk.

#### 4.2. The many uses of *ask* to report a request

Rudzka-Ostyn (1989) distinguishes a number of interrelated senses organized into a schematic network around *ask<sub>R</sub>* – *ask* used to report a polite request. These are shown in Table 10. The letters will be used as a reference also in Table 11, which shows the frequency of the various senses of *ask<sub>R</sub>* and their major translations.

**Table 10:** A network of meanings related to *ask* as a polite request verb (Rudzka-Ostyn 1989: 631-632)

- a. EXPRESS VERBALLY AND IN A POLITE MANNER A DESIRE (P) THAT THE HEARER DO SOMETHING AND THEREBY TRY TO CAUSE HIM TO DO IT
- b. P BENEFITS SPEAKER
- c. P= THAT HEARER COME
- d. P= THAT HEARER COME FOR SPEAKER'S BENEFIT
- e. P = THAT HEARER COME FOR HEARER'S BENEFIT
- f. P= THAT HEARER GIVE SPEAKER WHAT BENEFITS SPEAKER
- g. P = THAT HEARER ALLOW SPEAKER TO DO WHAT BENEFITS SPEAKER
- h. P = SPEAKER CONTACT OR BE PUT IN CONTACT WITH SOMEBODY FOR SPEAKER'S BENEFIT

The general meaning, which is shared by all instances of *ask<sub>R</sub>*, is described in (a). P refers to the proposition that describes the speaker's desire and in order to be a request the desire must be that the hearer should do something. This condition is fulfilled in most cases when the Message is realized as an object-controlled infinitive as described in the previous section. In the prototypical case (b), what is done benefits the Speaker. The most frequent Swedish translation is the verb *be* appearing in a congruent structure as in (27).

- (27) Sometimes a woman would *ask* my father to "speak to" her husband.(NG1)  
 Ibland hände det att en kvinna *bad* min far "tala" med hennes man.

However, there are some clear examples such as (28), where the action does not benefit the Speaker.<sup>5</sup>

- (28) I'll *ask* an officer to go out with you when we've finished.(MW1)  
 Jag ska *be* en polis gå med er dit ut när vi är färdiga.

Table 11 shows the frequency of occurrence of the senses of *ask<sub>R</sub>* and their Swedish translations. Senses (a) and (b) are presented together, since it is not always possible to decide from the concordance lines if what is to be done really benefits the Speaker. (Thus, "Benefit of Speaker" in the right column does not hold in an absolute sense, but refers to the typical interpretation.)

The rest of the senses refer to more fine-grained distinctions and are signaled by specific constructions. When the Message is condensed to *for* + NP (sense f), the desire is for the Hearer to give Speaker what benefits Speaker as in (29). The translation with the verb *be* uses a congruent structure with the preposition *om* + NP – the same preposition that marks a Topic.

- (29) At a junction I *asked* a food-seller *for* water.(BO1)  
 I en vägförskning *bad* jag en matförsäljerska *om* vatten.

<sup>5</sup> The interpretation may be a little bit tricky. (28) does not report an act that benefits the Speaker or the Hearer ("an officer") of the speech act reported on (the primary speech act) but is an act that benefits a third party ("you"), which happens to be the Hearer of the report (the secondary speech act).

**Table 11:** The senses of *ask* reporting a request and their major translations in the ESPC

Meaning	Construction	N	Major translations	N
<b>POLITE REQUEST</b>				
<i>Benefit of Speaker</i>				
Polite request, general (a,b)	ask NP to VP <sub>inf</sub>	70	be NP (att) VP <sub>inf</sub> be att-S	50 1
Ask to be given (f)	ask for NP	36	be om NP / be att få NP begära NP <sup>abstract</sup> (Formal)	20 6
Ask permission (g)	ask to VP <sub>inf</sub>	10	be att få VP <sub>inf</sub> be om NP anhålla/begära att få VP <sub>inf</sub>	4 3 2
Ask for contact (h)	ask for NP <sup>human</sup>	1	be att få tala med NP <sup>human</sup>	1
<i>Benefit of Hearer</i>				
Invitation (e, partly)	ask NP Particle/ ask NP to-VP <sub>inf</sub>	11	bjuda Particle + NP/PP be NP VP <sub>inf</sub>	8 2
<i>Other</i>		15	be	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	ask <sub>Q</sub>	143	be	86

Often what is asked for refers to an abstract concept (*ask for advice / be om råd; ask for an interpretation / be om en tolkning*). Related to this use are a few examples where what is asked for appears in the object slot:<sup>6</sup> *ask s.o.'s opinion, ask s.o.'s consent*. In Swedish, the preposition cannot be left out: *be om någons åsikt / be om någons medgivande*. In one case, there is a paraphrase: *he telephoned to ask my opinion* translated *han hade ringt mig för att få ett råd* ‘/---/ to get a (piece of) advice’

In (30), another verb *begära* is used in the translation. This verb takes an abstract noun referring to the desired action as an object: *begära stöd* ‘demand support’ and is used to report a formal requests.

- (30) Montgomery himself must accept responsibility for one major Allied misfortune at this time: he **asked for**, and received, the **support** of the US First Army to secure his right flank.(MH1)  
Han **begärde** och fick **stöd** av USA:s Första armé för att säkra sin högra flank.

In several examples, *begära* is combined with nouns referring to formalized procedures in institutional contexts: *ask for an adjournment / begära uppskov; ask for a ruling / begära ett avgörande*. There are also three non-literal uses where *ask for* is translated with rather colorless paraphrases: *ask for it => vara vad någon förtjänar* ‘be what someone deserves’ and *ask for trouble > utsätta sig för* ‘expose oneself to (something bad)’ *orsaka besvär* ‘cause trouble’. A specialized verb is used also as a translation of *ask for money / tigga pengar* (‘beg money’ cf. *tiggare* ‘beggar’).

In the examples analyzed so far, the Speaker asks the Hearer to do something, but, actually both *ask* and *be* can be used when the Speaker wants the Hearer to give the Speaker permission to do something. In (31), the Message refers to an act by the Speaker.

<sup>6</sup> These examples are included in the category Other in Table 11

- (31) If I hadn't *asked to speak* to her, would you ever have told us she'd left you?(AT1)  
Om jag inte hade *bett att få tala* med henne /---/

In examples of this type, *ask* does not have an object referring to the Addressee and the reference of the understood Agent of the infinitive is controlled by the subject of *ask* as shown with indexes in Table 12.

