

# English influence on the spoken language — with a special focus on its social, semantic and functional conditioning

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## *Abstract*

*The data for the investigation presented in this article were collected by a questionnaire. A comparison with the corresponding results for written language shows the same overall pattern, with only minor differences: the highest adaptation rate (i.e. change away from English towards the national language) is found with speakers of languages on the periphery of the Nordic area, the lowest rate is found with Danes in the centre of the area. The mean percentage for “adapted” variants is about 60 in the investigation as a whole, but the ranking order of the communities differs for phonology and morphology. Social variables seem to have surprisingly little impact on patterns of adaptation.*

*Keywords:* *Nordic languages; purism in speech; English influence; phonological adaptation; morphological adaptation.*

## **1. Introduction**

The topic of the present article is a subsection of the MIN-project, which addresses the use of English imports in the spoken language, focusing on the pronunciation and morphological integration of such words in the seven largest Nordic language communities: Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finland-Swedish and Finnish.

Most major studies of the impact of English on the modern Nordic languages have been based on data from the written language, primarily on published texts, such as newspapers (cf. Graedler and Kvaran in this issue), and there are much fewer studies that have focused on the spoken language. Sharp (2001) studied the use of English lexical items in a corpus of spoken Swedish, and even if her results are not fully comparable to the results of earlier studies based on written texts, they strongly indicate that

English words are more frequent in spoken discourse than in writing (Sharp 2001: 61–62). The results of two smaller studies of lexical borrowings in Icelandic, with a comparison of spoken and written data (Hilmisdóttir 2000; Svavarsdóttir 2004a), point in the same direction. The studies indicate, however, that the difference encountered might be connected with various situational and sociolinguistic factors, typically reflected in writing and in speech, rather than the medium as such (cf. Finegan and Biber's distinction between “literate” and “oral” registers [2001: 267]). Sharp's corpus consisted of two sets of data, differentiated primarily by the age of the speakers (19–25 vs. 29–55), and the speech situation (casual/leisure vs. [more] formal/professional), and there is a clear quantitative and qualitative difference between the two with respect to the English lexical items that occur in them (see e.g. Sharp 2001: 61, 75, 129–153). Svavarsdóttir compared her spoken language data, which consisted of spontaneous informal conversations, with two different sets of written texts, i.e. informal and personal (partly unpublished) texts vs. more formal and impersonal (anonymous) texts, and according to her results, the main difference with respect to the frequency of English lexical items was between the formal writing on the one hand and the conversations and the informal texts on the other (cf. Svavarsdóttir 2004a: 171–172). Previous studies also indicate that age and gender are relevant with respect to the frequency of imports (Svavarsdóttir 2004b; Sharp 2001: Section 6). It is not clear, however, how different situational and sociolinguistic factors bear on the use of imports, and how they relate to language structural and cultural factors.

## **2. The MIN-studies: method, approaches and data collection**

Contrary to the studies cited above, as well as to the subsections of the MIN-project directed at the usage of imports in the written language (cf. Graedler and Kvaran in this issue), our study on imports in the spoken language was not based on a corpus, but on a questionnaire, presented to a number of informants in an interview. Therefore, it is not directly comparable to any of these studies. The main purpose of the investigation was to study the adaptation of English imports, focusing on the comparison between languages within the Nordic area. However, it supplements the written language study in several ways. First, it focuses on the language level particular to speech, i.e. the pronunciation of imports with respect to their phonetic and phonological adaptation. Second, it gives a chance to include not only linguistic, but also sociolinguistic variables, and to analyse how the two relate to each other. Third, it gives an opportunity for a limited

comparison with the written language, with respect to the overall degree of adaptation regarding phonetics and orthography, as well as morphology.

The object of our study is on the periphery of a language user's native competence. Modern imports are not a part of the cultural and linguistic tradition to which speakers are socialised, and the process of how new imports become a part of established norms is interesting in terms of both structurally and socially oriented linguistics.

