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# English in the Nordic Countries : Connections, Tensions, and Everyday Realities

**Peterson, Elizabeth; Beers Fägersten, Kristy**

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Edited by Elizabeth Peterson
and Kristy Beers Fägersten

ROUTLEDGE

# English in the Nordic Countries

## Connections, Tensions, and Everyday Realities

# ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

People in the Nordic states – Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland – rank as among the most proficient speakers of English in the world. In this unique volume, international experts explore how this came to be, what English usage and integration looks like in different spheres of society and the economy in these countries, and the implications of this linguistic phenomenon for language attitudes and identity, for the region at large, and for English in Europe and around the world. Led by Elizabeth Peterson and Kristy Beers Fägersten, contributors provide a historical overview to the subject, synthesize the latest research, illustrate the roles of English with original case studies from diverse communities and everyday settings, and offer transnational insights critically and in conversation with the situation in other Nordic states. This comprehensive text is the first book of its kind and will be of interest to advanced students and researchers of World/Global Englishes and English as a lingua franca, language contact and dialect studies/language varieties, language policy, multilingualism, sociolinguistics, and Nordic/Scandinavian and European studies.

**Elizabeth Peterson** is a senior university lecturer in the Department of Languages at the University of Helsinki. She is a sociolinguist who specializes in variation, language contact, language attitudes, and ideologies. An American migrant to Finland, she is especially interested in the dynamics of multilingualism, language rights, and language change.

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# ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## Connections, Tensions, and Everyday Realities

*Edited by*
*Elizabeth Peterson and Kristy Beers Fägersten*

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*We dedicate this book to the English scholars in the Nordic countries who have paved the way for our work and for the study of English.*

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# PREFACE

In the spring of 2020, an acquisitions editor from Routledge's New York office queried this volume's co-editors about the possibility of publishing a book on "English in Scandinavia." At that time – and still – the Nordic countries were experiencing a wave of positive admiration and global recognition, for factors ranging from their elected officials to their concepts of *hygge*, *lagom*, *sisu*, and the elusive notion of "happiness." The query from Routledge serves as an acknowledgment of this reputation, as well as of the fact that the Nordic region is known to have a high level of English proficiency among its overall populations. The prominence – and pre-eminence – of English in the Nordic countries is well documented and has been a source of national pride. The ability to market their own hype – in English – has only added to what can be described as a fascination with all things Nordic.

Indeed, during the book's initial phases, the working title was *"Everyone Speaks English" Language and Everyday Life in the Nordics*. This title invoked the stereotype of widespread fluency in English associated with the Nordic countries, which has taken on epic, even mythical, proportions. A high proficiency in English is one of a handful of key defining myths that characterize the Nordic countries in the current era. As an illustration, during an editorial meeting for this book, the following exchange was observed at the central railway station in Helsinki, Finland: waiting on a platform by a dormant train, a young man was asked by a tourist, "Do you think this is the train to the airport?" The reply came in a chipper English accent, "I was about to ask you the same thing!" After a bit of laughter about tourists consulting other tourists as a source of local knowledge, the man continued, "Otherwise, that's the first question you ask, isn't it? 'Do you speak English?' But of course, everyone here speaks perfect

English, so it's not necessary." It was indeed the correct train to the airport, and the tourists were soon on their way – but not without confirming one of the main tenets of this volume: namely, that high proficiency in English continues to be one of the most widely invoked attributes of the Nordic countries.

This volume confronts the mythicized status of English that characterizes the Nordic countries, explaining how and why the English language came to be integrated into pan-Nordic societies, and how high levels of proficiency in English constitute a prevalent yet problematic stereotype. We focus a critical lens on the notion of English in the Nordic countries as a largely unquestioned triumph or success story.

Exploring the dynamics of the English language in the Nordic context, the volume appeals to readers interested in language as a social, cultural, and even political phenomenon, as English as a global language impacts upon, in particular, local languages and contemporary social settings. The volume's authors comprise a group of scholars with expertise in the languages, histories, cultures, and philosophies of the Nordic region. As such, the book is uniquely poised to present an overview of the social and linguistic realities that emerge in populations where English has advanced its position during the course of several decades. Given that many people in the world seem to view the contemporary situation in the Nordic countries as exemplary in several ways, this overview of the role and use of English has the possibility to serve either as a target or, as the cover photo alludes to, perhaps even as a cautionary tale.

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As co-editors, we would first like to acknowledge the contributors to the volume, whose collective expertise truly makes this volume greater than the sum of its parts. Each contributor deserves individual acknowledgment for helping us both explore different themes related to the use of English in the Nordic region and achieve a balanced representation of the Nordic countries. We gratefully acknowledge the impetus and support of our editors at Routledge, as well as the numerous people behind the scenes who have helped advance the project from the conceptual to the final stages of production.

We are equally indebted to the small army of external reviewers of the proposal and the cadre of additional reviewers of the volume's chapters. By its nature, reviewing must remain an anonymous activity, however much we would wish to publicly acknowledge the reviewers by name for improving the quality of the volume with their encouraging comments, insightful suggestions, and expert guidance.

