

TYPES OF SOCIETY AND LANGUAGE CHANGE IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

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1. Is it possible to make an experiment?

Linguistic change can be viewed from many perspectives. For some time now we have been reminding one another that language is spoken by human beings, and that a human being has intentions and reflects on his own behaviour. This has led to interesting discussions and new insights. However, I want us also to remind ourselves that we as individuals live in a society. In the following discussion I have deliberately chosen to ignore very many essential aspects of language change at the individual level. My intention is to develop some ideas concerning the macro level and see whether it is possible to indicate conditions at that level for language change. And I admit that my choice of perspective has been prompted by my interest in historical sociolinguistics. Over the last generation a lot of research projects have been completed on the Nordic languages, and the time has come for us to try to exploit the results from that database more systematically. (I regret my superficial knowledge of Finnish, so I am not able to refer to the Finnish language community here.)

A very brief introduction to my approach might be as follows: if the prime minister of Sweden asked us linguists to formulate a policy whereby he – as the prime minister – could make the dialect of Skåne into the future dialect of all Swedes, I think we would be able to give him some advice. More seriously: sociolinguists have some insights that could be used both to manipulate and foresee future language changes. On the other hand, I am glad this is not going to happen. The only point of this mere speculation is that it can help us to develop notions and categories that can be theoretically useful.

2. From micro to macro

Language is practised by individuals. We therefore want to understand language changes at their most basic level, in terms of either a change in the individual's speech habits or a deviation in the individual's acquired grammar as compared to the grammar of his/her surroundings. When trying to understand the individual's motivation for picking up a deviant linguistic feature, most of us want to relate it to the individual's type of network or social identity, i.e. to understand it within a socio-psychological framework. The type of network is in its turn con-

ditioned by the local community. Well-established insights have told us, for example, that rural communities are characterised by tighter networks than urban societies, the way of life in a working class encourages tighter networks than life in a middle class, and so on. The prevailing network structures are thus conditioned by the economic basis of the local community. And in turn the economic basis is to a large extent conditioned by the more general or national economy, for instance through industrial policy.

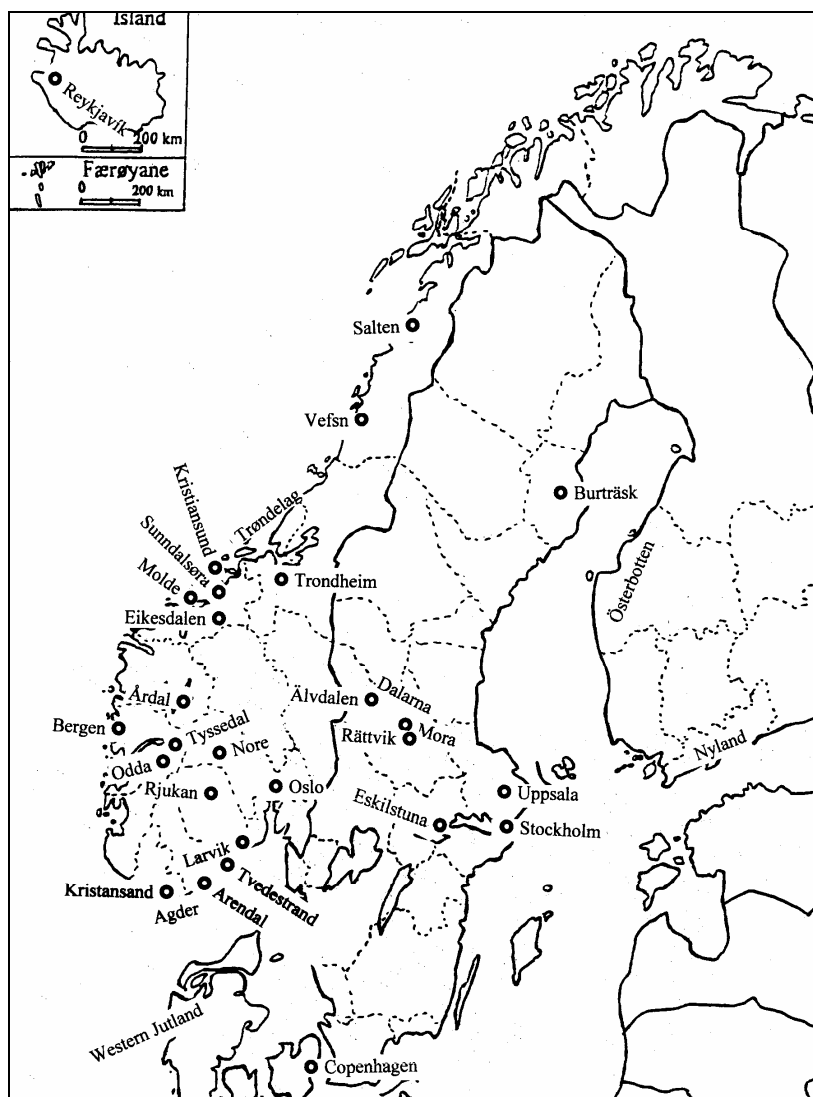


Figure 1. Map of Scandinavia with places discussed in the article

This is a simple and familiar kind of reasoning in situations where we want to look at connections between an individual's motivation at the micro level and general policy at the macro level. I do not want to develop the details any further here, only to mention that this macro to micro approach is often applied within sociolinguistics.

In one of his studies Peter Trudgill set himself the sociolinguistic goal of sorting out “some of the social determinants of linguistic patterning” (Trudgill 1997: 350). Several other linguists have worked within the same paradigm, where the aim is to connect language typology and types of society (e.g. Andersen 1988, Grace 1990). To my mind these objectives are often too ambitious, and there is a risk of atomistic usage of linguistic features. A more modest goal would be to sort out factors that seem to favour changes in general and have an influence on the speed and direction of changes.