The investigation consisted of six parallel studies, one for each Nordic language; Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish were handled as two separate varieties in the same study (cf. Dahlman [2007]; Andersen and Rathje [2007] studied Danish; Johansen [2007] Norwegian; Paatola [2007] Finnish; Sandøy and Petersen [2007] Faroese; and Svavarsdóttir [2007] Icelandic). A common methodology was developed for the investigation, and a joint decision made regarding the linguistic and sociolinguistic variables to be studied. The interviews were based on parallel questionnaires to ensure that the setting and the stimuli would be as similar as possible in all the communities. Despite the standardisation aimed at, certain adaptations in variables and test words were necessary for language specific reasons, due both to structural differences between the languages, and to differences in their vocabularies.

The morphological variables, that were tested in all or most of the studies, were the inflection of nouns and adjectives for plural, grammatical gender (not distinguished in Finnish), and at least one variable concerning derivation, either verbal nouns with the suffix *-ing* in English (all languages except Icelandic) or agent nouns with *-er* in English (Icelandic and Faroese). Some of the variables involve categories or functions that are common to English and the borrowing language(s), even if the formal exponents are different, in which case the adaptation entails a substitution of suffixes. This applies, for example, to the plural of nouns and various derivational processes. Other variables reflect inflectional categories that are present in most of the Nordic languages but lacking in English, such as the grammatical gender of nouns and the number and gender agreement of adjectives. In such cases, the adaptation involves the addition of a grammatical category.

The pronunciation of the following English sounds was tested in (almost) all the languages involved, but other variables which were considered interesting with respect to a certain language were included in the individual studies:

- (1) [w] (e.g. in *walkman*, *twist*)
- (2) [tʃ] (e.g. in *charter*, *brunch*)
- (3) [dʒ] (e.g. in *juice*, *bridge*)

- (4) [ɪ] (e.g. in *rap*, *aerobics*)
- (5) [θ] (e.g. in *thriller*, *death*)
- (6) [ʌ] (e.g. in *pub*)
- (7) [aʊ] (e.g. in *flower*)
- (8) [eɪ] (e.g. in *e-mail*)
- (9) [əʊ] (e.g. in *toaster*)
- (10) [ən] (e.g. in *badminton*)

The phonetic/phonological variables are of four types. First, there are English sounds with a cognate sound in the Nordic languages, even if the phonetic realisation may be different, e.g. /r/. Secondly, there are English sounds that do not have a parallel in the standard Nordic language(s), but are normally replaced by one particular native sound, e.g. prevocalic /w/ which is adapted as [v]. The third type includes English sounds that traditionally do not occur in the importing language, where their pronunciation fluctuates between various realisations. The affricates [tʃ] and [dʒ] are examples of this in many Nordic languages (though not in Finland-Swedish, Faroese and some Norwegian dialects). Finally, there are variables involving regular phonological processes and phonotactic restrictions in the Nordic languages that must be extended to imports for them to become fully adapted. Such features are e.g. preaspiration in Icelandic, and tones in Norwegian (cf. a complete overview of the variables in Jarvad and Sandøy [2007]).

To elicit natural and spontaneous pronunciation of the imports in the interviews, the questionnaire was based on a description of the words' content, and the informants should guess the words from these clues. This part was followed up with a full sentence where a blank was left for the import, and the informants were asked to repeat the sentence including the appropriate inflected form of the word in question. This method requires test words that are relatively frequent and widely used in the language community, so that they will be easy to guess. The main objection to the method is that the informants may (consciously or subconsciously) interpret the situation as a test of their knowledge of English, but the instructions at the beginning of the interviews and the complete sentences given in the native language throughout the interview were supposed to prevent that.

There were 30–40 informants in each language community. They were about 25–50 years old, and evenly divided between men and women. Furthermore, they were divided into groups according to lifestyle, defined by the kind of company they worked for and by their status within the workplace (see Pedersen in this issue for a discussion of the model). This yields four groups: A (traditional, high status), B (modern, high status), C (modern, low status) and D (traditional, low status).