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In addition, we express our gratitude to coworkers, friends, and colleagues, both near and far, IRL and virtually, who have offered valuable input on drafts,

presentations, and other ideas for this volume. We would also like to thank the eminent scholars who contributed to the concluding chapter with their reflections on past, present, and future research on English in the Nordic countries. Their insights offered inspiration and encouragement that carried us through the final stages of creating the volume's manuscript.

Editing a collected volume is no easy task, but it is made infinitely more enjoyable through collaboration. We would like to acknowledge the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) for awarding a generous bursary which financed an extended visit in Helsinki for the editors to engage in co-teaching, co-writing, and co-editing in real life.

Finally, we are particularly grateful to ReNEW, *Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World: An Excellence Hub in Research, Education and Public Outreach*, for promoting Nordic collaboration and research, and for confirming the value of this collected volume via their very generous financial support, which has allowed the entire volume to be available as Open Access.

# 1

# ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## An introduction

*Elizabeth Peterson and Kristy Beers Fägersten*

*with additional contributions from Florian Hiss and Johan Strang*

### Introduction

While the elevation of English to its current status in the Nordic countries is often touted as a "success story" (e.g., Simensen 2010), the situation also serves as an experiment, revealing how opening up to English has led to a spectrum of outcomes from positive to negative (Linn 2016, 203). The language situation in the Nordic countries thus becomes a case study of contemporary multilingualism, revealing the dynamics that occur when a single language, English, is imposed across large swaths of the population in multiple formats throughout a sustained period of time. It is of primary importance to establish that English is a mother tongue for only a small portion of the overall population of the Nordic region. For the vast majority of Nordic citizens, English is an additional language, something intimate yet still "other," a language acquired alongside or subsequent to the mother tongue(s). Such a scenario opens up opportunities for a compelling investigation, and it is such an investigation that comprises the chapters of this volume. Numerous tensions characterize the relationship between English and the national (and other) languages of the Nordic region. This volume brings these tensions to light through various perspectives, all through the general lens of sociolinguistics and the related research areas of multilingualism, language contact, and ideologies.

When approached about creating this volume, an original idea was to offer up further research, from a Nordic perspective, supplementing our knowledge of World Englishes. Such a view proved not only problematic, but also less compelling than the sociolinguistic perspective eventually adopted. A major challenge in adopting a World Englishes perspective is that, at this stage in

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history, the populations of the Nordic countries do not fit comfortably into existing models of World Englishes (for example, Kachru 1982; McArthur 1987; Schneider 2003; see also Mair 2016) mostly due to the ambiguity of the status of English in the Nordic countries. In other words, English is officially a "foreign" language in the Nordic countries, yet at the same time it is a language which is deeply imbued within multiple aspects of everyday life, sometimes at a remarkably intimate level. Indeed, several of the chapters in this volume call into question the status of English as a "foreign" language – and, in the same vein, as a second or first language. A related challenge in a World Englishes tradition was chronicling any discrete linguistic features that would typify Nordic English or Englishes; such an endeavor would be unreliable at best and unwarranted for the reasons explained here.

The editors and authors of this volume primarily view the situation of English in the Nordic countries as a complex, dynamic relationship with multiple social outcomes and implications. The main aim of this volume thus is to present an overview of the realities of English in relation to the languages of the Nordic countries and the populations who use them. This aim is achieved from various research perspectives, all connected under the umbrella of sociolinguistics. In this endeavor, a few theoretical considerations come to the forefront. These include, but are not limited to, investigations of code-switching, (pragmatic) borrowing, language change, language ideologies, a rhizomatic approach to multilingualism, conversation analysis, and translanguaging. These perspectives are not the focal points of the respective chapters, per se, but rather are woven throughout the volume as ways of telling the multifaceted story of English in the Nordic region.

At the same time, the volume departs from canonical volumes on World Englishes in its structure. The volume does not treat each country comprising the Nordic region on a case-by-case basis, in part because this would ultimately lead to a high level of repetition. There are, as established in the next section, good reasons to observe the phenomena related to English as a generally shared set of experiences across the Nordic region. That said, it would be a fallacy to imply that there are no distinctions between and among the five major sovereign states in the Nordic region – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden – and their respective populations. Therefore, neither does this volume treat these populations as a homogeneous mass; it is critical to tease out differences, highlighting the pre-existing language scenarios and conflicts, and how English interplays with these histories, the populations, and their languages. Not only do Nordic residents differ from country to country, but also according to social and linguistic groups within those countries. Individually, the chapters address different aspects of the English language in the Nordic countries, such as its history, its contact with and impact on national languages, and its usage in popular culture, linguistic landscapes, higher education, the workplace, social

media, and in family interaction. Together, these chapters provide a transnational overview of the widespread use of English across sociolinguistic domains and its consequences on the languages, ideologies, everyday experiences, and lifestyles of Nordic citizens.