Making sociolinguistic comparisons is extremely complicated because of the many relevant perspectives and the intriguing social and socio-psychological variables. However, there is a need to do comparative research. We now possess an ample number of sociolinguistic studies, and the value of each of them will increase if we are able to contrast them systematically in order to evolve more precise insights. By using the socially rather similar Nordic countries as a database, we may be able to reduce some of the many disturbing differences that often exist between various countries and thus look upon our countries as a convenient linguistic laboratory.

What are the macro factors? I am going to comment on

size
economic basis
migration
urbanization

These are sociological and clearly societal factors. However, I am also going to include

ideology

which some want to call a cultural factor.

There are additional factors referred to in the sociolinguistic literature, for instance dominance, endocentricity etc. However, I have found them too vague to be used here.

3. The making of a new dialect (melting-pots)

There have been several bold linguistic experiments in the Nordic countries, and some of the Norwegian ones have been sociolinguistically described. During the 20th century the Norwegian government sited industrial enterprises at various places around the country, and thousands of people moved to previously small and out-of-the-way places. These melting-pots represent an extreme with respect to type of community and type of society, since the first incomers often speak

different dialects and there is no obvious focussed norm. These societies have therefore to establish new dialect norms.

I shall first present some results from Sunndalsøra (Jenstad 1983) in the county of Møre og Romsdal, a new industrial centre dating from the economic recovery period after the Second World War, when cheap Norwegian hydroelectric power was to be used in aluminium production. The population increased from 530 in 1946 to 5114 in 1970 (Jenstad 1983: 33). During the most intensive immigration period, 1954–59, the incomers' regional background was as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Origin of incomers in Sunndalsøra, Møre og Romsdal, Norway

Møre og Romsdal	76.3%
Trøndelag	15.9%
Southern and Western Norway	3.5%
Eastern Norway	2.5%
Northern Norway	0.8%
Abroad	0.8%

(Jenstad 1983: 41.)

The dominant incomer group evidently comes from the same county as Sunndalsøra, namely Møre og Romsdal. The only group of significance beyond this has its origin in the neighbouring two counties of Trøndelag.

We must be aware that the Sunndalen rural dialect, and therefore the starting point for the new dialect as well, has quite a few very local peculiarities and a rather complex morphology. The dialect data for the following description was collected in 1981 by Tor-Erik Jenstad. I am not going to present or discuss the details of the variables, but you will find a linguistic description of the 12 variables in the note.¹

A first glance at the results of some 30 years of dialect mixing reveals a considerable restructuring of the dialect, and in (2) I have tried to explore the possible origins of the new elements – geographically and linguistically. These are the shaded slots with plusses. (A question mark indicates that the dialect source in question is ambiguous regarding the current feature.)

The product of this linguistic melting-pot follows the majority of incomers. As the dominant group is from the same region, all new features correspond to features in some neighbouring dialect. A characteristic is that the two urban dialects from the region (Molde and Kristiansund) so often seem to function as a model. Unfortunately, I have no statistics that can tell us how many of the incomers originated from these urban societies and how many from the rural parts of Møre og Romsdal. Therefore, the urban incomers may have had a greater impact than their proportion of the population might indicate. At the same time,

most of the changes represent a grammatical simplification compared to the original rural dialect. This tendency of simplification seems to be general in sociolinguistic studies on language mixtures, and it is theoretically easy to understand how it is so (cf. Trudgill 1986: 83ff., Labov 2001: 422ff.). (The reader should keep in mind that the variables in (2) represent changes from the traditional Sunndalen rural dialect, and, consequently, there are no shaded slots in the column 'Sunndalen rural dialect', and few in 'Rural area of Nordmøre' either.)

Table 2. Sources for the new dialect forms in the dialect of Sunndalsøra

Variable	Sunn- dalen rural dialect	Rural area of Nordmøre	Sunn- dalsøra	Molde (city)	Kristan- sund (city)	Trond- heim	Gramm. simpli- fication	Standard lang. (bm)
1. Diphthong vs. monophthong	ɛi	ɛ : œ	æi : øy	+	+	+		+
2. Suffix in weak fem., the sg. indef. form	-e, -u, - -	-e, -u, - -	-e	+	-	-	+	+
3. Morphophono- logical palatalization of velars	palat.	palat.	no palat.	+	+	+	+	+
4. Palat. of <i>nd</i> , <i>ns</i> , <i>nt</i>	no palat.	palat.	palat.	-	+	+	-	-
5. Suffix in the masc. pl. nouns indef. form	e & a	e & a	-a	+	-	-	+	-
6. Suffix in the strong fem. pl. nouns indef. form	e & a	e & a	-e & - ij/-aj	-	-	-	+	-
7. Suffix in the pl. of weak fem. nouns def. form	-ɔj, -j	-ɔj, -j	-a & - aj	+	+	+	+	-
8. Suffix in the neuter sg. of adjectives	-e	-e	-ent	+	+	-	+	+
9. Stem vowel in the past and ptc. 2. class irreg. verbs	au - ɔ	au - ø	øy - ø	+	+	?	-	-
10. Suffix in reflexive form of verbs	-st	-st	-s	+	?	+	-	+
11. Pers. pron. 1. pers. sg. Nom.	i	e	e	-	-	-	-	-
12. Pers. pron. 1. pers. pl. Nom.	oss	vi	vi	+	+	+	-	+

We shall observe that standard features have not in any case in (2) been an influence unless a nearby dialect corresponds to them! The situation where a new community is formed with new social opportunities does not seem to be exploited to pick up the most prestigious linguistic features. On the other hand, neighbouring (urban) dialects have caused imprints without support from the written standard. The 16% of incomers from Trøndelag do not seem to have had any independent impact.

In order to make this laboratory experiment more exciting, and in order to generalise our insights from these Norwegian data, I will be so bold as to present – on the basis of the above data – a formula for the strength of the factors influencing the product of the melting pot. This can be seen in (3) (where > means ‘has more influence than’).