### 3. Results

The features selected were in advance known to represent variation in language use, as they are sensitive to the structural “conflict” between the exporting and the importing language. Other features, where adaptation or non-adaptation is the general rule in most of the languages, were not considered interesting for our purposes and thus excluded, e.g. the morphological adaptation of verbs (see e.g. Graedler 2002: 71; Kvaran and Svavarsdóttir 2002: 97; Battarbee 2002: 271). Probably the best approach to reliable comparisons of structural properties and units of different linguistic systems is to include as many variables as possible. In our study this has been most successful in phonology. The figures displayed in Table 1 show the average degree of adaptation in each language, taking all phonological and morphological variables into consideration. As for morphology, however, the variables turned out to be too few, and therefore the percentages can not be taken as representative of tendencies in the morphological adaptation of imports in general, but only as indicators of how each language solves the linguistic “conflict” that arises with respect to identical or comparable grammatical features.

The mean percentage for the category “adapted” is about 60% in the investigation as a whole. There are, however, noticeable differences, both between the language communities, and between the two linguistic levels investigated in each language. Adaptation is dominant in all the languages, with the exception of Danish where the adaptation average is 36%. The geographically peripheral languages, Icelandic, Faroese and Finnish, together with Norwegian, have the highest average score of adaptation, and the two Swedish varieties occupy the middle position. There is no general pattern as to which structural level (phonology or morphology) has the highest average proportion of adapted forms.

Compared to the high mean score for phonological adaptation, the average for morphologically adapted forms is surprisingly low in Icelandic. This is due to the almost total lack of congruent inflection of the adjectives investigated (3%), e.g. in sentences like *staffið* (neuter) *er kúl* ‘the staff is cool’, where an adapted form would have the native neuter ending *-t* (i.e.

Table 1. *Average percentages of adaptation on the linguistic variables*

	Ic	Far	Nor	Den	S-Sw	F-Sw	Fin	Total
Morphology	45	63	73	38	56	57	81	59
Phonology	92	85	54	33	46	58	52	61
Total	69	74	64	36	51	58	67	60

*kúlt*). Such forms are more frequent in some of the other languages, e.g. in Swedish (64% in Finland-Swedish, 88% in Sweden-Swedish) and Danish (50% as an average of plural and neuter). As two of the five morphological variables tested in Icelandic concerned adjective inflection (plural and neuter), this feature greatly affects the average, even if the proportion of adapted forms is high in the other variables. The frequent lack of inflection in imported adjectives in Icelandic is well known. Many imported adjectives are colloquial, and belong primarily to the “oral” registers of language, and this applies to all the test words in our questionnaire (*cool* ‘attractive, fashionable’, *cosy* and *nice*). The oral registers tend to be more open to imports, especially to un-established lexical items, than more formal and “literate” registers, as discussed in the introduction. There is, however, an obvious discrepancy between Icelandic and the other Nordic languages with respect to these variables, so other factors must also play a role in the non-inflection of these imports.

The figures in Table 1 are an average of all the linguistic variables studied. They may be considered as an “index of adaptation” for the respective languages. A closer look at one particular variable across the languages yields a more varied picture, and the plural of nouns is a suitable point of comparison as all the languages in question inflect for number, both English and the individual importing languages. The variation in usage involves the English plural ending *-s*, as the un-adapted variant, and one or more native endings, including *-Ø* (no ending) where that is appropriate, forming a category of adapted variants. Table 2 shows the proportions of non-adapted vs. adapted forms in each language community; the category “other” includes various circumscriptions, etc.

Almost every other plural form produced by the Danish informants had the ending *-s*, and they seem to have a tendency to avoid native plural endings in imports as they are apt to use circumscription for the plural meaning. Adapted forms are dominant in all the other languages, and in Norwegian, Finnish and Icelandic adaptation is clearly the general rule, as there is little indication of the productive use of *-s* as a plural formative in these

Table 2. *Plural endings of imported nouns (indefinite/unmarked forms)\**

	Ic	Far	Nor	Den	S-Sw	F-Sw	Fin
English <i>-s</i>	2	30	10	45	38	27	3
Native ending	98	56	88	37	43	54	97
Other	—	13	2	18	19	17	—
N	125	194	239	316	499	503	48

\* Figures are percentages

languages. In Danish and Swedish, on the other hand, there is a substantial tendency to adopt the English plural ending *-s*, making *-s* a productive plural ending in modern Danish and Swedish, for example in *airbags* and *partners*, and the acceptance of such plural forms in the standard languages has been on the increase over the last decades (Gellerstam 2003: 70–71). It comes as a surprise that plural forms with *-s* are relatively frequent in Faroese as well, where the general “index of adaptation” is high; this may reflect an influence from such forms in Danish. The Faroese are generally bilingual, with Danish as the second language, and the long-standing political and cultural contact between The Faroe Islands and Denmark has been a source of extensive Danish impact on the Faroese language, in this case possibly by transmitting English influence.