## Defining the languages, the region, and the scope

Until this point, the terms *Nordic countries* and *Nordic region* have appeared without actually defining what they mean, at least within the context of this book. As noted in the volume's preface, the original invitation from the publisher was to write a book on "Scandinavian English." Even this seemingly straightforward proposition presented challenges. For example, we quickly changed the scope of the book to cover not just what we consider "Scandinavian languages," but the languages of the Nordic countries. This is because, from a strictly linguistic perspective, the Scandinavian languages, or, more accurately, the North Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages, includes Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish, but not other languages used in the Nordic region. For many, including some of the authors in this volume, the "core" Scandinavian languages means Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, and these are also languages that are considered (mostly) mutually comprehensible (see Chapter 2). Across the Nordic region, the North Germanic/Scandinavian languages are those most represented through numbers of speakers, but they by no means constitute the language use of all the inhabitants of the region. The second most represented language family in terms of population of speakers is the Uralic family, which in the Nordic region applies to the Finnic languages Finnish, Karelian, Kven, Meänkieli, and the indigenous languages comprising the Saamic group (see Figure 1.1).

In the context of this book, then, the term *Scandinavia(n)* refers to the three countries creating the core cradle of Scandinavian languages: Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. However, this delineation is limited in that it does not apply to all of the speakers or inhabitants in the area of investigation. As there is no term which captures the linguistic reality, we therefore use the term *Nordic* to apply to the people and the region that serve as the focal point of this book, although this is not an accurate term for the languages they speak; that is, there is no such thing as a "Nordic" family of languages. Therefore, in this volume we tend to use the phrase "the languages of the Nordic countries," although, for the sake of brevity and clarity, this is not always possible. The comprehensive term *Nordic countries* includes not just the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, but also Iceland, Finland, Greenland, and the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands and Åland (see Chapter 2).

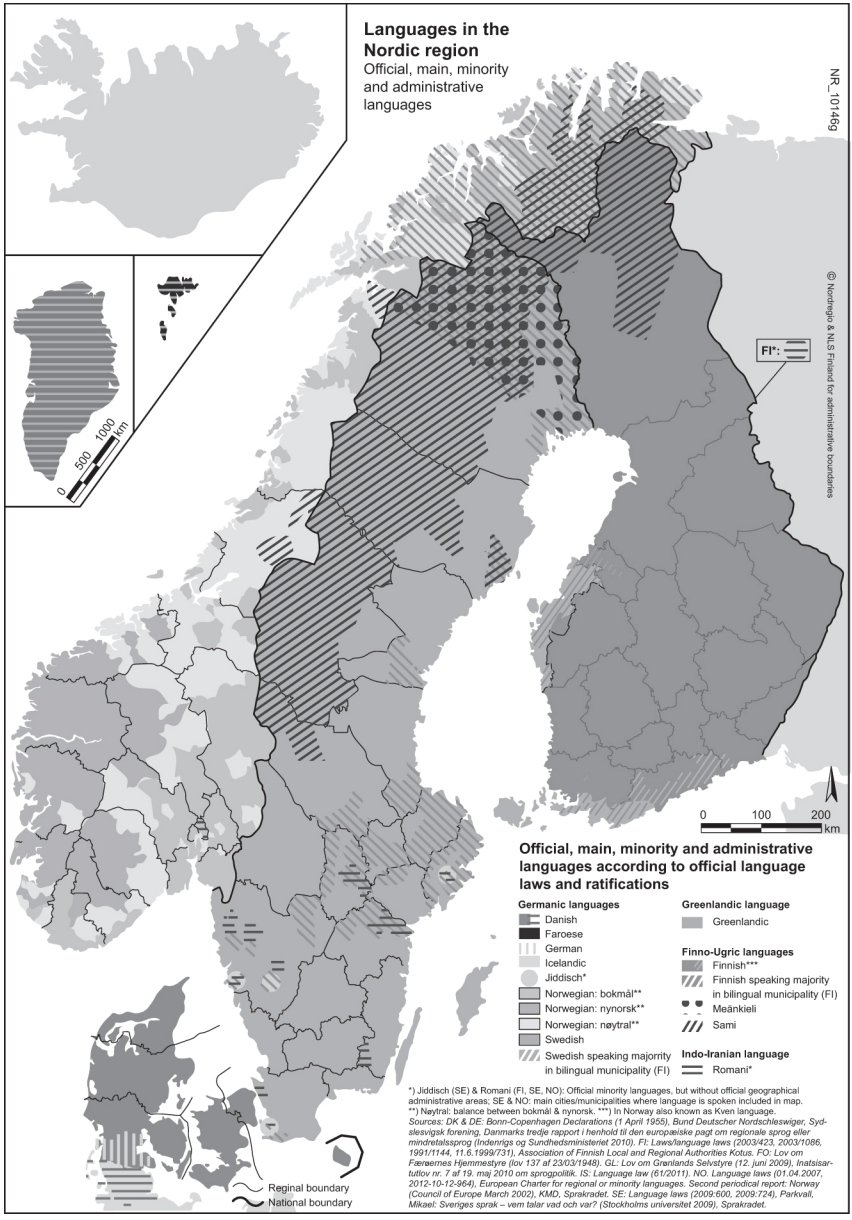


**FIGURE 1.1** Languages in the Nordic region. Reprinted and reproduced with permission from Nordregio.org, a research center of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Original version at https://nordregio.org.