Table 3. Strength of influencing factors in 'melting pots'

*high proportion of incomers > (regional centres > rural) regional area
> grammatical simplification > written code/standard > prestige*

We will now proceed to the most interesting linguistic experiment in Norway, this time from Hardanger in Western Norway; more specifically the two industrial centres of Odda and Tyssedal in the county of Hordaland. Descriptions of linguistic changes in these communities have been previously presented in the sociolinguistic literature (Sandve 1976, Sandøy 1983: 250f., Sandøy 2000, Kerswill 2002), but I will allow myself to repeat some of the data very briefly.

The “geographical compositions” of the incomers were different in the two societies, and at about 1920 the proportions of the mixtures were as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Proportions of incomers

Tyssedal:

Origin from Tyssedal	3.4%
From Hardanger and Western Norway	29.9%
From Bergen	4.8%
From Central Eastern Norway	33.8%
From other places	28.0%

Odda:

Origin from Odda	13.8%
From Hardanger and Western Norway	62.9%
From Bergen	8.6%
From Central Eastern Norway	6.0%
From other places	8.7%

Here we see that the proportions of people originating from the local area are very different in the two centres, and the number of incomers from Eastern Norway differ greatly between the two centres.

Table 5. Sources for the new dialect forms in Odda and Tyssedal

TYSSSEDAL:

Variables	Tyssedal examples	South-western Norway	North-western Norway	Bergen	Central Eastern Norway	Gramm. simplification	Written code Bokmål	Glosses
2. Plural masc. ar-class	bilar > biler	-	-	+	+	+	+	'cars'
3. Sing. fem. strong class def.	solæ > sola	-	+	-	+	-	(+)	'the sun'
4. Plural fem. ar-class	kjerringar > kjerringer	-	-	-	+	+	+	'married women'/ 'old women'
5. Sing. fem. weak class def. form	viso > visa	-	+	-	+	+	(+)	'the song'
6. Plural neuter def.	åræ, eplæ > åra, epla	-	+	-	+	-	(+)	'the years, the apples'
7. Plural neuter weak class indef.	eple > epler	-	-	+	+	+	+	'apples'
8. First pers. pronoun subj. form	eg>jæi	-	-	-	+	-	+	'I'
9. Pers. pron. obj. form	meg,deg, seg>mæi, dæi, sæi	-	-	-	+	-	+	'me, you, -self (3. pers.)'
10. negation	ikkje>ikke	-	-	-	+	-	+	'not'

ODDA:

Variables	Odda examples	South-western Norway	North-western Norway	Bergen	Central Eastern Norway	Gramm simplification	Written code Bokmål	Glosses
1. Plural masc. er-class.	gjester > gjestar	-	-	-	-	+	-	'guests'
3. Sing. fem. strong cl. def.	solæ > sola	-	+	-	+	-	(+)	'the sun'
6. Plural neuter def.	åræ, eplæ > åræne, eplene	-	-	+	-	+	+	'the years, the apples'
7. Plural neuter weak class indef.	eple > epler	-	-	+	+	+	+	'apples'

In Odda the noun inflexion has retained most of the West Norwegian characteristics, which 76.7% of the immigrants brought with them.

In Tyssedal the incomers from Eastern Norway made up a higher proportion (33.8% as contrasted to 6.0% in Odda), and they have left their mark on the dialect alloy. The merger of all feminine definite forms in the singular into the *a*-suffix may be both a West and an East Norwegian imprint. All plural suffixes correspond to the East Norwegian ones; however, the neuter system in variable 6 is in accordance with the traditional Northwestern Norwegian system as well. And, furthermore, the dialect of Tyssedal even introduced the pronouns *jæi*, *mæi* etc. (= 'I, me' etc.) from East Norwegian.

In order to supplement this grammatical approach, we shall examine the textual effect of the changes². If we try to quantify the Odda changes and imagine that we have a text of 1000 words in the classic Odda dialect of 1900, we find that the changes would be instantiated or exemplified 5.4 times in that text. That is not much. The corresponding figure for Tyssedal is 39.1 instantiations.

Once more we see that only high proportions of incomers have an impact on the new dialect. In the case of both Odda and Tyssedal the regional centre of Bergen does not have any obvious influence, and our formula in (3) should perhaps be modified. Therefore I have put the parentheses in the formula in (3). But we need more research to clarify this point.

There are more examples like this. In 1921 Peter Skautrup published a study on a Western Jutland town where, according to his description, 40 percent of the population were incomers from Western Jutland, i.e. the same region, and 20 percent of the population came from the rest of Denmark. Thus the incomers totalled 60 percent of the whole population. The standard-speakers made up 9 percent of the incomers, i.e. 7.2 percent of the population, and their influence on

the language was seemingly zero (Pedersen 2003: 19). This result concerning low proportions of incomers, i.e. in this case 20 percent from outside the region, confirms the already mentioned formula. This report from 1921 does not present details to the same degree as those I have already referred to, so further comparison is impossible.

To follow up our experiment: these data tell us that we should be able to model or mould a new dialect by manipulation. The speakers of the Skåne dialect should make up at least 35% of the population in the new Swedish centres if we want to ensure its influence, and at least 70% in order to dominate the product.

4. Preserving a language

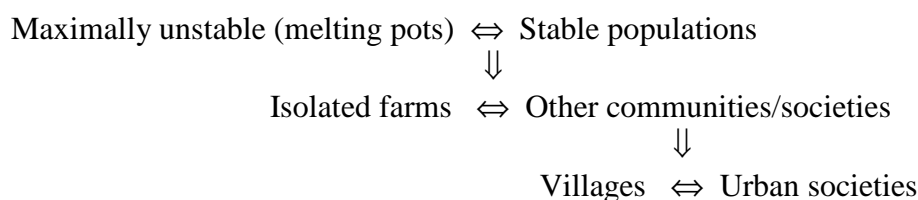
Our next experiment goes as follows: let us suppose that the politicians want to preserve the Swedish language as it is today. One suggestion for them could be to disperse the population in units of 10 people with the greatest possible distance between the units. This could be called "the Old Icelandic method".