The figures in Table 2 indicate the overall variation. Furthermore, the proportion of adapted forms varies greatly between words, especially in the languages where the English ending *-s* is relatively frequent. In Danish, for example, certain nouns (for example *brunch*) have *-s* in only 15% of the examples, while others have up to 98% *s*-plural (*airbag*; cf. Andersen and Rathje [2007]), and in Sweden-Swedish there are nouns where the ending *-s* does not occur at all, for example *pub*, while others have exclusively *-s* in plural (*freak*, *hacker*; cf. Dahlman [2007]). This indicates that differences in the structural and stylistic character of individual words, and their distribution and relative frequency in the language, may affect the variation in plural forms (and presumably in other variables as well). Such factors can, furthermore, vary from one language to another, and a comparison of the two Swedish varieties therefore is revealing. From a structural point of view, they represent the same language, but at the same time they represent two different language communities. As the same questionnaire and the same test words were used for both, a bias caused by idiosyncratic features of individual words should be ruled out. The distribution of the non-adapted plural ending *-s* in Swedish is presented in Table 3.

The table shows a clear difference between words, and interestingly the two Swedish varieties show roughly the same pattern, as each word tends to be either well adapted in both language communities (for example *coach*) or have a high proportion of the English ending in both (for example *hacker*). With three exceptions, *manager*, *thriller* and *display*, the Swedish-speaking Finns adapted more than the Swedes.

The different degree of adaptation attested between words indicates that the choice of test words may affect the results, and the fact that not all the questionnaires contained the same test words for each variable (nor the same number of words) should be taken into account when interpreting the results, though it is not self-evident that the same English word will have a similar status in different languages. There is, however, nothing that

Table 3. *Plural -s in Swedish\**

Borrowed word (first occurrence)	Finland-Swedish	Sweden-Swedish
<i>freak</i> (1975)	40	100
<i>hacker</i> (1983)	78	100
<i>airbag</i>	30	76
<i>manager</i> (1898)	78	67
<i>thriller</i> (1938)	72	65
<i>hit</i> (1962)	33	63
<i>baby</i> (1901)	20	26
<i>whisky</i> (1798)	10	17
<i>display</i> (1972)	14	12
<i>stuntman</i> (1953)	0	10
<i>coach</i> (1962)	0	0

\* Figures are percentages

suggests that our results suffer seriously from a bias caused by such factors. As a whole they reflect an overall patterning of the language communities with respect to the degree of adaptation in the spoken language that are in line with the comparable results on morphological and orthographical purism in the study of the written languages (cf. Graedler and Kvaran in this issue) and to the general language policy in the respective countries (cf. Vikør in this issue).

#### 4. Age of the imports. Influence from written or spoken English?

Change over time was not studied systematically in our investigation, as the emphasis was on words imported after 1945. Despite the comparatively short time span, a comparison between test words indicates, however, that older imports tend to be more adapted than more recent ones, and that there is greater variation in the realisation of the latter. For instance, the affricates in the older *check*, *Cheerios* and *stretch* (imported before ca. 1965) have been largely adapted in Icelandic, while the pronunciation of the younger *chill*, *chat* and *scratch* (imported after ca. 1990) is both closer to English and varies more (Svavarsdóttir 2007). Furthermore, informants tend to be uncertain of the pronunciation and inflection of younger imports, producing more than one form of the word in question (cf. Andersen and Rathje 2007). It is equally clear, however, that the age of the imported word is only one of the relevant factors. Consider, for example, three of the words tested for plural in Swedish: *manager* (1898), *thriller* (1938) and *hacker* (1983) (cf. Table 3). They are structurally similar, but bor-



rowed at different points in time. The frequency of non-adapted forms is relatively high in all three words, and the proportion of the English ending *-s* is considerably higher than in other test words, especially in Finland-Swedish, even if some of the other words are considerably younger. The frequency of *-s* is similar in all these words in Finland, regardless of their age, and the same applies to the two older words in Sweden, while the English ending is used by all the Sweden-Swedish informants in the most recent import.