As indicated, there is no accurate linguistic label to account for the citizens and languages of the Nordic region. Figure 1.1 clearly demonstrates the extent to which North Germanic languages dominate the overall region, while at the same time showing the extent to which individual languages and even language families extend across national borders, in some ways creating a shared macro language community. Swedish, for example, is a majority language in Sweden, but it is also an official language in Finland, used especially along the west and south coasts. Finland, in fact, is the only country in the Nordic region which is officially bilingual: the two Constitutional languages of Finland, dating to a decree in 1919, are Finnish and Swedish. In this book the Swedish in Finland is referred to as "Finland Swedish" while "Sweden Swedish" refers to the Swedish language in Sweden. Figure 1.1 also shows that there are overlapping areas populated by Finnic and Saamic speakers across much of the Nordic region.

As with any map, the information presented in Figure 1.1 is necessarily essentialist, offering a static representation of a dynamic system. While the map succeeds in demonstrating that the language situation in the Nordic countries is robust, it cannot, of course, capture the complex realities of issues such as speaker mobility and individual multilingualism. In addition, this particular map shows only the languages that have received some kind of official status or recognition. Migrant languages and, notably, English, are not included. Further, even some officially recognized languages, such as the distinct Sámi[1] languages, are not represented individually. A further challenge is that the map was produced from multiple sources, ranging from nation-states and supranational institutions such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (a resource dating from 1992 but comprising five ratifications), each with different aims and policies. Clearly, different sources reflect variation with regard to their preferred terms for languages, views on what constitutes these languages, and ways of accounting for their speakers. Finally, this map compiles information that is a snapshot of the time in which it was created, in the early 2000s. Note, for example, that the language Kven, an official minority language in Norway since 2005 (see Chapter 9), is described in this map as a "Finnish" language. These – and other – issues aside, Figure 1.1 nonetheless offer clear evidence of the languages that connect the region, which are overlaid with the presence of English.

### *Describing the Nordic countries*

So far, the terminology in the book has presented a rather confusing and even unsatisfactory view of what the Nordic countries are and what constitutes their commonality, leaving the reason for observing them in unison unanswered. Linguistic classifications do not create a full depiction for what entails "Nordicness" and what does not. Other classifications, then, are necessary to

establish the reason for this investigation. A main question thus emerges: Why look at the countries of this region as comprising a common area for a sociolinguistic examination? Where language classifications fall short, political, social, and other shared aspects of overall lifestyle emerge, creating a fuller picture of what characterizes the region.

In terms of geography and topography, each of these places occupies a position in Europe north of the 55th parallel, and most beyond the 60th parallel. This means that the areas comprising the Nordic region have a certain shared set of natural phenomena, including long, dark winters and prolonged daytime in the summers. This feature alone, of course, is not sufficient to account for a shared lifestyle, although it certainly contributes. A strictly geographical designation, of course, does little to offer a holistic view of the region, not least because other places in Europe lie north of 55 north and are not traditionally considered Nordic.

Politically and in terms of governance, the Nordic countries represent centuries of conflict, alliances, settlements, and manipulation not only external to the region, but within it. Historically, Sweden has been the most powerful country, exercising control over its neighbors and beyond the area (see Chapter 2). For example, the territory now recognized as the sovereign nation of Finland was for more than 800 years an eastern province of the Swedish crown. Norway, too, has been ruled by the Swedish as well as by the Danish crown. Denmark, in turn, has historically been a country exerting control not only globally, for example, through colonial rule in the West Indies, but regionally. Until it became a sovereign nation in 1944, Iceland was a territory under Danish rule. Currently, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are still part of the Kingdom of Denmark while governing to some extent independently.

A further major factor contributing to a similarity in lifestyle across the Nordic region is the dominance of the Lutheran religion.[2] With the Lutheran Reformation, which started at least in the Nordic countries with Sweden in the 1520s, the Lutheran Church began to exert leadership over censuses, taxation, and social control, in addition to other aspects of state administration. The tenets of the Church also meant that widespread literacy was a predictable feature of Nordic life, as going to church, understanding sermons, and being able to read scripture were components of Church doctrine. These principles, in turn, played a major unifying force in indoctrination not only into the lifestyle of the Church, but into the language community it created and maintained (Stenius 1997). The Lutheran Church has thus served to forge a certain level of uniformity in political, moral, and linguistic standards across the Nordic countries. This uniformity was strengthened with the nationalism that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries; some scholars have even claimed that the social democratic welfare state was a modern version of similar mechanisms of inclusion and homogenization of the Lutheran Church (Keskinen et al. 2019; Knudsen 2000; Nelson 2017).

Historically, there have been several economic and political alliances both external and internal to the region (see Chapter 3). For example, the Hanseatic League was a key group controlling major ports extending through Germany, Estonia, and into Sweden and Norway. This league was largely displaced by the Nordic Union, also known as the Kalmar Union, with its most influential figure Queen Margrete I of Denmark (Etting 2004). In the current era, there are numerous political, economic, and social ties between and among the Nordic countries. Denmark, Sweden, and Finland are all members of the European Union (EU), and Iceland and Norway are members of the European Economic Area. Since 1971, there has been an official Nordic Council of Ministers, which includes eleven different councils. There is a rotating presidency among the members of the Council, which includes the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland (Åland, a sovereign territory of Finland, is called Ahvenamaa in Finnish). Included among the many agreements are decisions about the movement of citizens within the Nordic countries, including university and workplace agreements.[3] At the time of writing, Sweden and Finland had jointly applied for NATO membership, reflecting mutual support that reaffirms contemporary Nordic solidarity.[4] At present, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are led by a parliamentary government with a monarch as head of state. Iceland and Finland are also led by a parliamentary government, but with an elected president as head of state.

