

Faroese (Färingisch, Färöisch, Färisch)

1. The language and its speakers

The Faroese language is a branch of the North Germanic languages and diverged from Old Norse (the Old West-Nordic language) in the Middle Ages, thus being most closely related to Modern Icelandic and Modern Norwegian. People from Western Norway began to settle in the Faroe Islands early in the 9th century, after the discovery of the islands around 700. The islands had intense contact with Norway during the Middle Ages and were considered a part of the Norwegian kingdom until 1814, when they were formally transferred to Denmark. Bergen in Western Norway was the centre for trading activities with the Faroe Islands until 1620, when the authorities of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom decided to move the commercial centre to Copenhagen and to subordinate the Faroese church to the Bishop of Zealand.

The intimate contact with Norway during this period made the language development run rather parallel to the language development in Western Norway. The same is also true of the Icelandic language, though to a smaller extent. Faroese still has many more archaic features than Norwegian, and Modern Faroese can in many respects be considered as an intermediate stage between Icelandic and Norwegian.

The first manuscript written on the Faroe Islands and still preserved is *Seyðabrævið* ("the sheep-letter", i.e. a law amendment on sheep breeding) from 1298, however, this was written by a Norwegian staying on the islands (Sørli 1965: 9 f.). A revised version of *Seyðabrævið* was written around 1310 by a Faroese clerk staying in Bergen (Sørli 1965: 73). This charter reveals linguistic features common for Norwegian and Faroese as opposed to Icelandic, such as the loss of initial *h* preceding *r* and *l* (e.g. in *hringr* > *ringr* "ring") and *hv* > *kv* (e.g. in *hvitr* > *kvitr* "white"), and features peculiar to only Faroese are the adverbial suffix *-laga* (< Old Norse *-liga* "ly"), the plural form *hini* (< Old Norse *hin* "the") and the form *bjár* in the genitive (< Old Norse *bóar* "farm") etc. (Sørli 1965: 9–11, 63–64).

There are some Faroese charters from the 15th century as well, however after the Reformation reached the Faroes in 1537, the Danish written language gained the upper hand in both Norway and the Faroes. This radical change in the language situation makes it reasonable to call the pre-reformation period Old Faroese and the post-reformation period New Faroese. Furthermore, Faroese word forms in Danish texts and linguistic structural reconstructions indicate that several sound changes were carried through in the language during the 15th and the 16th centuries, e.g. the great quantity shift and the structurally connected great Faroese vowel shift, which has made the language deviate considerably from both Norwegian and Icelandic phonologically. In the centuries after this period, even some morphological and syntactical changes

occurred which moved the language away from the Old Norse and Icelandic language type and more in the direction of the Modern Scandinavian type.

The starting point of a new epoch for the Faroese language situation can be set in the 1770s, when Jens Christian Svabo (1746–1824) returned from Copenhagen. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, he made systematic descriptions of the country and the community. Among other things he amassed a vast collection of medieval ballads (published in 1939) and a dictionary (published in 1966). Svabo recorded his texts in a kind of orthophonic script and had no vision of establishing a written code; on the contrary he argued that the Faroese people should give up their language, which he thought had become degenerate because of the dilution with Danish words. Because he did not expect that the people would agree to replace words in their language, he recommended that his people rather take up Danish. This solution would have the preferable consequence that all the king's subjects would speak the same language. The priest Johan Henrik Schrøter (1771–1851), on the other hand, was a pioneer of the revival of a Faroese written language, as in 1823 he published a translation of the Gospel According to St. Matthew into Faroese, more precisely into the dialect of the island Suðuroy. Another attempt was the edition of the medieval saga *Færingesaga*, published in parallel texts in Old Norse, Danish and Faroese. Schrøter had made the translation here, as well (Rafn 1832).

Publishing some folklore texts and ballads in 1846, the priest Venceslaus Ulricus Hammershaimb (1819–1909) proposed a new orthography for the Faroese language. The first grammatical description to be published was Hammershaimb's *Færøsk Sproglære* (1854), which was strongly influenced by the Icelandic philologist Jón Sigurðsson, and C. C. Rafn (1795–1864), a Danish professor of philology. This work was thus carried out under the influence of the contemporary Danish national romanticism as well as the Pan-Scandinavian movement. This Modern Faroese epoch did not cause any immediate radical change, since there was no political movement exploiting the new written code as a national symbol in the islands. After the Danish trade monopoly was dismantled in 1856, however, a new age of Faroese society was inaugurated, e.g. by the development of a Faroese fleet and a native bourgeoisie. A national movement was formally established at Christmas 1888. From there on the language question formed a very important part of the struggle for national independence. The Faroe Islands are still under Danish control and a part of the Danish Kingdom, but after the Home Rule Act of 1948 several administrative fields have been transferred to Faroese authorities and conditions, especially for the language, have constantly improved.