**Table 12:** Subject-controlled infinitive complements.

Frame elements	Speaker	Linguistic Action	Addressee	Message
Syntactic frame 3	NP <sub>i</sub>	Verb	--- (NP <sub>j</sub> )	PRO <sub>i</sub> to-VPinf = > PRO <sub>i</sub> att få VPinf
	I	asked		to speak to her
	Jag	bad	(honom) 'him'	att få tala med henne to get speak with her

If there had been an explicit Addressee in English in example (31), there would have been a change of reference and the understood Agent in the Message would refer to the Addressee rather than the Speaker: *I asked him to speak to her*. In Swedish, there can be an explicit Addressee without any change in reference as long as *få* appears in the infinitive complement: *Jag bad honom att få tala med henne* ('I asked him to get (to) speak to her'). In Swedish, the reference to the Speaker as Agent is expressed by using the verb *få* 'get' as a modal with permissive meaning ('be allowed'). If *få* is left out, the Addressee (as in English) is interpreted as Agent: *Jag bad honom att tala med henne* 'I asked him to speak to her'. The restructuring can be illustrated with two examples from the same text. In Swedish, *få* 'get' is used to ask permission as in (32).

- (32) "May I examine it?" he asked,(OS1)  
"Får jag undersöka det?" frågade han,

In the English novel from which this example is taken, the same speech act is reported as an indirect report of a question (33). The Swedish translation is restructured as an indirect report of a request.

- (33) He *asked* if he *might* examine it,(OS1)  
Han *bad* att *få* granska den [He asked to get (to) examine it]

In (34), a similar example is translated into Swedish with a full *om*('if')-S structure. In that case, *fråga* must be used as a correspondent of *ask*.

- (34) She *asked* if she *might* sit awhile and read a book.(RD1)  
Hon *frågade* om hon *fick* sitta där en stund och läsa en bok.

When the NP refers to a person (sense h), the construction *ask for* NP can refer to the request that the Speaker be put in contact with someone as in (35).



- (35) She retrieved the telephone, dialled Learmouth Police Station and *asked for* Detective Sergeant Cooper.(MW1)  
 Hon lyfte telefonluren, slog numret till polisstationen i Learmouth och *bad att få tala med* kriminalinspektör Cooper.

The Swedish translation is restructured and uses the construction that expresses a request to be permitted to do something (*be att få VPinf*), in this case to speak to a certain person. Swedish can also use *fråga* with the preposition *efter* ‘after’ as in (36). This example shows how *be* and *fråga* in some cases can be used to express the same specific meaning of ask provided that the verb appears in a construction that is characteristic of the verb.

- (36) Och där skulle hon *fråga efter* nån som hette Agnes Cecilia.(MG1)  
 When you get there, you should *ask for* someone by the name of Agnes Cecilia.

The use of narrative reports, where the message is presented in very condensed form, is characteristic of *ask*. There is a special construction, where *ask* is combined with a spatial particle or PP. Rudzka-Ostyn (1989) distinguishes three different senses of *ask* (c-e) when it appears in this construction, all containing the Proposition THAT HEARER COME (see Table 10). There are no examples in the corpus of the first two senses, but the most natural translation into Swedish appears to be the one expressing a polite request in general (*be NP VPinfinitive*), since *be* cannot appear in a congruent construction. See, for example, the translation shown in (37) of sense (d) – that hearer come for speaker’s benefit.

- (37) Ask the maid up. (Rudzka-Ostyn 1989: 630)  
 Be hembiträdet (att) komma upp [‘Ask the maid to come up’] (My translation)

The most interesting of these senses is (e), which is exceptional since it refers to an action that is carried out to the Hearer’s benefit. It is interesting also because a specific verb *bjuda* ‘invite, offer, treat so to sth’ is the most direct translation. This verb prototypically refers to something which is to the Hearer’s benefit. It can also appear in the same construction as *ask* with a spatial particle or PP. In (38), the proposition refers to a wish for the hearer to come to a certain place (their home) and – as usually is the case with this construction – some activity connected to the place is referred to (‘have supper’) or implied (in some other examples).

- (38) So this man and his wife, they *asked* the granny *round for* supper.(JC1)  
 Så den här mannen och hans fru *bjöd in* farmodern *på* lite kvällsmat.  
 [invited in the granny for (‘on’) a little supper]

Swedish *bjuda* can be combined with a spatial particle in a construction that is congruent with that of *ask*, but this is not possible with *be*, which requires a restructuring to an infinitive construction, when it is used as a translation in (39).

- (39) “You might have *asked* her *in*.”(AT1)  
 “Men Macon, du kunde väl ha *bett* henne stiga in.” [asked her step inside]

Semantically, *be* differs from *bjuda* by lacking the feature HEARER’S BENEFIT (category c in Table 10). If *bjuda in* had been used as a translation, it would have implied that the speaker

would act as a host in some sense (for example, by showing her around or serving coffee). Example (40), taken from a book on the experience of Sweden from a foreigner's perspective, presupposes a traditional scenario where prospective dancing partners are sitting around the dance floor waiting to be asked to get up and dance.

- (40) Once again the Swede met the challenge and *asked* the girl *to dance*.(JPM1)  
 Än en gång antog svensken utmaningen och *bjöd upp* flickan. [invited up the girl]

## 5. The verb *be* and other Swedish directive verbs

This section accounts for all the uses of *be* and *bjuda* and *begära* – the major correspondents of *ask<sub>R</sub>* – in order to see to which extent these verbs cover the same meanings as *ask*.

### 5.1. *be* ‘ask politely’

As shown above, *be* corresponds to *ask* when that verb refers to a polite request. All the uses of *be* in the original Swedish texts in the ESPC are shown in Table 13 together with the English translations. The most frequent use is to report a polite request and in this case the dominant translation is *ask*. Direct reports occur only with low frequency and the same applies to indirect reports realized as that-S clauses. The most frequent realization of the Message is the Infinitive clause followed by the non-clausal realization *be om* NP ‘ask for NP’. The pattern mirrors to a great extent what was found above for *be* as a translation of *ask*. Only in a few cases is a more special verb than *ask* used as a translation: *pray*, *beg* and *urge*.