The modern-day Nordic nation-states are perhaps most known for their model as a social welfare system of governance. Sweden, in particular, reached an apex of the social welfare style of governing in the 1970s (Pratt and Eriksson 2013, 66), and Sweden was also the first of the Nordic countries to adopt the model in the post-World War II era. This system serves to create a uniform set of social and lifestyle standards across the Nordic countries, key among them public health care, childcare, elderly care, education at all levels (see Chapter 7), as well as various public services. While many other national governments in the world operate social welfare systems of governing, relying heavily on taxation, it is the nations of the Nordic countries which serve as some of the system's most iconic examples. The relative success of the social welfare systems of governance in the Nordic countries, is linked, for example, to their continuous ranking on the annual *World Happiness Report* (Martela et al. 2020), with Finland currently ranked for the sixth time as the world's "happiest" nation.

While there are no doubt other forces that motivate the countries of the Nordic region as the subject of a logical joint investigation, these are some of the major factors: language, location, shared political and economic history, the dominant religion, and the modern-day form of governance. None of these factors arises as a singular or superior explanation for unification; rather, it is a combination of these and other factors that lead to the commonly held view that the Nordic region forms a self-evident bloc. Most importantly, it is the

people of the countries themselves who hold such views, as evidenced from the fruition of such official bodies as the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council, as well as other alliances.

These similarities in mind, it is crucial to point out that the Nordic countries also have distinct histories and trajectories in many ways. These include alliances and conflicts during the Napoleonic Wars and World War II (and other military conflicts), migration policies, indigenous people and languages, and a host of other distinguishing factors, many of which are introduced and expanded on further in the chapters of this volume (especially Chapter 2).

## English in the Nordic countries: An overview

While the previous section laid out the rationale for the scope of this volume's investigation, this section sets a foundation for the rest of the volume by establishing a few basic features of the English language in the Nordic setting.

First, a critical property is that English has entered into Nordic societies through what has been called "soft" or "cultural" imperialism. In other words, English did not enter into the Nordic setting as a result of colonization or colonialism (Pennycook 2017; Saraceni 2015), as it did, for example, in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Rather, starting in the period leading up to World War II and taking off in earnest in the post-war period, English was introduced as a foreign language as a component part of a new world order. In this world order, of course, the United States of America (USA) and Great Britain emerged as powerhouses of influence and, at the same time, exerted enormous cultural, economic, and political influence over other countries – including through the English language. For their part, the Nordic countries were eager to participate in this symbolic exchange (Peterson 2022), with the primary means of exposure stemming at the earliest stages from English-language learning, including in public schools.

A function of the social welfare system, the Nordic countries boast a relatively high overall standard of education. Finland, for example, has ranked among the highest in international assessments of education and learning (e.g., Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA) for several years, and Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are also among the highest-ranking countries in terms of student learning. A component of the Nordic educational system is the formal acquisition of foreign languages, which, since the post-World War II era, has mostly prioritized the English language. The use of English, in turn, is a heavy feature of contemporary globalization. The Nordic countries are, in the terminology of Buschfeld and Kautzsch (2017), societies that are open to or accepting of globalization, which connects specifically to English in its role as a global language. This means, for example, that the Nordic countries find "expression in […] linguistic and also cultural influences

**TABLE 1.1** Percentage per country of the EU (2012) population surveyed who claim they can have a conversation in English, ranked from highest to lowest

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ireland | 97 | Estonia | 50 |
| United Kingdom | 97 | Latvia | 46 |
| Netherlands | 90 | France | 39 |
| Malta | 89 | Lithuania | 38 |
| Denmark | 86 | Italy | 34 |
| Sweden | 86 | Poland | 34 |
| Austria | 73 | Romania | 31 |
| Cyprus | 73 | Czech Republic | 27 |
| Finland | 70 | Portugal | 27 |
| Slovenia | 59 | Slovakia | 26 |
| Germany | 56 | Bulgaria | 25 |
| Luxembourg | 56 | Spain | 22 |
| Belgium | 52 | Hungary | 20 |
| Greece | 51 | | |

coming from the Internet, US popular culture, and modern media as well as trading relations between countries," while at the same time offering an openness to accepting and not limiting access to these influences (Buschfeld and Kautzsch 2017, 214).

While English instruction was first introduced in the Nordic countries before the turn of the 20th century (see Chapter 3), the English education movement was launched in earnest after World War II. By the 1960s, the inclusion of English in the national school curricula was a *fait accompli* and understood as integral to socioeconomic advancement (Arnbjörnsdóttir 2018; Cabau-Lampa 1999, 2005; Graedler 2014; Hult 2012; Teleman 2003). Thus, the promotion of English as a required school subject was explicitly related to the use of English in business, industry, and trade in order to target international markets and to maximize each nation's global reach. In effect, the use of English has been institutionalized in the Nordic countries, with the goal of facilitating mutual communication with and contact between external parties.