During the centuries from the Middle Ages until 1800 the population of the Faroes, and consequently the number of speakers of the Faroese language, was about 5,000. During the 19th century the population increased considerably and today's population is approximately 48,000 (Oct. 2003). In the last centuries there has been a small proportion of Danish-speaking inhabitants, mostly priests and civil servants, and during the 19th and the 20th centuries teachers and a part of the Tórshavn bourgeoisie were immigrants from Denmark. The presence of a local Danish-speaking group made many of the Faroese inhabitants become bilingual, and this situation increased Danish influence on the Faroese language. However, this group never made up such a proportion as to represent a threat to Faroese as the dominant language among ordinary people. Exact figures for the number of Danish-speaking Danes do not exist. Today it has become quite normal that immigrants, even Danes, start learning Faroese when they intend to settle in the islands. There is no other immigrant group of any significance using a foreign language in the Faroes, so this language community is in fact very homogeneous.

Quite a lot of Faroese live in Denmark. Previously this was typical of students and academic people. Nowadays a wider range of Faroese people work in Denmark for several years. Many of them marry Danes and settle there. The number of Faroese-speaking people in Denmark is assumed to be about 10,000 (Poulsen 1997: 179).

After World War II the Faroese community has, like other Western societies, taken part in the increasing growth of prosperity. In spite of the fact that contact with the outer world has become more intense, this small language community has found that its language has become more prevalent, whereas the question of independence has not yet found its solution. However, especially during the last three decades the Faroese written language has conquered domain after domain of public life. In the Home Rule Act of 1948 Faroese was accepted as a national language, but Danish too was guaranteed a role. It should be "learned well and thoroughly", says the Act. As Danish dominated all public and official life for a very long period, the Faroese society is in practice bilingual. In school Danish is taught as a subject from the third year.

2. State and basis of standard variety

In proportion to the small geographical area and the small population, the Faroese language has many differences and boundaries. Most differences are phonological, some concern morphology, and hardly any is syntactic. The clearest boundary is between the southern and the northern islands. One salient feature is, for instance, that the short *ó* has merged with the short *o* in the southern dialects, whereas the dialects in the Tórshavn area and northwards merge the same vowel with *ø*: *bók* "book" is pronounced with a long diphthong (e.g. [ɔʊ] or [əʊ]) everywhere, but *bókstavur* "letter" is pronounced [bɔʰkstavʊr] in the south and [bøʰkstavʊr] in the north. Most of the phonological dialect differences are very systematically distributed. As for morphology, there are some differences in the plural suffixes of some noun classes (e.g. *hestanar* "the horses" in the south and northeast vs. *hestanir* elsewhere in the nominative plural) and the southern dialects skip the verbal past suffix in the second personal singular when the pronoun precedes the verb (cf. *tú tók* "you took" opposed to *tókst tú*). A more frequent feature is the distribution of the suffix vowels *-u-* and *-i-*, which nowhere are in correspondence with Old Norse. They have merged to some extent everywhere, but according to different morphological patterns. A prevailing pattern in the north is to use the *-ur* in the singular of verbs and *-ir* in the plural of nouns (Weyhe 1996).

Some dialect differences can be demonstrated in this sentence:

Suðuroy:	vi:ɖ fɔa vɪndɪn ɔur bɔ:ʊn atʊn
Suður-Streymoy:	vi:t fɔa vɪndɪn ɔur bɔavʊn atʊn
Northeastern islands:	vi:ɖ fa vɪndɪn ɔur bɑ:vʊn atʊn
Vágar:	vi:t fɔuwa vɪndɪn ɔur bɔavʊn atʊn
Spelling:	<i>Vit fǫa vindin úr báðum ættum</i> "We will have the wind from both directions"

These dialect differences never cause difficulties of comprehension among the Faroese people; they function only as local markers. Faroese does not have an oral standard language, everybody uses his/her dialect in any situation. On the other hand Faroese is not mutually comprehensible with any of the neighbouring

languages. This is an experience common to both Faroemen and Icelanders. Therefore they tend to speak Danish or English together. Furthermore, Danes, Swedes and Norwegians do not understand Faroese, whereas Faroemen, on the other hand, are so much exposed to these Scandinavian languages that they normally understand them quite easily. Without this exposure they would certainly not understand them. This mutual incomprehensibility applies to the oral languages, and historically this is caused mainly by the many Faroese phonological peculiarities. The written language, in which these phonological features are suppressed, is more easily understandable by both Scandinavians and Icelanders, and it becomes clearer that Faroese is an intermediate language.