The conservatism of the Icelandic language is well known, and the commonest explanations for the stability are the geographic isolation and the general literacy dating from the Middle Ages and the annual assemblies, the *Alþing*. I am very sceptical of these factors having such an immense impact.

James Milroy (1992: 196) has suggested that 'strong ties' are the explanation. Even though Milroy's theory on network and ties is more acceptable when speaking about sociolinguistic factors, I do not find his description well attested for Old Icelandic society. My alternative approach is to study the demographic history. According to available historical information, the settlers on Iceland in the 9th century dispersed throughout the country and mixed early. At about the year 1100 the population had grown to 40,000–50,000, a size that remained constant for hundreds of years (Magnús Stefánsson in print), in fact until the 19th century. Nor did any urbanization appear until the 19th century.

I admit that Icelandic linguistic conservatism is partly a result of the country's relative isolation, as the North Atlantic Ocean hampered daily contact with foreigners and language innovations on a broad basis. Nevertheless, my suggestion is that the most important factor explaining the extraordinary conservatism is the general pattern of settlement in Iceland, where people were scattered around the big island on isolated single small farms with 7–10 individuals on average (Stefánsson in print, 4). Only a few clusters of more than one farm can be found. This structure of settlement resulted in children's language acquisition being "controlled" by parents and grandparents. There were few opportunities for younger generations to form a language community with its own deviant language norms. Iceland therefore had few social forces that could give rise to language differences. (Sandøy 2001: 127f.)

I have started this discussion with the extreme sociolinguistic cases. My intention is to let the lines of reasoning follow pairs of contrasts, as demonstrated below:



The Icelandic case of isolated farms represents one type of society with a stable population. The next step is to find characteristics of other relatively stable communities. Here I find it interesting to differentiate between villages and urban societies.

5. Village communities

An interesting contrast to Iceland is the Faroe Islands, also seemingly isolated in the North Atlantic. Nordic settlement of the Faroes took place perhaps around 800 A.D., only a few decades before Iceland was discovered and settled. Very little is known about the Faroese society before about 1300, and by then 45 villages had been established. These have remained the same up to modern times, and the population is estimated to have been relatively stable at 5,000–7,000 from the Middle Ages up to about the year 1800, i.e. about 125 inhabitants in each village on average.

The Faroese settlement, therefore, was of a different character than the one in Iceland, and two aspects are of relevance for language change; the fewer but much larger communities represented better conditions for linguistic innovations among young people, as the grown-ups had not the same control over language acquisition among children and adolescents. We can easily imagine that some subcultures or social groups could arise in those villages, where innovations could have their first chance to spread to more than one person. Moreover, village structures seem to favour a stronger identity or adherence to the local community; they constitute a local cultural unit of a different type than the family units in Iceland. They permit several social networks while at the same time everyone in the village knows one another and has some kind of interaction. Thus, village life favours in-group mechanisms. Therefore, both tensions between the villages and stronger loyalties to one's own village culture can be natural, and as a consequence such societies can provide better sociolinguistic conditions for dialectal divergence. (Sandøy 2001: 127f.)

This is exactly the case in the Faroes. Within short distances there are many salient language differences and clear-cut dialect borders, and therefore the con-

trast to the neighbouring Iceland is a very interesting study in historical sociolinguistics.

The demographic characteristics of the Faroe Islands can be compared to the village structure that prevailed in Denmark until the 19th century. Inge Lise Pedersen (1991) has given an interesting historical overview of some macro factors in the dialect development. The Danish pattern of settlement was, over the centuries, characterised by villages and little communication between the villages because of the particular Danish adscription. Local allegiance was very high. The effect was surprisingly many dialect differences within Denmark's small area. According to Pedersen this changed radically during the 19th century because of new legislation and drastic transformations in settlement patterns.

Furthermore, it is interesting to extend this comparison to e.g. the area of Dalarna in Sweden. This area is – or was – also characterised by relatively small communities, which exhibit a large variety of dialect differences between the various villages. A pattern of the villages in Dalarna was that people married within the village or the parish. There were few exceptions, according to John Helgander's study (1994). Thus tight networks emerged in the villages, and consequently the ties to neighbouring societies were few, and over a longer period this could encourage the dialect split. (Helgander 1994: 71.)

The point is, then, that the pattern of settlement is an important condition for the merging of dialect differences, and that the village type, which means a population of at least some minimum and of some maximum, favours the creation and spreading of new language features. And equally important is perhaps the fact that the villagers stick to their characteristic features – also the conservative ones – they need them in order to be different. Conclusion: Villages can therefore encourage language change in order to establish differences, but it is difficult to foresee or manipulate them. Also for these communities a network model is very useful.

6. Urban societies

Let us extend our study to the larger, i.e. urban, society types where the inhabitants have no chance to know all members of the society. Such societies are constituted by several overlapping communities. They make good conditions for developing social class distinctions and for the differences between the generations and can pave the way for the spread of innovations by giving them the function of social markers. People often have at one and the same time several social and language loyalties; and it is perhaps easier to review one's loyalty to the local community. Urban societies are thus much more complex and diffuse, and many more parameters are relevant to understanding language as a cultural feature.

In accordance with such lines of reasoning it is not obvious that we should expect radical things to happen in urban societies. Unfortunately, we have as yet too little knowledge. As for the pattern of historical changes, we can still only guess on the basis of the synchronic variation. However, because of the many patterns of variation in towns and cities the usual apparent time studies are very unreliable if we want to draw conclusions as to the speed of language change in urban societies.

A new thesis has, however, appeared that may give us a clearer picture. Eva Sundgren's thesis from 2002 on Eskilstuna in Sweden is in fact a longitudinal study, as she can refer to Bengt Nordberg's pioneering sociolinguistic research there in 1967 (Nordberg 1972). Sundgren revisited Eskilstuna in 1996, i.e., 29 years later. Her main impression is that very little had happened in this period, embracing almost a third of a century. From this study, therefore, we can see that urban language can remain considerably stable for quite a long period.