Asking Permission to do something is a special case of polite request that has been singled out because it requires the use of *få* in the infinitive complement (see Table 12 above). There are some uses of *be* where *ask* is not used as a translation. One such use is referred to as Pray in Table 13 and occurs when *be* is used to report a prayer as in: *Hon bad inte till Gud* (MR1) translated *She didn't pray to God*. A topic can be introduced in the ordinary way with *om*: *be om seger* ‘pray for victory’. When it refers to praying, *be* can also take a noun referring to a prayer as object; *be bordsbön* – *say prayer* or be used without any complement as in the following translation from English: *He was praying*. (RDO1) translated as: *Han bad*.

Another special use of *be* is to report an apology as in: *morsan bad om ursäkt*.(PP1), which is translated: *Mum said she was sorry*. In Swedish, this is just a special case of a condensed polite request using *be om* NP ‘ask for’ NP. *Be om ursäkt* can also be translated with the simple verb *apologize* (see 41).

- (41) De gånger jag har träffat honom verkar han som om han *bad om ursäkt för* att han fanns till.(SW1)  
 The times I've run into him, it always seems as if he wanted to *apologize for* simply existing.

There are also a few examples where *be* is used performatively. In (42), it is used to make an apology.

- (42) - *Jag ber om ursäkt*, sa han.(HM2)  
 “I'm sorry,” he said.

*Jag ber om ursäkt* ‘I ask for forgiveness’ is the formula in Swedish corresponding to *I’m sorry* in English. Another performative use *Får jag be om* ‘May I ask for’ is a rather formal politeness marker. Example (43) appears in the context of a court hearing.

- (43) - *Får jag be om* ert fullständiga namn. (MPC:HN) [may I ask for your full name]  
 ‘What is your full name, *please?*’

**Table 13:** The uses of Swedish *be* and its major English translations

Meaning	Construction	N	Translation	N
<b>REPORT</b>				
<i>Polite request</i>				
	<i>Direct report</i>	2	ask say	1 1
	<i>Indirect report: Clausal</i>			
	<i>be</i> NP (att-)S	4	ask pray	2 2
	<i>Infinitive complement</i>			
	NP <sub>i</sub> <i>be</i> NP <sub>j</sub> (att) PRO <sub>j</sub> VP <sub>inf</sub> (att 13, Zero 27)	40	ask urge (formal)	34 3
	<i>Narrative report</i>			
	<i>be om</i> NP	19	ask (for NP)	13
	Message understood or pronominal	6	ask	3
<i>Asking permission</i>	<i>Infinitive complement</i>			
	NP <sub>i</sub> <i>be</i> (NP <sub>j</sub> ) (om) att få PRO <sub>i</sub> VP <sub>inf</sub>	7	ask beg	5 1
<i>Pray</i>	<i>be</i> (till Gud)	8	pray (to God)	6
<i>Apology</i>	<i>Narrative report</i>			
	<i>be om ursäkt</i> ‘ask for forgiveness’	4	apologise, say + sorry	2 2
<b>PERFORMATIVE</b>				
<i>Politeness marker</i>				
		4	please I pray	2 1
<i>Apology</i>			I’m sorry	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>be</i>	94	ask	58

## 5.2. *bjuda* ‘invite’, *begära* ‘request’

This section is devoted to the two verbs *bjuda* and *begära* that were used as translations of *ask<sub>R</sub>* besides *be*. As can be observed in Table 14, *ask* is not the most frequent translation of these verbs. *Bjuda* rather corresponds to *offer* and *invite* and *begära* to *request*. In order to describe the meaning of these verbs it is necessary to briefly discuss some of the major parameters that organize the contrasts between the directive verbs in general. As mentioned above, the distinguishing feature between *be* and *bjuda* is that the request refers to something that is, respectively, to the benefit of the Speaker or to the Hearer. Like *ask*, *be* and *bjuda* both

are used when the right to impose an obligation on the Hearer is not taken for granted by the Speaker. That is, however, the case when verbs such as *require* and *demand* (Swedish *kräva*) are used. None of these presuppose any formalized or institutionalized social relationship or order-of-command between Speaker and Hearer such as the verb *order*. In Swedish, two different verbs are used that are based on different institutionalized roles. *Beordra* is used when there is an order-of-command (prototypically in the military) and *beställa* is used when the relationship between Speaker and Addressee coincides with that of Customer and Service provider ('to order goods or services').

**Table 14:** The major translations of *bjuda* and *begära* in the ESPC

<b>bjuda</b>		<b>begära</b>	
Total	54		39
<i>Major translations</i>		<i>Major translations</i>	
ask	2	ask	8
offer	15	request	14
invite	13	expect	6
		demand	3

The most frequent translations of *bjuda*, *offer* and *invite*, both indicate that the Message describes something that is beneficial for the Addressee. (44) is one of the two examples translated with *ask* and are translated with a combination of *ask* and a spatial particle of the kind that was discussed in Section 4.2.

- (44) Varför *bjöd* du *ut* mej?(JG1)  
Why did you *ask* me *out*?

Conceptually, *bjuda* is a blend of several types of verbs. It is a verbal communication verb, because an offer is presented verbally. In (44), the Addressee is asked to do something pleasant together with the Speaker (such as to go to a restaurant for a date). The translations of *bjuda* are interesting, since in many cases they require a partial reconceptualization combined with a restructuring on the grammatical level. In the English translation of (45), the Addressee is also asked to do something in a condensed form (to come over to someone's home). The argument marked with *for* indicates something that the Addressee will be given. In the Swedish version, *bjuda* has an argument marked with the preposition *på* 'on' corresponding to this argument. A literal translation would rather be: 'We have been offered afternoon coffee up at Percy's and Elsa's'. The request to go there is only implied.

- (45) För vi är nämligen *bjudna på* eftermiddagskaffe uppe hos Percy och Elsa(ARP1)  
'We've been *asked over* to Percy's and Elsa's *for* afternoon coffee.'

When this construction is used, *bjuda* partly is a verb of giving. This is reflected in an expression such as *Jag bjuder* 'It's on me' used when someone offers to pay the bill for the whole group. The argument marked with *på* 'on' represents what is given and this is clearly reflected in the translation of (46), where the preposition *to* marks the corresponding argument in the translation.

- (46) Okej, jag **bjuder på** fika nästan på Djurgårn.(JG1)  
 Okay, I'll **treat** you **to** coffee somewhere in Djurgården.

As a Verbal communication verb, *bjuda* is primarily used to present narrative reports with a condensed realization of the message. This applies as well to the cases where *bjuda* is translated with *invite* and *offer* (see 47 and 48).