It is no exaggeration that the use of English in the Nordic countries is something extraordinary in the current era. A recent survey of Nordic citizens aged 16–25 (Frøshaug and Stende 2021) showed the astonishing result that 95 percent of the respondents state that English is "easy," and 65 percent of respondents go so far as to claim that expression is "easier" in English than in their mother tongue. Compared to the other citizens of the European area and EU, those from Nordic countries routinely rank among the most proficient English speakers. For example, survey data from a Eurobarometer (European Commission 2012) study show that 70-80 percent of Nordic respondents claim they could have a conversation in English. Table 1.1 shows an overall breakdown

of the responses to a question asking about to a question asking about English conversation skills among EU citizens.

The survey, conducted in 2012 among citizens of the then-EU states (Croatia joined the EU in 2013, and the United Kingdom left in 2020), includes information from 26,751 respondents aged 15 or older and residing in an EU member state. There were approximately 1,000 respondents from each EU state except Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta, which, due to their lower populations, were represented by about 500 respondents each. A few details from Table 1.1 warrant explicit mention. The first is that, not surprisingly, countries where English is a main and/or official language show the highest overall level of proficiency, at 97 percent for both Ireland and the UK. Next in the list, however, comes the Netherlands, a country in which English is an additional language, with 90 percent of survey respondents claiming they could have a conversation in English. Malta follows at 89 percent; English and Maltese are official languages of Malta. Denmark and Sweden are both next on the list at 86 percent. The Nordic countries Iceland and Norway are not included in the study, as they are not EU member countries; however, it can be assumed that their reporting would be on par with Denmark and Sweden. Finland falls slightly lower in the ranking, after Cyprus and Austria, at 70 percent. This could be due to a few factors, including the fact that Finnish is not a member of the Germanic language family (see, e.g., Meriläinen 2020). These rankings support an established observation, as presented at the beginning of this introduction: there is an overall high level of proficiency in English in the Nordic countries, especially among younger people.

## Critical approaches in this volume

The premises described so far – the social setting, the various populations and their respective languages, the widespread use of English – bring to the forefront several key areas that warrant investigation in this volume. As proposed by an author in this volume (Lønsmann, Chapter 8), "the question is not only how much English is used […], but also why, how, and with what consequences."

The phenomenon of English in the Nordic countries brings to the forefront key notions related to language spread and language contact. For studies of language contact, the presence of the same foreign language, English, as a language of influence across multiple generations offers previously unavailable insights into contact phenomena (a topic taken up in Chapter 4 of this volume). Notably, this allows for reassessment of the supposedly more superficial contact which tends to characterize foreign language contact settings. Indeed, it has been argued in multiple accounts that English becomes something much more than a "foreign" language in the current era, with the possibility to enter into a

deeper level of language influence that normally typifies face-to-face language contact (Androutsopoulos 2014; Peterson 2017). There are both historical and contemporary reasons explaining why English figures so saliently and occupies a rather privileged position in the Nordic countries (see Chapter 3). Each of the nation-states has long had a policy of including English in the school curriculum beginning at the elementary levels and continuing into higher education (see Chapters 4 and 7), and of promoting the use of English in the domains of trade and industry (see Chapters 8 and 9).

The number of domains where English has become seemingly indispensable is constantly increasing (see Chapter 6; see also Aijmer and Melchers 2004; Bianchetti 2020; Haarmann and Holman 2001; Haberland 2005; Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson 2010; Josephson 2014; Phillipson 1992; Teleman 2003). Claims that English has precluded the native languages in certain domains of communication and interaction are countered by arguments that English does not pose a total threat to native Nordic languages, but rather serves as a linguistic resource for lending nuance to communication (Nowenstein and Sigurjónsdóttir 2021; Preisler 1999, 2003; Sharp 2001). However, considering the deliberate and even aggressive integration of English in Nordic societies, it is not surprising that the coexistence of languages can create tension with regards to the languages' respective positions and purposes (Linn 2016; Taavitsainen and Pahta 2003; Vikør 2010). The reigning characterization that "everyone speaks English" is an ideal that theoretically promotes inclusiveness, but for those who are unwilling to embrace or unable to excel in English, it can also serve divisive, exclusionary, or gatekeeping purposes. Against the background of overall positive associations of English in the Nordic countries, an extended analysis of how its widespread use has come about, as well as the results and repercussions of this development, are well warranted. Therefore, this volume represents not so much an overview of a "success" story, but rather serves as a set of critical investigations into the complex outcomes that occur when English is welcomed with open arms.

The Nordic countries serve as a model, and in many ways a lesson, on the benefits versus the costs of widespread use of English. Furthermore, it could be argued that, concurrent with the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, the Nordic countries may represent a new or at least expanded center of gravity for the English language, or in other words, a new epicenter for English (Hundt 2020). This reality constitutes a running theme throughout the manuscript which is treated explicitly in later chapters of the volume.