It is therefore worthwhile to scrutinise some of the social characteristics of Eskilstuna: in 1967 it was a flourishing industrial city of about 66,000 inhabitants, and its population had, at the time when Bengt Nordberg was making his tape-recordings, doubled in 30 years. During the 1970s industrial crises lead to a recession that has not been totally compensated for by the official policy of siting some central government agencies in Eskilstuna. The effect is therefore a small reduction in the population. The unemployment rate today is higher in Eskilstuna than in the rest of Sweden, and the average level of education is lower. However, according to Sundgren's data, people in Eskilstuna are well integrated into the local community and report social satisfaction. (Sundgren 2002: 70ff.)

In 1967 the Eskilstuna dialect was characterised by typical urban variation with a classic social hierarchy. From the general assumptions of tendencies in language changes in Sweden, Sundgren expected a considerable progress of standard forms, which in this case means forms corresponding to the written Swedish code (Sundgren 2002: 245). She is therefore surprised that this has not happened. "The average usage of standard forms has not increased much," she says (p. 247). Only one variable shows the expected trend, which is variable no. 2 in (6), the definite form in the plural of neuter nouns (*husena* > *husen* 'the houses'), which has increased from 38% to 61%. The general conclusion is that the 1967 variation has been stabilised as a variation, though with some interesting minor changes in the patterns (p. 247).

Table 6. Dialect changes in Eskilstuna 1967 – 1994.
Percentage of 'new' variants

Variables	1967	1996
1. Neut. Sg. Def.	56	60
2. Neut. Pl. Def.	38	61
3. 1.Decl.Pl. Indef.	7	8
4. Supine 1.&4.conj.	26	25
5. Supine 2.conj.	88	93
6. Past 1. conj.	16	15
7. <i>Blev/vart</i> (past)	48	49

One very salient variable, the past form of the auxiliary *bliva*, which can be both *blev* and *vart*, demonstrates an increase in the usage of the prestige variant *blev* from 48% to 49%, which means only one percent in one generation!

If we were to quantify the Eskilstuna changes and construct an average text of 1000 words in the hypothetically classic Eskilstuna dialect, the changes referred to as changes in 1967 in table (6) would have an effect 11.8 times in 1000 words.) The 1996 changes would be instantiated 13.1 times, and the additional changes from 1967 until 1996 correspond to 1.3. That is a very low change rate.

All quantifications of linguistic differences and changes depend totally on the method of operationalization. I do not intend to discuss my method here, only to demonstrate one advantage of quantification, namely the possibility of a more precise comparison. Table 7 shows a comparison of the Eskilstuna changes and the changes in the Norwegian melting-pots mentioned above.

Table 7. Language change rate

	Traditional	Intermediate	Modern
Odde	1906: 0		1975: 5.4
Tyssedal	1900: 0		1975: 39.1
Eskilstuna	?: 0	1967: 11.8	1996: 13.1

This surprise at the slow speed with which language changes – at least at some times and in some places – has struck several researchers in several countries (cf. Sundgren 2002: 269, who refers to Paunonen on possessive constructions in Finnish). These are very interesting results. To understand situations of non-change is very important – in order to understand the changes elsewhere! (Sandøy 1983.)

The Eskilstuna experiment has shown us that the economic transition from industry to civil service does not seem to enhance the usage of standard forms despite the fact that the changes in economic life have provided opportunities for social mobility. Interestingly, the informants who have increased their social status have not, on average, increased their percentage of standard forms, except

for variable no. 2. This study should therefore remind some of us that we tend to exaggerate economic structure as a direct factor in language change.

The stabilisation of the dialect may, on the other hand, be an effect of the stabilisation in the population, as there is no longer any influx of Swedish incomers to Eskilstuna. Sundgren emphasises that the fact that people feel happy in Eskilstuna is an important factor. This is an interesting cultural or perhaps ideological factor that we must bear in mind. Another interesting result from Eskilstuna is that the social differences in language usage have been reduced since 1967, so the average effect implies both that social group 1 has reduced its usage of standard forms and social groups 2 and 3 have increased their percentage (Sundgren 2002: 312).

Sundgren's very interesting report triggers new questions: is this representative of the change rate in urban dialects? Today we know too little. However, we may now be inaugurating a new era, as we have the chance to revisit societies studied in the first period of Nordic sociolinguistics about 1970. Such studies will be of great importance, because there is a general assumption that language is changing very rapidly in our times and in a specific direction – towards a prestigious or standard variant.

In 1972 one of our early Norwegian sociolinguists and dialectologists, Anders Steinsholt, said that it was at that time unfortunately too late to describe the traditional Larvik dialect, since many of the local features had become vulgar, and “the standard language will undoubtedly increase its influencing force” (Lindbekk 2000: 127). We have no exact statistical studies from Larvik in Steinsholt's time, but two recent and independent sociolinguistic reports from that town (Dybvik 1994 & Lindbekk 2000) should convince us that the traditional grammatical forms in this urban dialect still dominate, and there is no indication of their disappearance. Young people use traditional forms even more frequently than elderly people do. Only single and very local lexical items tend to sink into oblivion.

Once more I want to comment on language isolation and contact as factors explaining language conservatism or change. For me at least, it is a paradox that modern urban communities remain that stable compared to the changes in previous centuries. I have calculated the historical changes over several centuries as well, and the language change rate was very high in pre-Modern times! (Sandøy 2000: 349-351.) The concepts of isolation and contact are too vague, and not the central ones.

The innovative force is perhaps not an effect of the number of people. It is more likely to be an effect of the social situation of language mixing. If the latter is the case, the innovative forces appear most distinctly in the establishing epoch when a town or centre is a melting-pot. This goes well with the theory of focusing, too. As the referred studies concern stable communities, we now need a

quantitative and longitudinal study of an unstable city in order to establish a contrast to Eskilstuna and the other stable urban communities.