The most simple and natural explanation of the higher proportion of adapted forms in older imports seems to be that they have had longer time to adapt, but changes in the language community, and the increased contact with English, especially in its spoken form, is likely to count for part of the difference between old and new imports. With regard to the phonetic/phonological level, the channel through which English words are imported can also affect their pronunciation in the Nordic languages, and it is reasonable to assume that many older imports have been imported from written records (for instance, newspapers, magazines, records covers, etc.), while more recent imports have rather been imported from the spoken language (through, for instance, television, song lyrics and travelling contacts). The different pronunciation of some old vs. new imports supports this, for instance, *trailer* pronounced with [ai] in Finnish in accordance with the spelling and *e-mail* with [ei] like in English (cf. Paatola 2007), and *joker* which has yielded two lexical items in Icelandic, the older one (referring to the playing-card) with initial [j] influenced by the written form and the younger one (referring to someone that makes a lot of jokes) with [tj] reflecting the English pronunciation (cf. Svavarsdóttir 2007). The critical point of time is, however, unclear, and a correlation between the age of an import and the channel of importation can by no means be generalised. A considerable part of English words imported at present are no doubt introduced from written sources, such as the Internet, manuals, etc.; however, an increasingly widespread knowledge of English means that the general public is better aware of the pronunciation of words in the source language, and people are therefore more likely to imitate it, even in words that are imported from the written language. A further factor that can affect the pronunciation and morphological form of imports is the influence of an intermediary language, notably from Danish in Faroese (cf. Sandøy and Petersen 2007) and Icelandic, from Swedish in Finnish (cf. Paatola 2007), and from Finnish in Finland-Swedish (Dahlman 2007), causing some of the words to adapt in unexpected ways. In some cases, at least, this factor is connected to the age of imports, for instance, older imports in Icelandic were frequently borrowed via Danish, while such a transmission is unlikely in recent times.

## 5. Social patterns in adaptation

The relevant sociolinguistic factors in our investigation are age, gender and lifestyle. As regards the use of English imports, it is widely assumed that young people in general use more lexical imports than older persons, but it is less clear if and how the gender and lifestyle of informants will correlate with their usage. It may be expected, however, that women, who in general tend to follow the conventions of the standard language more closely than men, would show more reluctance to use non-established and non-adapted imports than men do. Likewise, it may be hypothesised that those who belong to lifestyle groups defined as modern are more apt to use the English form of imports than the more traditional groups, and also that the high status groups are likely to use less adapted forms than the low status groups. An analysis of our data from a sociolinguistic perspective aims at testing these hypotheses.

A variation in usage is a prerequisite for a sociolinguistic analysis to be of interest. In many of the linguistic variables and words studied in our investigation, the variation within the individual language communities was so small, either in the direction of (near) total adaptation or non-adaptation, that even if the results may be revealing for the community as a whole in a comparison of the seven communities, they are of little interest from a sociolinguistic perspective. The focus of the discussion in this section will therefore be those instances where a substantial variation has been attested. Our discussion is based on the analyses done in the national studies (cf. Jarvad and Sandøy 2007), and it causes problems in the comparison of language communities that the method of analysis was not fully standardized. In the Icelandic and Faroese studies the sociolinguistic analysis was based on the results for each linguistic variable as a whole, i.e. on the total number of examples reflecting the variable in question, whereas the analysis in the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian studies was based on the results for individual words, and the Finnish study took account of both.

Another problem concerns the relatively small number of informants in each study (about 30–40), and the interdependence of the sociolinguistic variables. Each lifestyle group, for instance, consisted of only 10 informants, and in some of the studies they were even fewer, such as the Finnish one which had only 30 informants and as few as 4 persons in the smallest lifestyle group (A; cf. Paatola 2007). Furthermore, men and women were not evenly distributed across the lifestyle groups, even if the number of males and females was balanced in the investigation as a whole. If we find a relatively high proportion of adapted forms in a lifestyle group where the majority of informants are female, we cannot therefore be sure which factor is more decisive (cf. Andersen and Rathje 2007;

Svavarsdóttir 2007). This means that we have to be careful when interpreting the results.