- (47) “Hörde du, torsken vill **bjuda** oss **på** middag!” meddelade hon glatt.(JG1)  
 “Did you hear that? The sucker wants to **invite** us **to** dinner!” she reported cheerfully.
- (48) Främlingen **bjöd** sen gubbarna **på** var sitt glas.(SC1)  
 Then the stranger **offered** the old men a drink.

*Bjuda* can also refer to a bid at an auction or to the offer to pay a certain sum for product in a business negotiation (‘to say that one is willing to pay a certain sum for an object’). The verb then is used in the frame *bjuda* PRICE för GOODS, where the sum of money appears in the object slot as in the English translation with the verb *offer* in (49).

- (49) Dom hade **bjudit** tjugofem kronor.(SC1)  
 They had **offered** twenty-five kronor.

In this particular use *bjuda* is in a converse relation to *begära* (like the pair ‘buy’ – ‘sell’), since *begära* can take the Seller as subject: *Peter begärde 100 dollar för cykeln* – *Peter asked \$100 for his bike*. *Be om* – the usual correspondent to *ask for* – does not sound completely appropriate in this context, since – in addition to referring to a polite request – *be* has a relatively strong entreating component (like *beg* – but perhaps a little weaker. As mentioned, *be* can also refer to praying.) *Begära* suits better to refer to a negotiation between equal partners. As noted in Section 4.2, *begära* ‘demand’ is used as a translation of *ask* also in institutional settings, when *begära* is combined with an abstract noun (*begära ordet* ‘ask to speak’ / *begära uppskov* ‘ask for a delay’). The most frequent translation of *begära* is the verb *request* (see Table 14 above), which is a polite but formal directive verb. In most cases, *request* is used as a translation of combinations of *begära* + abstract noun: *begära skadestånd* ‘request compensation’, *begära upplysningar* ‘request information’, *begära klarläggande* ‘request clarification’. *Begära* can also take a *that*-S clause as complement as in (50), but not an infinitive complement.

- (50) Skyddsombudet kan också **begära** att en viss undersökning skall göras för kontroll av förhållandena inom skyddsområdet.(ARBM1)  
 The safety delegate can also **request** that a certain investigation be carried out to verify conditions within his safety area.

### 5.3. Summing up the contrasts between *ask* and its Swedish correspondents

Swedish divides up the linguistic functions covered by *ask* between the verb *fråga*, which reports questions, and *be* and some related verbs, which report requests. The lexical contrasts in Swedish have parallels in the choice of constructions both in Swedish and English. The verbs *fråga* and *ask<sub>Q</sub>* are frequently used with direct reports and clausal indirect reports,

whereas *ask<sub>R</sub>* and *be* only in a few cases are used with these complements but typically are used with infinitive complements. In addition, the verbs (in particular when they refer to requests) are used in more or less lexicalized phrasal combinations as phrasal, prepositional or support verbs. Such combinations form less regular patterns but have meanings that can be related to the prototypical meanings of the verbs. There is a close semantic relationship between the functions of *ask* symbolized as *ask<sub>Q</sub>* and *ask<sub>R</sub>*. This is reflected in the fact that indirect reports of questions sometimes are restructured as indirect reports of requests in the translations (see examples 18, 19 and 33 above) owing to the use of questions to express polite requests.

## 6. The verbs of answering

The verbs of answering are the major example of reactive verbal communication verbs, i.e., verbs that presuppose or respond to a prior speech act (e.g. *ask a question – answer, claim – refute, deny*). The concept of answering forms a conceptual network which is similar in English and Swedish but contrasts with respect to the way meanings are divided up between various verbs. English has several verbs of answering, which all have complex networks of meanings, as shown by Rudzka-Ostyn (1995) in her detailed study of the verbs *answer, reply, respond, rejoin* and *retort*. The English verbs of answering share a single Swedish verb *svara* as a major correspondent. This verb has several derived forms that partly have other correspondents than the English verbs of answering, but are organized around underlying conceptual structures that are closely related: *försvara* ‘defend’, *ansvara (för)* ‘be responsible (for)’ and *motsvara* ‘correspond’.

### 6.1. Schemas and frames

Asking questions is closely related to giving answers. In discourse analysis, question and answer are regarded as a basic type of adjacency pair. As a verbal communication verb used to report speech, *answer* is special since it presupposes very strongly a question, even if it is not always explicit in the context as in (51) and (52).

- (51) I *asked* him why he and Sarah have no children, and he *answered*: “Because I’ve never had the urge to play God.”(MW1)
- (52) I remember when he was *asked* what the principal crop of Thailand was and he *answered* transistor radios. (JB1)

In Rudzka-Ostyn’s (1995) analysis, the conceptual networks of the verbs of answering are organized around two schemas. The prior-subsequent schema accounts for the requirement of a prior act, but is rather general. For example, it is one of the preconditions for the relation between cause and result. The correspondence schema accounts for the close relationships between specific elements of the prior act and specific elements of the response. In straightforward examples such as the ones above, the reason given in the answer in (51)

corresponds to “why” in the question and in (52) “transistor radios” provides the missing information in the question (“what”).

In FrameNet, the verbs of answering evoke the frame *Communication\_response*. This frame inherits the structure of the more general *Response* frame, which is defined as follows: “An Agent performs a Response action in consequence of a Trigger event.”<sup>7</sup> The Trigger corresponds to the prior act in the prior-subsequent schema, but is more specific in a way that is specified in the correspondence schema. Table 15 shows the model adapted from FrameNet that will be used for the analysis in this paper. (Note that the frame elements can be realized in any order. The linear arrangement has been specially tailored for expository purposes only.)

**Table 15:** *The Communication Response frame*

<b>Response frame:</b>	<b>Trigger</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Response action</b>			
	↓	↓	↓			
<b>Communication Response frame</b>	<b>Implicit verbal Trigger</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Speech act</b>	<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Trigger</b>
	QUESTION	Peter	answered	me	that he was tired	
	QUESTION	Peter	answered			my question
	QUESTION	Peter	didn't reply			to the question
	ACCUSATION	Peter	answered			the accusation

Since the analysis will be based only on sentences containing the verb of answering and its arguments, the Trigger will often be implicit as indicated in the column to the left in Table 15. In some examples from the ESPC as in (51) and (52) above, the Trigger appears in the previous discourse, but it seems as if the Trigger must be pragmatically derived from context in many of the examples from the corpus. The Trigger can also be realized as an argument of the verb, variously realized as a direct object after *answer* (*He didn't answer my question*) or as a prepositional object after *reply* (*He didn't reply to my question*). Such arguments always point back to the previous context, which must contain an explicit or implicit Trigger for the text to be coherent.