8. The influencing of incomers

Migration seems to be an important factor. My examples of dialect mixing and melting pots concerned new societies where we might imagine and expect that the inhabitants needed some time to develop a focussed local culture. How will it be when a traditional culture is exposed to a smaller proportion of incomers? Such communities too are melting pots to some extent. Here we should expect a traditional focussed culture to be reflected in the individual member's awareness of the local language norms, and a small proportion of incomers not to disturb the awareness of these norms. The strong focussing admits of some fuzziness. We have as yet, to my knowledge, no exact data to test the size of the *proportion of incomers* that can affect norms in a traditional community. However, there are some interesting studies describing *how* incomers influence traditional societies.

Here one factor seems to be vital: the proportion of mixed marriages. This factor has been thoroughly analysed by John Helgander (1996: 117 tab. 20) in his reports on the dialect of Dalarna in Sweden. He has given a precise description of dialect disintegration. In this area we see a difference between the rural communities in Älvdalen and the urban centres of Mora and Rättvik where, typically, dialect retention is higher in the rural than the urban communities when compared to the percentage of incoming or mixed parents. Helgander's figures are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Mixed marriages and dialect speakers in Dalarna, Sweden

	1. Families with mixed parents	Percentage of children (of these families) using dialect	2. Families with both parents speaking dialect	Percentage of children (of these families) using dialect	3. Families with both parents not speaking dialect	
Mora	36.6%	6.8	20.5%	12.1	42.9%	100%
Rättvik	37.1%	7.7	24.3%	17.6	38.6%	100%
Älvdalen	44.6%	20	37.6%	55.3	17.8%	100%

(Helgander 1996:117)

These data tell us that in families where the parents speak different dialects, i.e. only one speaks the *local* dialect, there is a strong tendency for the children to speak standard Swedish. However, even though the proportion of mixed parents is highest in the area of Älvdalen, i.e. 44.6%, the children of these families tend more often to use the local dialect than children of mixed parents do in Mora and Rättvik. The exact figures are 20% of the children in such families in Älv-

dalen, and 7.7% and 6.8% in Rättvik and Mora. In the two urban areas, Mora and Rättvik, a high proportion of children even of parents speaking the local dialect have chosen to acquire standard Swedish. Compare with column 2. In Älvdalen less than half of them ($100\% - 55.3\% = 44.7\%$) do so. 55.3% stick to the Dalarna dialect. Even within each of these three municipalities there is a corresponding pattern between the central area and the periphery.

Thus the urban centres seem to stimulate the transition to a standard Swedish, and families with mixed or incoming parents increase this tendency further more. On the whole, the prospect, even in the most conservative area, Älvdalen, is that a regional standard Swedish variety will take over as the medium of communication among the children in the near future. Data from Eastern Norway seem to support these findings in Dalarna (e.g. Papazian 1997).

9. The levelling processes

So far we have discussed or tried out hard societal factors such as size, economic basis, migration and urbanization, and we have looked for the linguistic consequences. Let us now use the opposite approach: describing the linguistic changes and looking for the societal factors.

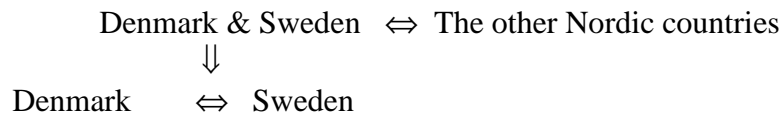
There are observable levelling processes within all our language communities. Interestingly this process manifests itself differently in the various countries, and therefore searching for contrasts may help us understand more about the conditions for language change. The first contrast should be drawn between Denmark and Sweden on the one hand and the other Nordic countries on the other.

Earlier in this talk I have mentioned the surprisingly far-reaching split into many dialects in Denmark in previous times. Today this language situation is totally different. Dialectologists now consider that the traditional dialects are on the verge of extinction and characterize the changes as “an extreme linguistic process” (cf. Kristensen 2003, Pedersen 2003). The number of dialect-speaking Danes was 80-90% early in the 19th century (Pedersen 2003: 10), whereas it is estimated at “a couple of percent” today (Kristensen 2003: 29).

Inge Lise Pedersen assumes this radical change is the result of “an early modernization of agriculture and the dominance of the capital” (Pedersen 2003: 9). Extensive agrarian reforms were implemented around 1800, and traditional dialects started their decline from that period. During the 19th century Danish agriculture was transformed into industrial production with a large export market, and the reforms caused greater regional and social mobility. Farmers were now to a large extent involved in fields of activity beyond the villages where they lived (Pedersen 2003: 11–12).

It seems as if the nation of Denmark has become one single region today. Previously the high-status dialect of Copenhagen had an influence all over the country, now even the low-status dialect of the capital exerts an impact. This

means that the social differentiation of Copenhagen becomes relevant all over the “region” or nation of Denmark.



The standardization process is not totally the same in Sweden. Mats Thelander (1979), in an extensive thesis on the dialect of Burträsk in Norrland (northern Sweden), has elaborated statistical methods and the use of implicational scales to study the cohesion of variants of different variables in the dialect. He concludes that there are three language norms, or spoken varieties, in Burträsk, which he calls a “traditional local dialect”, the “Swedish standard” and a “regional standard”. This last one is a mixture of the two others with quantitatively stable proportions of both. We notice here that regional traits still have a position.

Claes-Christian Elert (1994) claims that local dialects are not generally used much in Sweden today; the regional standards dominate. Three varieties – as described by Thelander – are certainly found in areas where local dialects still persist and diverge a great deal from the standard. The regional standards are characterized solely by phonological and phonetic differences, and on the basis of such criteria Elert concludes that there are seven regional varieties of Swedish, including Finland-Swedish.

Typical of the Danish and Swedish situations is the role of a standard language. The most precise and fruitful definition of a spoken standard is that a listener shall not be able to localize the speaker of the standard. From the discussion among Danish linguists I have understood that there have been discernable local variants of the national code until recently, but thanks to the modern total dominance of the Copenhagen varieties, these varieties cannot be localized any longer, and Danish has eventually developed a spoken standard language by definition.