The orthography of the written code and the phonology of the spoken language make up a complex of reciprocal relations. Historically this is a consequence of the ideas of the national romanticism where the mediaeval language was looked upon as the language of the golden age and therefore the ideal one. V. U. Hammershaimb, the creator of the written language, followed very closely the old language in the codification of Modern Faroese orthography and morphology, despite many radical phonological changes in the language since mediaeval times. A result of this is that words in the written language retain a more constant lexical form than in the spoken language, as demonstrated e.g. in the case declension in the singular and the plural of "day": *dagur* – *dags* – *degi* – *dag* – *dagur* – *daga* – *dagum* – *dagur*, which in the spoken language is [de:ɹvur – daks – de:je – de:a – de:ar – de:a – dø:ɹvun – de:ar]. Moreover, the written language discriminates between word forms that have merged in the pronunciation, e.g. [ve:vur] which can be both *vevur* "loom, woven fabric", *vegur* "way, road", *veður* "weather". The written language retains the letter *ð* and the intervocalic *g*, whereas neither of these are represented in any of the Faroese dialects. This conservative writing system was mainly legitimised by the romantic ideas, although an important additional motivation was that it would give the language more dignity by virtue of the fact that words would be more easily recognizable from the neighbouring languages. Furthermore, with this orthography everybody could read the language with his/her dialectal pronunciation.

The Faroese orthographic system is complex first and foremost from the perspective of deducing written from oral forms (cf. [ve:vur] for the three words *veður*, *vegur* and *vevur*). The other way around the relation is a simple deduction (*veður*, *vegur*, *vevur* shall unambiguously be pronounced [ve:vur]). This causes quite a lot of problems in school, but these difficulties are equal for all, there is no privilege allotted to any particular dialect or sociolect. The written system is thus in fact a common denominator.

3. Grammatical structure and vocabulary

The phonological units in Faroese comprise eight monophthongs, six diphthongs and 20 consonants. This phonological system is rather archaic in the sense that it corresponds very precisely to the Old Norse system; however, the development of the various units is often radical. The great quantity shift has been correlated with a diphthongisation of many previously long vowels, but the pronunciation of diphthong vs. monophthong depends to some extent on the vowel quantity in today's language. When short, some vowel units merge, especially in certain consonantal surroundings. Some consonants have also undergone various developments, which make the realisation of them distributionally very sensitive (Sandøy 2004).

Faroese phonology can with advantage be described by several phonological rules, among which some deal with consonant insertion in hiatus positions. The output of insertion rules depends on both the preceding and following vowel, and these rules account for the many varying inflected forms of the same word, e.g. *vegur* – *vegir* – *vega* (“road, way” in the Nom. sg., Nom/Acc. pl. and Gen. pl.) pronounced [ve:vur – vejir – ve:a] where a [v], [j] and nothing respectively is inserted. As mentioned above, historical *ð* and postvocalic and intervocalic *g* have been dropped, and consequently this word (*vegur*) is treated as a word with hiatus. (Though, *ð* and *g* are often retained in morphologically related forms, cf. *týða* – *týðningur* [tudningur] “meaning”, *dagur* – *dags* [daks] “day”).

Voiced consonants are devoiced in front of an unvoiced consonant, e.g. *seint* [saiŋt] “late” in the neuter sg. *P*, *t*, *k* after a short vowel are preaspirated as in *hattur* [ha^htur] “hat”. *B*, *d*, *g* are pronounced unvoiced, and after a long vowel *p*, *t*, *k* lose their postaspiration in most of the dialects so that these two sets of stops merge in such positions: *fēpur* [fe:pur] “fever”.