## 6.2. *The English verbs of answering*

There are only 72 occurrences of *answer* as a verb in the ESPC, but the examples accounted for in Table 16 suffice to show the most frequent uses.

In the majority of cases, the Trigger is a prior utterance and *svara* is used as a Swedish translation. One difference is that the Trigger is realized as a direct object in English when it is explicitly mentioned, whereas it requires the preposition *på* ‘on’ as a marker in Swedish (see 53).

<sup>7</sup> The definition continues: In many cases, a non-agentive *Responding\_entity* causes the Response after the Trigger occurs. The definition of the *Communication\_response* frame runs: This frame deals with a Speaker communicating a reply or response, a Message, to some prior communication or action, the Trigger.

- (53) Rather than **answer this question**, Marjorie reverts to an earlier one.(DL1)  
 Istället för att **svara på frågan** återgår Marjorie till den tidigare.

**Table 16:** The uses of answer and its major translations in the ESPC

English answer		Swedish translations			
Trigger:		N			
PRIOR UTTERANCE		39	svara	33	besvara 3
PRIOR UTTERANCE:	as object	14	svara på	5	besvara 8
PRIOR UTTERANCE:	Contested	3	säga emot	2	ge svar på tal 1
PRIOR UTTERANCE:	Critical	3	bemöta 'meet'	3	
PHONE SIGNAL		6	svara	4	
DOOR SIGNAL		3	öppna dörren 'open the door'	3	
WISH		1	bönhöra 'hear a prayer'	1	
CRIME		1	lösa 'solve'	1	
REPREHENSIBLE PRIOR ACT		2	stå till svars 'stand to answer <sub>N</sub> '	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	answer	72	svara	42	

As an alternative, the Trigger can be realized as a direct object also in Swedish by using *besvara*, which is a form of *svara* derived with the applicative prefix *be-* (see 54).

- (54) He was a genial soul, very ready to talk and to **answer any questions** I asked him.(OS1)  
 Han var en sympatisk själ som gärna pratade och **besvarade allehanda frågor** jag ställde till honom.

There are some examples where the Swedish translation incorporates special aspects of the meaning signaled by *answer* used in special constructions or used in special contexts. Examples (55) and (56) show translations of *answer* used as a phrasal verb *answer back* that signals that the Trigger contains contested information. *Säga emot* (lit. 'say against') and *ge svar på tal* ('give answer on speech') can be used to express the corresponding meanings in Swedish.

- (55) Never **answer her back**.(RD1)  
**Säg** aldrig **emot** henne. [say never against her]
- (56) only Abe never sulked, he had the gift of the gab, he **answered back**.(MD1)  
 han var begåvad med en rapp tunga, han **gav svar på tal**, [gave answer on speech]

Another translation tied to a specific context is *bemöta* (a prefixed form of *möta* 'meet') combined with an abstract noun. This translation is used when the Trigger contains criticism that is rejected as in (57).

- (57) I had designed them to **answer the criticism** of Ford Doolittle and Richard Dawkins that Gaia was teleological.(JL1)  
 Jag gjorde den för att **bemöta den kritik** jag hade fått från Ford Doolittle och Richard Dawkins /---/

As demonstrated by (58), this type of translation is not tied to the translation of any specific abstract noun such as *criticism* but can be used as soon as the semantic criterion is satisfied.



- (58) I cannot say the same, however, for her unwelcome slurs on my colleague Mr Elles, particularly as he is not here to **answer** them.(ECH11)  
/---/ i synnerhet eftersom han inte är närvarande för att **bemöta** dem.

Very specific is the translation when the Trigger refers to a prayer as in (59), where Swedish uses a compound verb as translation: *bönhöra* (*bön* ‘prayer’ + *höra* ‘hear’).

- (59) And then, miraculously, her prayer **was answered**.(PDJ1)  
Sedan **blev** hon på ett mirakulöst sätt **bönhörd**.

The Trigger can also be some kind of non-verbal signal. English and Swedish are similar when the Trigger is a phone signal (see 60).

- (60) Många signaler gick fram innan fru Wallin **svarade**.(HM2)  
The phone rang for some time before the widow **answered**.

When the signal comes from the door bell (or a knock on the door), Swedish uses the expression (*gå och*) *öppna* ‘(go and) open’ as in (61).

- (61) She’d **answered** the door.(RDO1)  
Hon hade **öppnat** dörren.

Table 17 shows the translations of all the verbs of answering in English. (*correspond* has been added since it will be discussed in Section 6.3.)

*Table 17: Translations of the English verbs of answering in the ESPC*

<i>English verb</i>	<b>answer</b>	<b>reply</b>	<b>respond</b>	<b>retort</b>	<b>rejoin</b>	<b>correspond</b>
Total	72	57	30	1	0	21
<i>Translations:</i>						
<b>svara</b>	44	47	9	1		
<b>besvara</b>	11	1				
ge <b>svar</b> <sub>N</sub> ‘give answer’	5					
<b>motsvara</b>						19
säga ‘say’	2	5	1			
reagera ‘react’			8			
Other	10	4	12	0	0	2

The verb *reply* usually describes the response to a question as trigger and is translated with *svara* in the majority of cases (47 out of 57). In a high proportion of the examples (39 out of 57), the Message is realized as a direct report (see 62).

- (62) He had instantly **replied**, “No, Your Majesty.”(ST1)  
Han hade omedelbart **svarat**: “Nej, Ers Majestät.”

The presence of a direct report makes it natural to use *säga* ‘say’ as a translation of *reply* in 5 examples (see 63). However, this is a rather small proportion of the total number of examples.

- (63) “That so, Evvie?” George **replied** since some reply seemed necessary.(SK1)  
“Jaså du, Evvie”, **sa** George Meara eftersom hon verkade vänta sig ett svar.

The verb *respond* is also used as a verbal communication verb with *svara* as a translation (see 64), but this rather represents a special use of the verb in certain contexts. Its meaning should probably be connected directly to the general response frame, since the Trigger in many cases is non-verbal. Swedish *svara* can be used even in such cases (see 65), but the most frequent translation is *reagera* ‘react’ (see 66).