### 5.1. *Age*

A study of the use of English imports in Icelandic diary entries written by people of varying ages, showed that while writers under the age of 40 used 8 English imports per 1000 running words, the proportion was only 4.4% in texts written by people over 40, even though the frequency of imports did not decrease evenly with an increase in age (Svavarsdóttir 2004b: 160). A comparison of the type of words used by teenagers (11–20) and by middle aged writers (51–60) in the same study, about 100 imported words by each age group, showed that the young writers also used more non-established and non-adapted imports than the older ones (Svavarsdóttir 2004b: 161–164). This was connected to clear differences in the length and the style of the texts, as the teenagers generally wrote shorter and less carefully composed entries than the middle aged diarists. Sharp's study of spoken Swedish, cited in the introduction, also showed qualitative and quantitative differences relating to the age of speakers, but the young speakers in her study actually used fewer English words than the older ones, and also fewer non-established words. On the other hand, the younger speakers used unmixed English utterances, both single words like *Sure!* and multi-word strings and clauses such as *YEAH cool!* and *I don't understand*, more frequently than the older speakers (Sharp 2001: 104–109). These two studies suggest that there is not a simple correlation between the amount and type of imports applied and the speakers' age.

In the MIN-project, the correlation between the adaptation of imports and the age of the informants was only studied in some of the language communities. The results indicate that the connection between the two is clearly not as simple and direct as is sometimes assumed, as they vary from variable to variable, and do not show any clear pattern with respect to the age of the informants. The “index of adaptation” in Faroese was fairly high (an average of 72%; cf. Table 1), and even if informants over 40 adapt slightly more than those who are younger, Sandøy and Petersen (2007) consider the difference surprisingly small (3–4%). Johansen (2007) concludes that on the whole, age does not seem to be a relevant sociolinguistic factor in Norwegian, despite minor differences in some variables. Similarly, the pronunciation of Swedish speaking informants over the age of 40, both in Sweden and Finland, tends to be somewhat more adapted than the pronunciation of informants under 40, but there are also examples that show the opposite. The same seems to be true for the age variable in

Norwegian, as there are examples of the younger generation adapting more than their elders, e.g. in *chips*, although the difference is only a few per cent. On the other hand, Norwegian informants over the age of 40 adapt English [w] to a greater degree than informants under 40, replacing it by [v] (cf. Johansen 2007), while there were no age differences in this variable in Swedish, neither in Sweden nor in Finland. The Danish results point in the same direction as the younger informants have a clearly more adapted pronunciation than older informants in many cases, e.g. do 55% of those under 30 use the adapted [j] as the initial sound in *jogging*, whereas only 20% of informants over 40 do the same (Andersen and Rathje 2007). It may be added that in the Icelandic study, where the “index of adaptation” was high, especially for the phonetic/phonological variables (92%; cf. Table 1), all the informants were comparatively young (23–36 years).

It came as a surprise that younger informants do not seem to adapt less than older informants on an average. Situational and stylistic factors can hardly explain the results of a questionnaire survey, but there are indications that differences in the frequency and distribution of certain imports might play a part. The Danish study, for instance, used four test words to investigate the inflection of adjectives (neuter and plural), i.e. *cool*, *clean*, *fancy* and *bitchy*. Informants under 40 tended to inflect less than those over 40, with the exception of *cool*, which most of the older informants did not inflect. Andersen and Rathje (2007) suggest that this particular word is more central in the language of young people, who use it like any other Danish adjective, whereas the older generation is more likely to handle it as an alien. And there are, in fact, similar results for this word in the Swedish study, where the younger informants are more likely to inflect it than the older ones, both in Sweden and Finland (Dahlman 2007).

## 5.2. *Gender*

Our investigation shows comparatively little difference in the adaptation of imports with respect to gender, but interestingly, all the results point in the same direction suggesting that women use more adapted forms than men, and that men imitate the English pronunciation more often than women.