Compared to the Old Norse language stage, Faroese verb morphology has been considerably simplified. It does not, for instance, include any subjunctive category. In the present and the past there is a singular-plural distinction, and singular is marked for person, first person generally with the suffix *i* in the present, and second person with *-t/-st* in the past of strong verbs (and *-rt* in the present of some strong verbs). Typical paradigms are these (a weak verb in the present and a strong verb in the past):

<i>eg kasti</i>	“I throw”	<i>eg fekk</i>	“I received”
<i>tú kastar</i>	“you throw”	<i>tú fekst</i>	“you received”
<i>hann kastar</i>	“he throws”	<i>hann fekk</i>	“he received”
<i>viit/iit/teir kasta</i>	“we/you/they throw”	<i>viit/iit/teir fingu</i>	“we/you/they received”

On the other hand, the case system of nouns, adjectives and pronouns has been retained in a quite complex form with an ample set of paradigms. In nouns the paradigms refer to declension classes in the indefinite and to both declension class and gender in the definite form. As in the other Nordic languages, the definite form is represented by a suffix added to the suffix of the indefinite form, and the system can be illustrated by the following example (where a hyphen marks the morphological boundaries: stem-indefinite suffix-definite suffix):

Nom. Sg.	<i>dag-ur-in</i>
Gen. Sg.	<i>dag-s-ins</i>
Dative Sg.	<i>deg-i-num</i>
Acc. Sg.	<i>dag--in > dagin</i>
Nom. Pl.	<i>dag-ar-nir</i>
Gen. Pl.	<i>dag-a-na</i>
Dative Pl.	<i>dag-um-num > dagunum</i>
Acc. Pl.	<i>dag-ar-nar</i>

The genitive does in fact not function as a syntactic case in spoken language. On the other hand, the above forms in the indefinite form the first part of compound nouns: *dagsljós* “daylight”, *vegagerð* “making of roads”. This case tends to be used more extensively in more formal style, especially in names, and it

represents an instance of grammatical “revival”. Even nouns modifying a head word by expressing the owner are in Modern Faroese transformed to a prepositional phrase, cf. *bilurin hjá ritstjóranum* “the editor’s car”; however, when the moderator is a proper name the genitive case is an alternative: *Janusa bilur – bilurin hjá Janusi* “Janus’ car”.

Prepositions and verbs previously governing the genitive govern the accusative in Modern Faroese. Noun phrases in Faroese are thus characterised by the three cases nominative, accusative and dative, where the cases are dependent on the function in the sentence, governing properties of the head verb, the adjective or the preposition. Agreement is also consistently marked in noun phrases, e.g. *eg haldi tann* (Acc.) *nýggja* (Acc.) *bilinn* (Acc.) *vera ta* (Acc.) *størstu* (Acc.) *frygdina* (Acc.) *i løtuni* “I consider the new car to be the greatest pleasure at the moment”.

Impersonal sentences (with no nominal subject) are not such a frequent characteristic of Modern Faroese as they were of Old Norse (and still are of Icelandic), though some verbs do not normally take a subject in the nominative: *Mær* (Dat.) *dámar bilin* “I like the car”. Otherwise, Modern Faroese has established *tað*-insertion following the Scandinavian pattern: *Í gjár voru tað ongar konur sum møttu á arbeiði* “Yesterday there were no women who came to work”.

It is a feature of the Faroese language and community that there are few rules of formality. However, a still prevailing pattern is that younger people address older people by using the form *tygum* “you” (*tygara* in the genitive). Otherwise it is hard to discern any social hierarchy reflected in language usage or attitudes towards various varieties of the language.

4. Script and orthography

The archaic orthographic system introduced by Hammershaimb in 1846 was at an early date experienced by its users as a difficult system. In 1889 the linguist Jakob Jakobsen (1864–1918), a co-worker of Hammershaimb during the last decades of the 19th century, proposed an alternative orthographic system based primarily on an orthophonic principle. The two alternatives can be illustrated by the following example sentences:

Hammershaimb 1846: *Mykines hevur eftir manna søgn verið flotoyggj. Ein maður i Sørvági, sum javnliga róði út, raddist illa størhvalirnar úti á havi.*

Jakobsen 1889: *Mikjenes hevur ettir manna søgn vere flotåiggj. Ain mävur y Sørváje, sum javnlia róe út, raddist idla størkvälenar úte á háve.*

“According to legend, Mykines used to be a floating island. A man in Sørvágur, who often rowed out there, was very afraid of the big whales out at sea.”

Jakobsen’s proposal triggered a harsh debate and an unpleasant disagreement among pioneers of the new language, and in 1895 a committee composed of representatives from both sides concluded its work by introducing a slightly revised version of Hammershaimb’s system (Larsen 1991). This compromise was never widely accepted (although Jakob Jakobsen himself followed it), but politically it put an end to the

controversies. What has been practised loyally since then is Hammershaimb's original orthography with a single change: the merger of the obsolete distinction between *ø* and *ö*.