The treatment of the phenomena of English in the Nordic region is mostly limited in scope in this volume to the largest language populations: Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish. The decision to address the largest linguistic populations was a difficult choice that necessarily excluded compelling and important languages and populations who inhabit the region,

namely speakers of Eskimo-Aleut languages, Saamic languages (although see Chapter 9), Faroese, sign languages, migrant languages, and numerous others. With this volume, an aim is to create an overall picture of the contemporary language situation as regards English, which we hope can be followed up with an investigation of other languages and populations. The editors have aimed to enlist the expertise of at least one author from each of the main Nordic countries to achieve overall representation.

## English in the Nordic countries: Volume overview

While the volume reflects a broadly sociolinguistic approach, the various chapters make use of an array of theoretical perspectives and methods, drawing from such disciplines as critical sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, linguistic landscape, and ethnography. Together, the chapters make clear the need for a multidisciplinary investigation of the role of English in Nordic societies to account for how it affects national languages and language policies, linguistic ideologies and language attitudes, and a variety of social interactions.

In contrast to a traditional organization pattern for anthologies on World Englishes, this volume is first and foremost organized not by country, but rather considers the Nordic countries as a holistic and self-evident region for overall investigation. Throughout the volume, the Nordic countries are presented as a societal, economic, and political entity with ample differences, yet constituting a common core in terms of governance, territory, history, populations, and values (Strang 2018; see also Chapter 2). These properties emerge as critical connections also with regard to how English is acquired, used, and ultimately valued and regarded. Adopting a two-part structure, the volume first aims at synthesizing existing research and information to highlight uninvestigated perspectives and offer critical commentary on the actual extent and outcomes of the Nordic countries' investment in English. The thematic cohesiveness of the Nordic countries established in the first part of the volume thus sets the stage for the second part, which explores the role of English in common domains from everyday life, such as education, work, and home. These chapters represent original contributions in the form of transnational overviews complemented by focused investigations or case studies, providing a deeper exploration from the perspective of a specific country, but put into conversation with its Nordic neighbors.

### *Part I: Background and critical perspectives*

Part I offers a narrative arc in which the chapters begin with an overall description of the language situation, moving on to language contact with English, then to remote language contact, continuing to popular culture and code-switching, pragmatic borrowing, intimate language contact, and finally to ideologies and perceived domain loss.

The first contribution in this section is Chapter 2, "The role of English in the Nordic language system," by Johan Strang. In this chapter, Strang lays out the language politics of the Nordic countries, delineating pre-existing tensions and relationships. He reflects upon English as increasingly serving as a language of communication between officials and citizens of the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the three autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. Long before the rise of English as the premier language of the Nordic region, the citizens of most (not all) of these countries enjoyed the ability to communicate with each other in their own languages, as the Scandinavian languages of Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian are to a large extent mutually intelligible. In part, this mutual comprehensibility has been what makes Scandinavia and the greater Nordic region a cultural entity with its own distinctive traditions. On the one hand, Nordic cooperation and the Nordic community remains closely associated with the Scandinavian linguistic community; this chapter asks, might English threaten the very bonds that tie the Nordic nations and their peoples together? On the other hand, as the chapter provocatively proposes, English can also have a liberating and democratizing role in leveling hierarchies within the Nordic region itself. Indeed, the Scandinavian language community is the prerogative of those who speak one of the three Scandinavian languages – Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish – to the exclusion of, for example, Finnish-speaking Finns, Icelandic speakers, or speakers of Greenlandic or Saamic languages. The central argument of the chapter is that while the Scandinavian language community is culturally important and deserves political support, the democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive function provided by English as the new lingua franca in the Nordic region should also be recognized.

In Chapter 3, "Shifting connections between English and the languages of the Nordic region," Elizabeth Peterson establishes the shared history of the most dominant language family in the Nordic region, the Scandinavian group of languages, with English. From there, she moves on to discuss a series of contact phenomena between the Scandinavian languages and other languages of the Nordic countries with English over the centuries. This exploration includes Finno-Ugric languages in contact with Germanic languages, Scandinavian language influence exerted on the developing English language during the Middle Ages, and migration from the Nordic countries during the colonial period. In this exploration, she highlights that contact with English is not limited to the contemporary setting; the languages in question have a long, shared history. The key differences, she proposes, are that whereas the contact phenomena used to be characterized by outward movement of languages from the Nordic countries into English-speaking territories such as the British Isles and North America, contemporary contacts are characterized by the inward movement of people into the Nordic region, as well as general English language use in its role as a global language.

