

It's embarrassing how little Swedish you need to know

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Because everybody here speaks English. Perfectly. Sometimes they'll speak English to me even before I say anything. (My comparative silence probably gives me away as a non-native.) Other times they'll notice that I'm speaking with a bad accent and switch to English. Some humor me by speaking Swedish until I finally break down and ask (in English), "I'm sorry, could you say that again?" because they're speaking Swedish too fast for me to keep up. When dealing with non-Swedes, the default language is English. Not because people from English-speaking countries are so prevalent, but because English is everybody's *second* language. If a German and a Russian meet, they'll talk in English. In other language news: On the flight out of Seattle, a variety of newspapers were available and I grabbed what turned out to be a Norwegian paper by mistake. But it turns out that if you know Swedish, you can read a Norwegian paper anyway; it's no big deal. Yesterday, one of Jonathan's dormmates listened patiently as I said "sju" ("seven") over and over again until I could get the sj-sound right. It went like this: Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "Sju." Peter: "Nope." Me: "I give up."

Peter: "That's okay."

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