Strictly speaking, Sweden has no such spoken standard language. On the other hand, the Swedish written standard code has been the prevailing model for the changes in each region. However, a total amalgamation into a single linguistic region still seems far off. In this respect the Danish case is unique, and I am not able to suggest any explanations for this uniqueness and the difference of the two countries other than the relative size of the capital and the short distances within the country. It is difficult to identify any other societal differences between these two countries, Denmark and Sweden.

The contrasting pairs in this part of the discussion are these:

Denmark & Sweden \Leftrightarrow the other Nordic countries



Eastern Norway & Nyland \Leftrightarrow The other regions of Norway & Ostrobothnia

We have the Danish language situation as an extreme on the one side and the Norwegian and Finland-Swedish (especially Ostrobothnia) situations on the other, where a general shift to a national standard is far from being the case. Even though the urbanisation process started earlier in Denmark, the urbanization process is presumably very similar in all Scandinavian countries, so this factor cannot represent a satisfactory "explanation" alone. Our laboratory contains a contrast that demands a more precise explanation, and we have perhaps to resort to Pedersen's last suggestion by adding: "strong standard ideology".

Pedersen (2003: 24f.) assumes that this shift to the standard language is connected to the social changes after 1950, first and foremost the increased urbanization. The urbanization process comprises both the centralisation of the population and the diffusion of urban behavioural pattern into the countryside. The consequence is that children feel more inclined to shift to the standard than to stick to the dialect that was already associated with rural life and the private sphere (p. 25). The general ideology was already telling people that only the standard language was "applicable to institutional settings" (p. 25).

Dialectal levelling within Norwegian is solely regionally based, either as a compromise between the traditional dialects within the region or by having an urban centre in the region as its model. Urban dialects play an important part in regional levelling. The regional capital, rather than the national capital, seems to be the prevailing language model. Rural informants, therefore, tend to accommodate their language to the dialect of the nearest city even when speaking to people from Oslo.

Thus the levelling process will be different in Norway. Therefore, 'regional dialect' is a more appropriate term than 'regional standard' for these varieties. However, the patterns of regional levelling are still unclear. In some areas or municipalities it is difficult to observe obvious changes over the last generations, whereas in other communities that experience an urbanization process and high proportions of incomers, the changes can be radical. The levelling process is most obvious in South-Eastern Norway, which seems to be under intense influence from the capital, Oslo – which here has the function of being the regional capital – although it is possible to discern sub-regions with particular characteristics.

I have mentioned three new Norwegian industrial centres that formed new communities and new dialects, all of them sited outside Eastern Norway. There

is one, perhaps two, examples of new industrial centres in the East Norwegian region, as well. Unfortunately, we have not any exact data about the dialect changes there, but according to my observations the modern Rjukan dialect, for instance, seems to be fully adapted to the so-called standard eastern Norwegian dialect, which is based mainly on the dialect of Oslo, the regional capital. Thus, the formula I gave for the Sunndalsøra, Odda and Tyssedal (3) cases does not fully apply to Eastern Norway today. I interpret this as an effect of the stronger pressure from the centre in the direction of a homogeneous dialect in this area.

I doubt that this dominance of the regional centre is equally visible in other regions. Nor is there any established regional dialect outside Eastern Norway, only trends in the dialect changes. A general tendency is that geographically widespread regional features oust local ones. (This applies to phonological and grammatical features more than to lexical ones, as new words seem to spread rapidly on a national basis.)

An example of regional levelling is apocope in the county of Nordland. Traditionally there were different patterns in the local dialects, from apocope in quite a lot of morphological categories, as in Salten, to apocope in only a few categories, as in Vefsn. The new emerging regional dialect is a compromise in that apocope is restricted to the verbs; however, this is now implemented in dialects with previously almost no apocope. (Sandøy 2000.) Confer the shaded lines of Table 9:

Table 9. Apocope (marked as _) in Nordland, Norway

<i>Traditional dialect in Salten</i>		<i>Levelled dialect of Nordland</i>	<i>Traditional dialect in Vefsn</i>	<i>Glosses</i>
<i>å levv_ (inf.)</i>	>	<i>levv_</i>	<i>lev(a)</i>	'to live'
<i>levv_ (pres.)</i>	>	<i>levv_</i>	<i>lev(e)</i>	'lives'
<i>levd_ (past)</i>	>	<i>levd_</i>	<i>levd(e)</i>	'lived'
<i>^vør_ (ptc.)</i>	>	<i>vør_</i>	<i>våre</i>	'been'
<i>ein han_ (weak masc.)</i>		<i>ein hane</i>	<i>ein hana</i>	'a cock'
<i>ei kån_ (weak fem.)</i> woman'		<i>ei kånne</i> <	<i>ei kånä</i>	'a
<i>eit stykkj_ (weak neut.)</i>		<i>eit stykkje</i> <	<i>eit stykkje</i>	'a piece'
<i>da gras_ (neut. def. sg.)</i> grass'		<i>de grase</i> <	<i>de grase</i>	'the
<i>fleir kån_ (weak fem. pl.)</i> women'		<i>fleire kånne</i>	<i>fleire kånår</i>	'more

In the county of Aust-Agder a recent innovation seems to support both the strong regional tendencies and the fact that changes can move in the direction to the centre and not from. Some years before the Second World War youngsters in the small town of Tvedestrand started using the subject form of the second personal pronoun singular *du* 'you' in non-subject positions as in: "E ser på du" 'I

look at you' (Broberg 2001). Tvedestrand was at that time a small village with a stable population of about a thousand inhabitants (*Norsak allkunnebok*). Now this syntactic innovation has spread to most of the county of Aust-Agder. This is an interesting example where a new characteristic of a smaller town diffuses into the dialect of a larger town, here Arendal, which is the centre of this county.