In 1954 a parliamentary committee introduced a small reform by changing some minor details, of which one was that one of the neuter noun classes should have the facultative endings *-ir* and *-i* in the plural: *eplir* and *epli* "apples" (Hansen et al. 2003). The first ending corresponds to the ending in spoken language. Otherwise there have not been any changes in the Faroese orthographic system. Because of the constant problems with learning and mastering the written language, a conference was held in 1996 on the question whether amendments should be introduced, and a moderate proposal was suggested on removing the "silent" *ð* of endings. This has not been followed up, so for the time being there seems to be a general acceptance of the orthography, and in spite of common errors in print, especially in newspapers, and in spite of the codification of alternative written variants of some words, Faroese spelling practice is fairly homogeneous.

In 1995 a reedited version of a Danish-Faroese dictionary was published (Petersen 1995) where more loanwords were accepted than in previous dictionaries. However, despite its more liberal attitude as to vocabulary, this dictionary was more consistent with respect to orthographic purism. This was reflected especially in modern loanwords from English, e.g. *tineyggiari* for *teenager*. This unconventional solution, however, provoked a harsh language debate, which in fact demonstrated the tensions in the Faroese language community and even in language practice. Many modern loanwords from both English and French are written in accordance with the Danish orthography, which very often applies the same spelling as in the source language, e.g. *jaloux*, *nation* and *design*. However, there are already quite a lot of exceptions with a more adapted spelling form, e.g. *trolari*, *sikkla* "trawler, bicycle", and the Danish-Faroese dictionary (Petersen 1995) developed the adaptation principle further by e.g. *sjalu* and *desain* ("jealous, design"). The only exception were words of the *-tíón*-type, which kept the Danish/French spelling *-ti-*, whereas other dictionaries has used the adapted form *-sjón* in these words, and both spellings are used in papers and literature.

5. Cultural foundations of standard varieties

From the time when the Hanseatic League began to dominate the trade of the Nordic countries, especially from the 14th century onwards, quite a large number of Low German loanwords intruded into the language. As long as Bergen remained the commercial centre, foreign influence on Faroese was certainly passed on by Norwegian. However, from 1620 almost all contacts with the Faroes were from Copenhagen, and a royal trade monopoly was administered from there until 1854. The dominance of the Danish language made a strong impact on the Faroese vocabulary during the next centuries.

The Faroe Islands were administered as a Danish county during the modernisation period until 1948, which made the society dependent on Denmark on all areas. This dependency has continued even after the Home Rule Act of 1948, despite the fact that the Faroes have taken charge of several fields of administration. Young people normally go to Denmark to get their higher education, many go there to work for some time, and there are many intermarriages. Quite a lot of Danes stay on the islands for some time, for instance as teachers. Danish books and magazines dominate as reading matter, and films always have Danish subtitles. Therefore, in daily life the Faroese people have become used to being bilingual.

W. B. Lockwood (1950: 106) has even asserted that all words used in Danish can be used in Faroese. Because of the good and general knowledge of Danish among the Faroese people, there is an obscure borderline between the two languages with respect to vocabulary in spoken language. However, the assertion referred to is an exaggeration, as people normally have a common understanding of which loanwords are socially accepted words of the language community and which are “quotation words” used in code-switching only. Moreover, the accepted loanwords are, on the whole, the same in all dialects. The Low German loanwords are, of course, systematically adapted to Faroese phonology and morphology, cf. *behagar* “pleases” pronounced [beħe:ar], and [beħe:aje] in the first person sg. present tense.

Because of the language purism described in Section 6, there is a considerable gap between the spoken and the written language as far as vocabulary is concerned. Everybody tends to avoid many of the loanwords in writing, but most people do not find it stylistically comfortable to use all puristic neologisms when speaking. The Faroese written language was not founded on a cultural or social elite. In the latter half of the 19th century the social elite in Tórshavn was dominated by Danish-speaking people, so this would have been historically impossible. On the other hand, a very important factor for the feeling and consciousness of a tradition was the great quantity of medieval ballads in a popular and vital oral tradition. Over and over again since Hammershaimb’s time, normative decisions about word, grammar and expressions have referred to quotations from the old ballads, and this is still the case. This cultural feature has been accepted as an authoritative basis. The ballads are, of course, genuine in form because of their formal requirements of rhyme and rhythm. Folktales and legends were recorded and published during the last decades of the 19th century as a part of the (delayed) Faroese national romanticism, and were influenced by the language ideology, not vice versa.

