The fact that mutual intelligibility of Danish-Swedish spoken language is asymmetric can be explained by various linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. The present paper focuses on the role of orthography. Both orthographies are rather conservative, but Danish pronunciation has changed more rapidly during the last century than Swedish pronunciation has. As a consequence of the conservative spelling, Danes can be expected to have more support from the orthography of their mother tongue than Swedes when listening to the neighbouring language. This hypothesis is tested, first by measuring phonetic distances between the spoken languages’ adaption and taking into consideration the help that the listeners can receive from the orthography when listening to the neighbouring language. The distance corrected for orthography turns out to be smaller for the Danes than for the Swedes. This indicates that Danes have more potential help from the orthography than Swedes do. Second, the distance is correlated with the results of a word intelligibility experiment among Danes. The distance corrected for the influence of orthography shows higher correlations with the intelligibility scores than pure phonetic distances. From this, the authors conclude that Danish listeners indeed seem to make use of the additional information that the orthography can provide.

**Keywords:** Swedish, Danish, mutual intelligibility, orthography, linguistic distance, Levenshtein.