A very interesting parallel to the Norwegian situation is the Finland-Swedish one. The situations in the two countries are similar both in the way that most people use their local dialects in everyday life, and in the way regional levelling takes place. According to Ann-Marie Ivars (1996) there is a tendency in Nyland – which is the southernmost region – to level out the local dialects into a regional dialect. Whether this is a regional dialect of the Norwegian type, i.e. a regional compromise, or a regional standard of the Swedish type, is not fully clear to me. Perhaps the latter interpretation is the best one, as Ivars in her description from 1996 adds that middle-aged and young educated people tend to use more regional forms, whereas the elderly stick to the Finland-Swedish standard. This seems, therefore, to be connected to the bidialectal situation. Interestingly, Ivars has interpreted the expansion of regional forms as being a linguistic consequence of social levelling after the Second World War – which corresponds to Ulla-Brit Kotsinas' interpretation of the parallel development in Sweden-Swedish. (Kotsinas 1988.)

Ostrobotnia (= Österbotten) – the northernmost Finland-Swedish region – can with some advantage be compared with Norway outside Central Eastern Norway. The dialect split is more noticeable in Ostrobotnia than in Nyland, and the inhabitants retain their traditional dialects more than in the south. In recent descriptions (Ivars 1996&2003 & Wiik 2002) it is claimed that this region during the two last decades has had a kind of dialect renaissance, which in particular has affected the situational distribution of the national oral standard and the local dialects. Dialects are now used more widely – to some extent even in writing in Ostrobotnia.

As to the levelling processes of local dialects, Ostrobotnia is very different, too, and I want to quote from Ivars: "The socio-psychological preconditions for levelled regional varieties do not exist as yet." (My translation from Ivars 2003: 62.) However, both she and Barbro Wiik (2002: 362f.) admit that there may be tendencies of levelling so that the present 30 dialects in the future can be best described as being 10 different dialects, in accordance with new administrative areas. There are examples in Ostrobotnia and Norway of innovations spreading within regions, a fact that enforces the impression that these dialects are not on the verge of extinction (Ivars 2003: 72f.).

These clear differences in the levelling processes are interesting. It may support an idea suggested by James Milroy that linguists, being academic people and members of a cultural elite, prefer to interpret forces and processes within

hierarchical models, and therefore find it self-evident that urban societies and specific social classes prevail. Tendencies deviating from this pattern are difficult to fit into the intellectuals' picture of the world. In any case, these variations and contrasts in the pattern of levelling should be studied in greater detail, as the hierarchy models gain some support in Denmark, Sweden and Eastern Norway, but not elsewhere in Norway and in Ostrobothnia.

It is assumed that the Norwegian situation can be explained by the cultural struggle, which is also reflected in the struggle between the two written codes Bokmål and Nynorsk. This struggle has its social and economic basis in regional conflicts and several anti-authoritarian or anti-central movements. This particular aspect of political and cultural history has forged strong regional identities. Officially, in accordance with a law of 1878 Norwegian teachers have to accept the pupils' use of the local dialect; that is, the teachers have to adapt their speech to the pupils'. Even though this has not been practised in all urban schools, there has been a considerable acceptance of dialects in Norwegian schools – in contrast to the situation in Denmark and Sweden. (Cf. Kristiansen 2002.)

However, this explanation is too ad hoc, since it does not apply to the Ostrobothnia case, which is linguistically similar to the Norwegian one. Finland-Swedish even has a written language with its normative centre outside Finland, whereas Norwegian, especially Nynorsk, has its centre in the Norwegian dialects. Bidialectalism is common in Finland-Swedish, whereas it in Norway plays an insignificant role. I have no answer to how Norway and Ostrobothnia can be both so similar and so different. These pairs of contrasts have therefore forced us to formulate more precise questions.

10. Conclusion

My intention has not been to provide all the answers about language changes, rather to use the Nordic communities as a laboratory. The picture is quite complex and the Nordic countries provide several sets of contrasts. What I have learnt about language change is a) that the size of communities seems to play a role, b) so does migration, as well, and c) that the Nordic countries still demonstrate variation that is hard to understand satisfactorily on the basis of such statistical and demographic data alone. Therefore, we certainly have to resort to an ideology factor, as well. The discipline of cultural analysis underlines that the symbolic power of culture, which is in fact an ideological factor, plays an increasingly important role in modern social life and 'lifestyles', which is demonstrated e.g. in the fact that cultural symbols play an essential role in modern industry and marketing (Frønes 1999). One of our challenges is to integrate these insights in sociolinguistic research.

Despite similarities in social structure in our countries, and despite contact and so on, language is used differently as a cultural artefact, and the language

awareness seems to differ considerably in our Nordic countries. Even the central notions of e.g. 'language', 'standard language' and 'dialect' are conceived very differently in the various communities. This conclusion naturally then triggers a question about how we can explain or understand the societal basis of ideologies or language awareness.

Notes

- 1 Differences between the rural Sunndalen dialect and the new dialect of Sunndalsøra:
 1. the two monophthongs /ɛ/ and /œ/ change to the diphthongs /ei/ and /øy/
 2. weak fem. sg. ends in -e in the sg. indefinite form, which is a merger of /-e/, /-u/ and /-_/ in the rural part of Sunndalen
 3. morphophonological palatalization of velars disappears (both in verbs and nouns)
 4. palatalization of *nd*, *ns*, *nt* is introduced
 5. the previous two plural suffixes in the masculine merge in -a
 6. the previous two plural suffixes in the feminine merge in -e
 7. the previous two plural suffixes -oɲ/ɲ merge in -aɲ in weak feminine
 8. the adj. suffix in the neuter: -e > -ent (p. 80)
 9. øy and ø are used as stem vowels in the past and the ptc. in 2. class of irregular verbs (< *a#* – *ɔ* in the rural dialect)
 10. Reflexive suffix in verbs: -st > -s
 11. 1. pers. pron. sg. *i* > *e*
 12. 1. pers. pron. pl. *as* > *vi*

(Jenstad 1983.)

2 This quantification model is based on data from *Nynorsk frekvensordbok* (Bergen 1989), a dictionary of word and form frequencies.

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