- (64) And so would he, responded Alexander, were he not Alexander.(JH1)  
Och det skulle han också göra, svarade Alexander, om han inte vore Alexander.
- (65) they [the Americans] **responded** coolly and decisively **to** the Mortain assault.(MH1)  
Amerikanerna **svarade** kyligt och beslutsamt **på** angreppet vid Mortain.
- (66) Usually they’ll **respond to** treatment.(AH1)  
I vanliga fall **reagerar** de **på** behandling.

Note that the usual marker of the trigger is used in the last two examples (*to* in English and *på* ‘on’ in Swedish). It can also be remarked that *svara* can be used as a translation of *react* in many cases, in spite of the fact that the trigger is non-verbal as in (67).

- (67) I **reacted with** one of those little jumps you do when you open the evening paper and a spider runs out.  
(SG1)  
Jag **svarade med att** hoppa till på det sätt som man gör när man öppnar kvällstidningen och en spindel kilar fram.

There is only one example of *retort* in the ESPC (see 68) and *rejoin* only appears once as a translation of *svara* (in a Swedish original, see 69). According to Rudzka-Ostyn (1995), these two verbs tend to express disagreement with a prior utterance, but this is not clearly reflected in the few examples in the ESPC. Nevertheless, these examples show the great range of correspondents to *svara*, when it is used as a verbal communication verb.

- (68) Perhaps he’d like to **retort**: “I like you too”?(BR1)  
Kanske skulle han vilja **svara**: “Jag tycker om er också”?
- (69) — Då halshugger man oss, **svarade** han buttert.(KOB1)  
“If we did, they’d chop our heads off,” he **rejoined** sullenly.

Actually, there are a few rather infrequent verbal communication verbs with a specialized meaning that can serve as alternatives to *svara* in Swedish such as *genmäla* in (70) och *replikera* in (71).

- (70) Kronprinsen måste skyddas, hade Rantzau då kyligt **genmält** eftersom han inte fann att detta var ägnat för skämt.(MPC:POE2)  
“The Crown Prince must be Protected,” Rantzau **retorted** coldly, since he didn’t find it a suitable topic for jest.
- (71) “Det säger du varje år”, **replikerade** Birger.(MPC:KÖ)  
“You say that every year,” **replied** Birger.

### 6.3. Swedish *svara* and its derived forms

Interestingly, Swedish *svara* is etymologically related to *answer*. According to OED, *answer* has developed from Old English *swērian* ‘to affirm, swear’ in combination with *ant-* ‘against’ and the original meaning was a solemn affirmation made to rebut a charge. In present-day Swedish, there is an unlauded form *svära* derived from *svara*. Like its English cognate, *svära* ‘swear’ can mean both ‘to curse, use bad language’ and ‘take an oath’. The degree to which *answer* and *svara* still correspond semantically in present-day Swedish can be observed in Table 18, which shows the translations of *svara* in various uses.

**Table 18:** Translations of the Swedish verb *svara*

Meaning of <i>svara</i>		English translations						
<b>Verbal communication</b>		N						
prior utterance implicit		241	answer	68	reply	86	say	63
prior utterance explicit	<i>svara på</i>	21	answer	15	reply	1	say	1
<b>Trigger: Phone signal</b>		18	answer	14				
<b>Non-verbal communication</b>		4	answer	1	respond	2		
<b>Correspondence</b>	<i>svara mot</i>	9	correspond	2	match			1
<b>Responsibility</b>	<i>svara för</i>	21	answer for	1	be responsible for			8
<b>Proportion/Whole</b>	<i>svara för</i>	31	account for	24	be responsible for			2
<b>Achievement</b>	<i>svara för</i>	2	achieve	1	prove	1		
<b>TOTAL (all uses)</b>	<i>svara</i>	347	answer	99				

In the majority of cases, *svara* is used as a verbal communication verb with an implicit Trigger. (Note that “implicit” indicates that the Trigger is not included in the argument structure of *svara*. It may be explicit in the previous discourse). The most interesting result is that *reply* and in particular *say* are used as translations besides *answer* to such a great extent. Swedish *säga* is used only a few times as translation of *answer* and *reply* as mentioned above. The use of *reply* and *say* is conditioned by the use of a direct report as demonstrated in Table 19.

**Table 19:** Message of *svara* realized as a direct report

Trigger: Prior utterance implicit	Translations			
	answer	reply	say	
Total	241	68	86	63
Direct report		25	62	56
No message		36	15	0

The use of *reply* reaches a high frequency only in fiction and this appears to be related to the frequent use of dialog and direct report in that register. The use of *say* has a parallel in the use of *säga* as a frequent translation of *tell* in translations from English into Swedish and in a significant underrepresentation of *tell* in English texts translated from Swedish. (*Säga* appears to be translated with *say* in contexts where *tell* could have been used. See Viberg 2016.) Another noteworthy feature is that *answer* is preferred when there is no explicit message (e.g. *Peter answered. / Peter didn't answer.*) *Answer* is also the preferred translation when there is

an explicit Trigger in Swedish (see the second line from the top in Table 18). As mentioned, *på* ‘on’ is required as a marker after *svara*, whereas the Trigger is realized as direct object in English. *Reply* is more marked and requires a preposition: *He didn’t reply to the question*. Another case where *answer* is the preferred translation is when the Trigger is a phone signal. Closely related is the use of *svara* when it refers to other types of Non-Verbal communication. In one of the four examples of this type, *answer* is used as a translation: *han svarade med ett litet flin:(AL1)*, translated: *he answered with a little grin*. *Respond* appears as a translation of two more such examples, e.g.: *Jag svarade med en gest.(BL1)* *I responded with a similar gesture*.

The meanings of *svara* discussed so far have all be concerned with (symbolic) Communication. *Svara* also has a number of uses where it refers to other types of meanings. In these uses it is characteristically combined with a specific preposition as indicated in Table 18. A further option is to use one of the derived forms of *svara*. The major translations of the derived forms, which are shown in Table 20, give an idea of their basic meanings.

It is often possible to alternate between a certain derived form and one of the combinations of *svara* with a preposition. The derived forms have a tendency to be somewhat more formal and/or have a more abstract meaning. The first alternation of this type has a grammatical function. As mentioned, the Trigger cannot appear as the direct object of *svara* but must be marked with the preposition *på* ‘on’ as in (72).