In the Norwegian study, the female informants in general use more adapted forms than the male informants, though this is not without exceptions. The difference is especially clear in the morphological variables, but it is also revealed in some of the phonological ones, such as the initial sound in *juice*, adapted by 81% of the women, and only 71% of the men,

and in /r/ which is more often adapted by women than by men. It is Johansen's (2007) conclusion that gender is the most important sociolinguistic variable in Norwegian. The same seems to be true of Icelandic, where women adapt more often than men in the two variables that were analysed with respect to gender, the difference being of little significance in one of them, but 58% vs. 47% in the other (vowel length; cf. Svavarsdóttir 2007). Andersen and Rathje (2007) found a clear pattern with respect to gender in the congruence inflection of Danish adjectives, where female informants produced inflected forms considerably more often than male informants in all test words. The Faroese and the Swedish results, on the other hand, do not show any clear patterning relating to gender, neither in Sweden nor in Finland. (The correlation between adaptation and gender is not discussed in the Finnish study).

### 5.3. *Lifestyle*

The results of the studies do not indicate any clear correlation between the lifestyle of the informants and the degree to which they adapt imported words. In most of the communities a faint tendency can, however, be discerned for informants in the low status groups (C and D) to adapt their pronunciation more than those belonging to the high status groups (A and B). This is, for example, the case with respect to [w] in the Norwegian data, which leads Johansen (2007) to suggest that lifestyle is at least worth considering as a sociolinguistic variable.

It is difficult to see any patterns in the Finnish data, and whatever differences there are, they are very small (Paatola 2007). Informants in the traditional/goods-producing lifestyle groups (A, D) used more adapted forms than informants in the modern/service-producing groups (B, C) for some variables, and in other variables the high status groups (A, B) adapted less than the low status informants (C, D). There are minor differences between lifestyle groups in the Faroese speech community (cf. Sandøy and Petersen 2007) with respect to the average degree of adaptation, and the results correspond to the Norwegian results where the pronunciation of group C (modern/low status) is the most adapted (cf. Johansen 2007).

The Icelandic results similarly indicate a faint correlation between lifestyle and the degree of adaptation as regards the pronunciation of English affricates: the low status informants (C, D) adapt more than the high status informants (A, B), and the pronunciation of traditional lifestyle informants (A, D) is more adapted than the pronunciation of modern lifestyle informants (B, C). This is, however, not reflected in the results for the

other variable analysed with respect to informants' lifestyle (cf. Svavarsdóttir 2007). Different tendencies in relation to lifestyle, and a lack of clear patterning, are also registered for Danish. The rendering of the abbreviation *IBM* suggests that many informants in group A prefer the English pronunciation, whereas the majority in groups C and B prefer the Danish pronunciation. The inflection vs. non-inflection of Danish adjectives yields the clearest patterning in this respect, and the results indicate that the B- and D-groups use more inflected forms than the A- and C-groups (Andersen and Rathje 2007). The division seems to be rather un-systematic, as it follows neither axis of the lifestyle model. Our data provide little evidence of any regular correlation between adaptation of imports and lifestyle — as this notion was operationalized in the MIN project.

## 6. Conclusions

The Nordic communities are generally considered to be relatively egalitarian and socially homogenous. There are, for instance, comparatively little differences in the social status of men and women in these countries (cf., for instance, *itim international* 2006). Therefore major sociolinguistic differences are hardly to be expected. This seems to be reflected in the results of the MIN-studies of the phonetic/phonological and morphological adaptation of imports in the spoken languages. By and large they do not indicate that the linguistic behaviour of informants within each language community differs much, and imports do not seem to have established clear sociolinguistic patterns. Even if certain differences relating to the age or lifestyle of the informants can be perceived, at least in some of the linguistic variables, there is no clear patterning. As for gender, there is a slight tendency in three of the communities for women to adapt more than men, but the difference is too small to call it an obvious gender distinction. The most surprising result with respect to the sociolinguistic factors is that younger informants did not seem to adapt less than older ones, contrary to what is generally assumed.

More obvious are the differences between the language communities. The most evident correspondence appears to be between the degree of adaptation on the one hand, and the general language policy on the other. The communities, where the informants adapt most on the average, i.e. the Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian and Finnish, are communities where there has been a strong language awareness, and where purist views have been prevailing as a result of the integration of the national language in the

struggle for the independence of these nations in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

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