On the other hand, for the extension of the language literature published in Faroese was very important. The collection of ballads, folk tales and legends (*Færøsk Anthology* [Hammershaimb 1886–1891] and *Færøske Folkesagn og Æventyr* [Jakobsen 1898–1901]) were the basic Faroese books in most Faroese homes. The first novel to be written in the new language was *Bábilstornið* “The tower of Babel” by Regin í Lið in 1907. Some journals were established in order to publish both fiction and factual prose, e.g. *Foringatiðindi* (1890–1906) and *Varðin* (1921–). No daily newspaper in Faroese appeared until after the Second World War, when *14. september* was founded. The dominating newspaper on the islands, *Dimmalætting* (established in 1878), was written mainly in Danish until the late 1970s.

For cultural life the translation of the Bible to Faroese was, of course, important. The first edition of the whole Bible was not published in Faroese until 1948, translated by Victor Danielsen. (The official Faroese Bible appeared in 1961, translated by Jákup Dahl and K. O. Viderø into a more elevated style.) The literary production has been constantly increasing, and nowadays about 100 titles including textbooks and translated books are published every year. (In 2002, the number was 137 books in Faroese, including 58 translations.) There are several journals and one popular scientific magazine. However, there is a typical lack of production in the mother tongue within popular culture, despite some music CDs having been released during the last two decades.

Still Danish books, magazines and textbooks represent the prevailing literature. However, over the last decades English influence appears more and more. During World War II the islands were formally occupied by the British, a fact that made for closer relations with the UK. However, today’s linguistic influence is more a consequence of general international contacts, and whether borrowings come from English directly or via Danish is hard to decide.

6. Language policy and politics, attitudes

Faroese language history is characterized by struggles for language rights, e.g. in the educational system. For a long time Faroese was not allowed in Faroese schools, and because of conflicts the Danish government in 1912 passed a resolution underlining that Danish was the language of instruction in Faroese schools. However, from 1938 the language could be taught as a subject in school, and the first divine service in Faroese had to be arranged outdoors, indoors it was allowed from 1939. The Home Rule Act of 1948 introduced Faroese as the main language of the society. The Faroese folk high school – established in 1899 and based on the Nordic folk high school movement founded on the national and pedagogical ideas of N. F. Grundtvig – played an important role by practising Faroese as a subject and as a language for instruction and thus imparting knowledge and ideas to a broader popular movement.

In 1974 students of the college initiated a conflict by refusing to use Danish at their oral exam. Two of them did not receive a leaving certificate. According to the Home Rule Act, laws had to be issued in both Faroese and Danish, but this was changed in 1966.

The continuous struggle for the Faroese language has developed a very high linguistic consciousness. Since the 1880s the society has held a continuous language debate on both language rights and language usage. The language struggle has materialised in several private organisations established in order to strengthen the conditions for national culture. The first one, the *Føroyingafelag* “The Faroese Association” was established in 1881 among students in Copenhagen, and its parallel in the Faroes appeared in 1888, *Føringafelag*. Both had the acceptance of the national language as their primary goal. A private scientific academy, *Føroya Fróðskaparfelag*, was founded in 1952 with the aim of acting as a catalyst for both Faroese research and the usage of Faroese language. Its first contribution was the yearly publication *Fróðskaparrit*, which published articles in several academic disciplines. (Today, the practise has changed, as most articles presented in it are written in English.) In 1965 one of the *Føroya Fróðskaparfelag*’s aims was realized with the opening of the Faroese university, *Fróðskaparsetur Føroya*, which was to take special care of research in Faroese language, literature and folklore.

Over the 19th century the Faroese language has conquered many new domains. Faroese radio (*Útvarp Føroya*, established in 1957) and television (*Sjónvarp Føroya*, established in 1984) were milestones in the modernisation process of cultural life. The popular support of the national language has increased, especially during the last three centuries. The change from Danish to Faroese as the editorial language of the conservative daily newspaper *Dimmalætting* – which is a proponent of continued subordination to the Danish state – which occurred in the late 1970s, was in fact a very symbolic act, since it symbolised a general support of Faroese language and culture. This has increased further, especially during the 1990s when the Faroese government and the Løgting (Parliament) had a conflict with Denmark over a bank crisis, and at the turn of the millennium most political parties have given support to a re-negotiation of the Home Rule Act and the question of sovereignty for the islands. There is a stronger movement for independence than ever before, and this certainly has cultural and language effects.