- (72) Men du *svarade* inte *på* frågan. (JG1)  
But you didn’t *answer* the question.

**Table 20:** Translations of the Swedish verb *svara* and its derived forms

	<i>Promotion to direct object</i>		<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Correspondence</i>	<i>Defense</i>
<i>Swedish verbs</i>	<i>svara</i>	<i>besvara</i>	<i>ansvara för</i>	<i>motsvara</i>	<i>försvara</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	347	18	12	55	32
<i>Translations:</i>					
answer	99	11			
reply	88				
say	64				
account for	24				
defend	0				23
be responsible	11		11		
correspond	2			25	
OTHER	59	7	1	30	9

The Trigger can be promoted to object by substituting the prefix *be-* for the preposition *på*: *Du besvarade inte frågan* ‘You didn’t answer the question’. Unlike *svara på*, the prefixed form *besvara* can be passivized (see 73). Such forms are found in particular in Non-Fiction. The most frequent translation of *besvara* is *answer*, which also takes the Trigger as a direct object that can be passivized.

- (73) högar av brev skall *besvaras* och många besök förberedas.(GAPG1)  
piles of letters need to *be answered* and many calls must be prepared.

In Swedish, the verb *försvara* (*sig*) ‘defend (oneself)’, which consists of *svara* and the unstressed prefix *för-* can be used both as a verbal communication verb and with reference to physical or military defense. Example (74) conceptually is closely related to the response frame. The accusation serves as a trigger for the verbal defense.

- (74) I natt i drömmen kort samtal med Ruth B. Hon tycktes anklagande: jag **försvarar** mig häftigt.(PE1)  
At night in the dream short talk with Ruth B. She appears to accuse me: I **defend** myself violently.

The message can even be realized as a direct report as in (75), where the general communication verb *say* is used as a translation.

- (75) — Men om dom står på vinden, är det ju ingen som använder sakerna, **försvarade sig** pojken.(MR1)  
“But if they’re in the loft, no one uses the things,” the boy had **said in his defence**.

The message can also be realized as an indirect report, which expresses a justification (see 76). A special construction is used: *försvara* (*sig*) *med att*-S. (*med* is an instrumental preposition).

- (76) Berra **försvarade oss med att** det kunde ju hända att Janne mådde pyton, så han kunde behöva hjälp rätt vad det var.(PP1) [defended us with that-S]  
Bert **claimed we were doing the right thing** cos for all we knew Johnny wasn’t feeling too good, and he might need a bit of help all of a sudden.

In (77), *försvara* appears in a context where it refers to physical defense.

- (77) Väine blev mer och mer irriterad när Johan duckade utan att **försvara sig**.(KE1)  
Väine grew more and more annoyed when Johan ducked without **defending himself**.

As a verbal communication verb, *correspond* and its Swedish cognate *korrespondera* can refer to an exchange of letters: *Peter corresponded with Maria – Peter korresponderade med Maria*. In this use, *correspond* refers to an activity and is constructed like a speech activity verb (cf. *Peter conversed with Maria*, see Viberg 2016, Section 4). There is no example of this use in the ESPC corpus, but only abstract examples which have a meaning that is closely tied to the correspondence schema: two entities have parts or characteristics that are related to one another or fulfill complementary roles (like Speaker and Addressee in the Communication frame. In example (78), “sparks” and “lightning” are related in this way. Note that a different preposition (*to*) is used when *correspond* is used with this meaning.

- (78) The sparks **correspond to** lightning — also present on the ancient Earth and on modern Jupiter.(CSA1)  
Gnistorna **motsvarar** blixtar — som också fanns i den urtida jordatmosfären och finns på dagens Jupiter.

The correspondence schema plays an important role in Rudzka Ostryń’s (1995) analysis of the verbs of answering. The centrality of this schema is supported by the fact that the major translation of the English verb *correspond* is the derived form of *svara*, namely *motsvara* as in (79). The derived form alternates with the combination of verb + preposition: *svara mot* (*mot* ‘towards, against’). Compare examples (79) and (80).

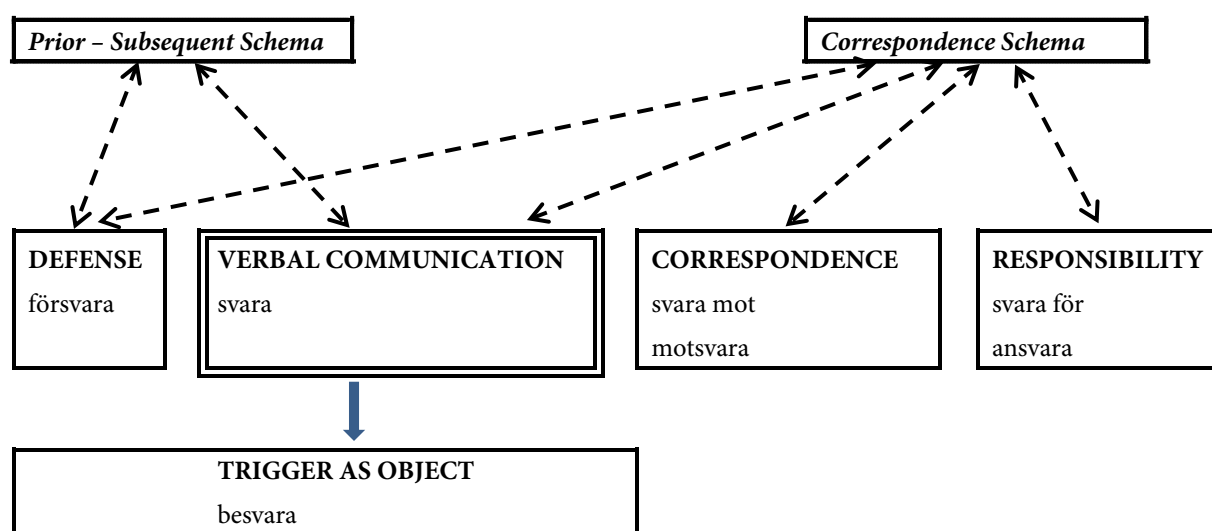
- (79) Uttaget av virke **motsvarar** 79% av tillväxten på brukad skogsmark.(ASSI1)  
Timber extraction **corresponds to** 79% of growth on cultivated land.