Language purism has been a hot issue in the Faroese language struggle. In order to underline the struggle for independence, also culturally, about 1900 many of the adherents of the new Faroese written language started forming new Faroese words for traditional Danish and Low German loanwords, especially those words formed with the prefixes and suffixes *an-*, *be-*, *for-*, *-heit* and *-else*. The above-mentioned Jakob Jakobsen was the pioneer of Faroese purism, and one of his first attempts was the word *søgusmiður* “author”

for Danish *forfatter*, proposed in the 1890s. This word was not a success and has later been replaced by *høvundur*, however, quite a lot of today's everyday words were "forged" by Jakobsen, e.g. *bókasavn*, *sjálvljóð*, *klombrur*, *fyrmynd*, *trúbót* "library, vowel, brackets, model, church reformation". The technique for forming neologisms is a) to translate the elements of the original foreign word or of a Danish or Icelandic parallel neologism, cf. *bókasavn*, *sjálvljóð*, *fyrmynd* (< Lat. *bibliothek*, Da. *selvlyd*, Ic. *fyrirmynd*), b) to describe the concept using Faroese word elements, cf. *lærdur háskúli*, *trúbót* "skilled high school" = university, "belief amendment" = church reformation, or c) to extend the meaning of a traditional Faroese word, e.g. *klombrur* (original meaning: "clip").

These techniques have been used by his successors, e.g. the two professors of Faroese at the University: Christian Matras (1900–1988) formed quite a lot of words, for instance, *skilmarking* for Da. *definition*. The most successful in his making of new words is Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen (b. 1934), who has proposed hundreds of words, and most of them have been accepted in language usage within a very short time, e.g. *bingja* "container", *fløga* "CD" and *hugburður* "attitude" (Da. *holdning*). One of his specialities is to form new short words that have the potential for giving associations relevant for the concept, e.g. *telda* "computer", which easily evokes associations with the word *tal* "number".

An important instrument for the purism are the various dictionaries. The descriptive work of Svabo (Svabo 1966), cf. above, had 169 easily discoverable Danish/Low German loanwords, i.e. with the prefixes and suffixes *an-*, *be-*, *for-*, *ge-*, *-heit*, *-lisi*, and these words made 0.58 % of the entry words. The first dictionary after the establishment of the Faroese written languages, Jakobsen (1891), had only 24 of them (or 0.29 % of the entry words). The most important dictionary for three generations, *Føroysk-donsk orðabók* (Jacobsen/Matras 1927–28), had fewer of these loanwords, and they were restricted only to words with *an-*, *for-* and *-lisi*. In the last and most comprising authoritative dictionary, *Føroysk orðabók* (Poulsen et al. 1998), the percentage increased to 0.37 % (or 243 entries of the total 65,000) (Simonsen 2002).

Three years earlier *Donsk-føroysk orðabók* (Petersen 1995) had provoked an intense debate because of its liberal attitude towards traditional loanwords (accepting 882 loanwords of this type). However, the dictionary of 1998 certainly demonstrates a more liberal trend towards these traditional Danish and Low German loanwords. Today it is realised that modern Anglo-American words represent a progressively greater challenge, and more and more attention has been given to them.

Both *Málstovnur Føroya Fróðskaparfelags* (Language Council of the Faroese Scientific Academy, 1958–1985) and its successor *Føroyska málnevndin* (The Faroese Language Council) (established by the government in 1985) have exerted a strong official status as authorities on language matters. The latter publishes a newsletter, *Orðafar*, intended mainly for journalists, where it presents and advocates neologisms, and calls attention to errors with respect to Faroese grammatical structure. Otherwise, textbooks and children's books are important instruments for promoting neologisms, and therefore play an important role in the nation's language policy.

The loyalty to language purism is greatest in the written language, but we often find loanwords and neologisms side by side in the same articles, e.g. *skateboard* and *renniþól*, *privatisering* and *einskiljing* "privatisation" (Jacobsen 2004). In spoken language loanwords are more freely used, but on the other hand, there is a tendency for people in formal situations to prefer fewer loanwords and replace them with Faroese neologisms, e.g. *ferðaseðil* for *billet* "ticket"; however, this is not really a stylistic demand. Over some time even spoken language seems to change, and younger people tend to give up the older traditional loanwords, e.g. *forstanda*, *ferdigur*, *alminniligur*, *forskelligt*, *elefantur* etc. "understand, finished, common, different,

elephant” in favour of the puristic Faroese words *skilja*, *liðugur*, *vanligur*, *ymiskt* and *fitur*. Language purism has demonstrable effects on the language, and the direction of the drift is obvious. With respect to vocabulary the language is therefore tending to drift away from the Scandinavian languages.