- (80) Detta förutsätter, att samhället genom beskattning av inkomster och förmögenheter kan omfördela resurser i den omfattning som *svarar mot* dessa sociala behov.(SOC1)  
This presupposes an ability on the part of society, through the taxation of incomes and wealth, to re-allocate resources to the extent *corresponding to* these social needs.

When the correspondence is exact in some respect, the verb *överensstämna* can be used in Swedish as in (81).

- (81) The wounds to the wrists *correspond* precisely *with* the Stanley knife blade discovered on the bathroom floor,(MW1)  
Såren på handlederna *överensstämmer* exakt *med* gipskniven som påträffades på badrumsgolvet,

Figure 2 shows how *svara* and its derivatives are related conceptually via the Prior-Subsequent and Correspondence schemas.



**Figure 2:** The relationships between the major meanings of the verb stem *svara* ‘answer’ and conceptual schemas

In its most prototypical use, *svara* is related to a question which must be prior to the answer. In addition, there must also be a correspondence at a more detailed level between the information asked for and the information given (in the ideal case). The frame element Trigger, which plays a prominent role in the Response frame in FrameNet, also must be prior and in addition must correspond in crucial ways to the response. If the last condition is not fulfilled, the prior element could be of a more general type, for example any type of Cause. As an answer to an attack (or an accusation), a defense depends both on the attack being prior to the defense and on a correspondence between this specific type of trigger (‘hostility’) and the specific type of answer. Correspondence, on the other hand, is a static relationship, and is not related to the Prior-Subsequent schema. The same applies to Responsibility, as will be demonstrated shortly. The arrows showing the connections are bidirectional. When they go from the schema, they indicate an instantiation of the schema. The opposite direction indicates abstraction. The connection between *svara* and *besvara* (Trigger as Object) is symbolized with a solid arrow which indicates a morphological relation (prefixation).

When *svara* refers to Responsibility, there is an alternation between *svara för* lit. ‘answer for’ (see 82) and *ansvara för* (see 83) (cf. the noun *ansvar* ‘responsibility’ and the adjective

*ansvarig* ‘responsible’). Different domains of responsibility are related to (correspond to) various responsible parties. This is particularly clear in (83). Thus, the Correspondence schema is relevant also for Responsibility, but the relation is completely static, so the Prior-Subsequent schema is not relevant. The major English translation is *be responsible for*. In addition, *be in charge of* is used in one example.

- (82) Arbetsgivare och arbetstagare **svarar** gemensamt **för** att skyddsombud får erforderlig utbildning. Lag (1991: 677).(ARBM1)  
Employer and employees **are** jointly **responsible for** safety delegates being given the requisite training.
- (83) Hans Quiding **ansvarade för** vissa delar, Viking Göransson **för** andra och Nils Einar Eriksson **för** den enorma festplatsen med hela restaurangen.(CE1)  
Hans Quiding **was responsible for** some parts, Viking Göransson **for** others and Nils Einar Eriksson **for** the enormous festival square and the entire restaurant.

*Svara för*, but not *ansvara*, has another meaning, where the verb refers to amounts that form part of a larger sum (the WHOLE). The relationship between part and whole might be regarded as an instantiation of the correspondence schema. (This is not completely obvious and would deserve a deeper analysis, but that falls outside the scope of this paper on verbal communication). (84) is based on an actual example in the ESPC (word order has been normalized).

- |      |             |           |              |                    |                        |
|------|-------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| (84) |             |           | PART: amount |                    | WHOLE: sum             |
|      | Steamers    | accounted | <b>for</b>   | 33 million kronor  | <b>of</b> this sum     |
|      | Ångfartygen | svarade   | <b>för</b>   | 33 miljoner kronor | <b>av</b> detta belopp |

*Be responsible for* is used as a translation even of this meaning of *svara för* (see 85).

- (85) A small group of people on long-term sick leave are **responsible**  
[**for** a very large proportion]PART  
[**of** the total number of days of sick leave]WHOLE  
En liten grupp av långtidsfrånvarande **svarar för** en mycket stor del **av** antalet sjukfrånvarodagar.(ARB1)

## 7. Conclusions

The verb *ask* is interesting because it has a number of different meanings, each of which appear in specific types of constructions that serve as cues for the interpretation, when the verb appears in different contexts. The two basic Swedish correspondents *fråga* and *be* not only correspond to the two different semantic prototypes of *ask* (*ask<sub>Question</sub>* and *ask<sub>Request</sub>*) but also divide up the constructions in which they appear in a parallel way. The verbs of *answering* in English are interesting primarily because they form a network together with other English verbs conceptually organized around the Response frame. In Swedish, large parts of this network are expressed lexically in words that are morphologically derived from the verb *svara* ‘answer’. Thus the conceptual network is reflected to a great extent in the morphological relatedness between word forms.

The analysis in this paper is presented from a theoretical perspective but also represents a good point of departure for teaching the basic contrasts. Most of the senses described in this paper and often also a number of less frequent ones can be found in a good comprehensive dictionary. However, for reasons of space and due to the alphabetical organization, which is convenient for looking up words, words and their senses are listed without explaining how they contrast with semantically related words and how various uses are related to the general structure of the language.

This study of the verbs *ask* and *answer* together with the parallel study of the verbs *say*, *tell*, *speak* and *talk* compared with their Swedish correspondents (Viberg 2016) show how the basic semantic contrasts within the field Verbal Communication are expressed across the two languages departing from shared basic elements in the conceptual structure such as Speaker, Linguistic action, Addressee, Message and Topic. When these elements are realized syntactically the Speaker is canonically realized as Subject, whereas the Addressee variously is realized as an Object or a PP depending on the verb, for example *I answered her*, *I talked to her*. In Swedish, the Addressee is also realized as an object after *svara* (*Jag svarade henne*) but as a PP with the preposition *med* 'with' after *prata* 'talk'; *Jag pratade med henne*. (*With* is possible also in English but represents a marked alternative). The verb *tell* also takes the Addressee as an object: *I told her the result*, whereas the Addressee is marked with the preposition *för* 'for' when it appears after the Swedish correspondent *berätta*: *Jag berättade resultatet för henne*. The Topic is usually marked with *about* in English and *om* in Swedish: *I talked about her* / *Jag pratade om henne*. These are only some simple examples, but it is possible to present, for example, some of the more complex realizations of the Message in similar ways.

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The Bank of Swedish: <http://spraakbanken.gu.se/eng>

The English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC): <http://www.sol.lu.se/engelska/corpus/corpus/esp.html>