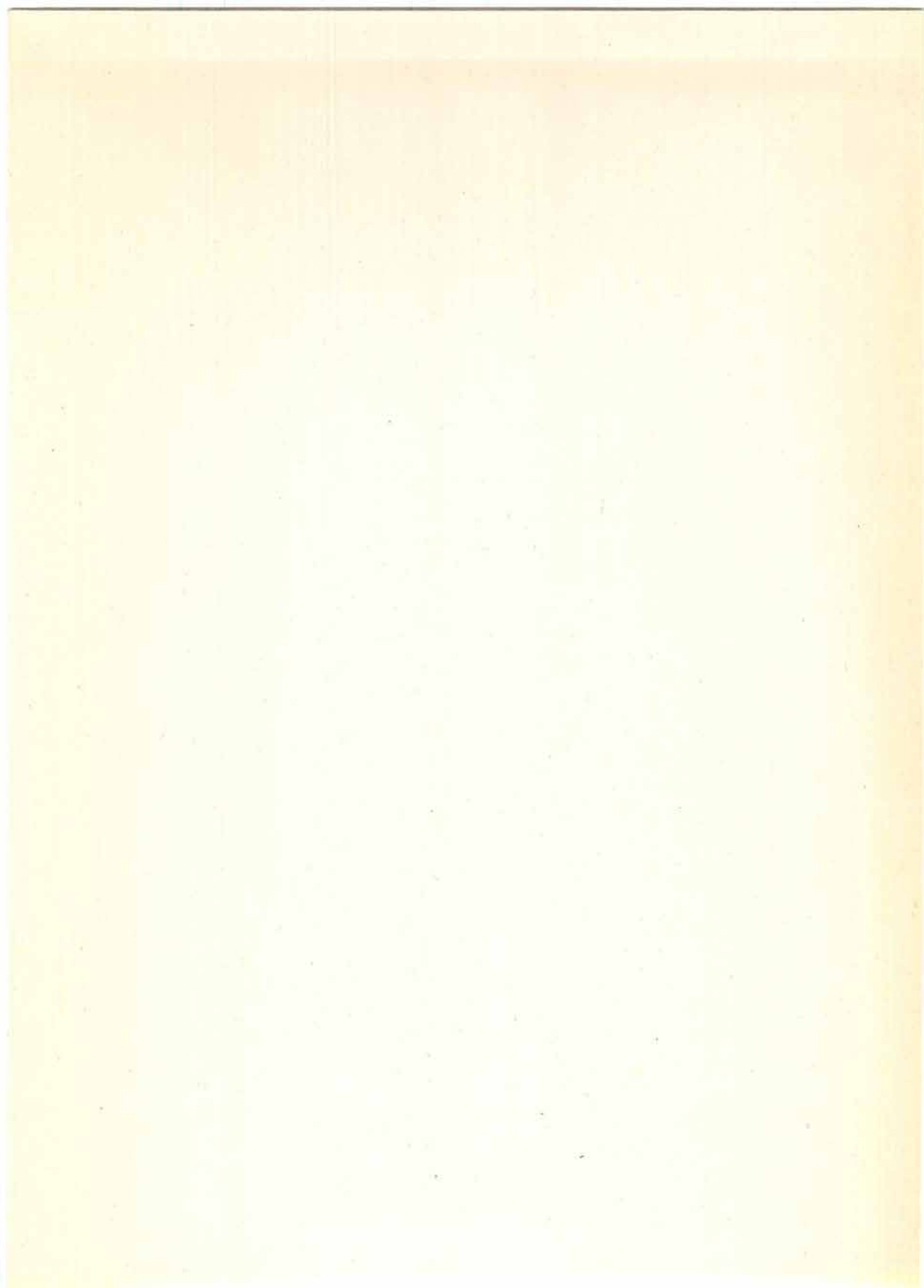
On the other hand, the Faroese people have never unanimously supported the struggle for independence, nor has it demonstrated any general support for the dominant language policy: purism. There has always been some scepticism of the academic eagerness to coin neologisms for the loanwords of daily life. In recent years Faroese linguists also have taken part on the sceptical side of this debate. Therefore, the Faroese vocabulary comprises a lot of cultural tensions and attitudinal markers, and among language users there is a high awareness of variation in the vocabulary.

In a Nordic Gallup poll on language attitudes carried out in 2002, the Faroese people seem to be almost as positive to language purism as Icelanders and Finnish-speaking people. 67 % of the respondents express their approval of coining neologisms, and 58 % prefer to use the national neologism “teldubræv” for “e-mail”. In the three Scandinavian language communities (i.e. Norwegian, Swedish and Danish) the corresponding figures were 43 % and 32 % (Vikør 2003).

For the time being the Faroese language is thus gaining both support and domains, and is enhancing its characteristic distinctions.

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