In Chapter 4, "Anglicization of the languages of the Nordic countries: Popular culture and everyday discourse," Kristy Beers Fägersten explores the status of Anglophone popular culture throughout the Nordic countries with regard to its relation to attitudes toward English and its effect on everyday discourse. Beers Fägersten notes that the stronghold the English language enjoys in the Nordic countries is in part a result of the early adoption of English-language popular culture, arguing further that, while familiarity with Anglophone literature and history once symbolized erudition and high intellectual pursuits, engagement with English in the Nordic countries is now more widely associated with popular culture. Enthusiastic consumption of English-language popular culture tends to be credited for the Nordic citizens' celebrated and mythicized exceptional skills in English, giving the distinct impression that the educational system offers little to no additional value. Indeed, the large-scale embrace of Anglophone popular culture may serve to erode one's faith in formal education in English or undermine the authority of teachers. Further consequences of the increasing orientation toward Anglophone popular culture include the very marked behaviors of code-switching and swearing. Beers Fägersten proposes that such behaviors characterize the pan-Nordic use of English, while the Nordic countries themselves are taking a page from the Anglophone popular culture handbook and themselves becoming significant creators of English-language popular culture. While there is no dedicated chapter in the volume dealing specifically with youth language, this is one of several chapters in which youth language figures prominently (others are Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 10).

The point of departure for Chapter 5, "Language contact and language change: Impact on the languages of the Nordic countries," by Helga Hilmisdóttir and Elizabeth Peterson, is the fact that, in settings where there is widespread multilingualism, expected outcomes include language borrowing and language change. In the Nordic countries, a high level of unidirectional borrowing from a foreign language is the result of long-term contact between national languages and English, giving rise to a sizable amount of research on how open Nordic populations are to English, who the main users of English are, and what kind of attitudes there are toward English and English borrowings. The chapter offers an overview of this research at the national level and makes comparisons across the Nordic nation-states, presenting a transnational overview of language attitudes toward English, assumptions and studies about which social groups have proficiency in English, and attitudes about varieties of English.

In Chapter 6, "Beyond threat or opportunity – English and language-ideological tensions in the Nordic countries," Janus Mortensen addresses the frequently cited and publicly lamented dominance of English over other languages, such that it is accused of being a predatory language. Many people in the Nordic countries believe that their languages, spoken by only a few million people, are at risk of being wiped out entirely or forever changed due to the

influence of English. The metaphorical fire that is English as a "killer" language is fanned by observations of domain loss among national languages. Mortensen suggests that the case of English in the Nordic countries can be taken as a prime example of language-ideological tensions caught up in complex processes of ongoing sociolinguistic change. Mortensen notes a change in the acceptance of English starting in approximately the 1990s, a time when the notion of "domain loss" discourse began to take hold. The chapter includes a historical summary of the debate, with an emphasis on how it has played out in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Taking a closer look at some of the processes that helped shape the domain loss debate and both past and present perceptions of English in the Nordic countries, Mortensen highlights attitudes toward English among members of the public, drawing on survey studies conducted in the Nordic countries and recent examples from the public debate in Denmark. He argues that although discussions about English as a threat or an opportunity are still ongoing today, the current language-ideological climate is not exactly the same as it was in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century. The chapter encourages us to reconsider whether the binary view of English as a threat or an opportunity is still the most relevant way to conceptualize the role of English in the Nordic countries, highlighting that for everyday language users, English is neither a threat nor an opportunity, but a natural choice alongside their native language(s).

### *Part II: English in different settings*

In the second part of the volume, "Part II: English in different settings," the chapters explore the presence, imposition, or active use of English in various everyday contexts and social settings. While each chapter includes a transnational, pan-Nordic perspective, they also include case studies, taking a closer look at the issue at hand from within one Nordic country as a specific example with representative potential. Part II begins with the domain of higher education. In Chapter 7, "Parallelingualism, translanguaging, and English-medium instruction in Nordic higher education," BethAnne Paulsrud and Una Cunningham provide a thorough overview of the internationalization efforts within higher education in the Nordic countries, which often take the form of teaching in English or incorporating English-language course literature. The use of English at Nordic universities is increasingly common and has resulted in an influx of international students, facilitating the practice of "internationalization at home" for domestic students of Nordic universities. However, while the practice of parallelingualism promotes the use of English alongside the national language, it also creates a binary that excludes the languages represented by international students. At the same time, the promotion of internationalization via English-medium instruction at Nordic universities presumes a high proficiency in English among the domestic university students (and teachers), but there is evidence that such students can

experience dissatisfaction with English-language teaching and materials and insecurity in their own language abilities when they are prevented from using their most proficient language. Paulsrud and Cunningham furthermore point out that the pre-eminence of English as the language of internationalization may serve to marginalize both local languages and neighboring languages, jeopardizing an opportunity for the active use of Nordic languages and a promotion of mutual intelligibility. Surveying the context of higher education in multilingual Sweden, the authors suggest that the practice of translanguaging can provide an ideological space for multiple languages to be made visible, so as to move beyond the binaries established by parallelingualism in the Nordic context of English-medium instruction.

It is in large part due to a commitment to the use of English that the Nordic countries have experienced a high degree of success, visibility, and collaboration in international commerce. However, while the investment in English has opened doors and paved the way for economic advancement, it has also served to marginalize native language usage, notably Scandinavian as a lingua franca. Chapter 8, "English in the Nordic workplace: Practices, policies, and ideologies," reflects an intersection between critical sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, whereby Dorte Lønsmann surveys the use of English as a language of industry and corporate communication in the Nordic countries, focusing specifically on the use of English as a lingua franca in the Danish branch of an international business. The transition from Danish to English as the language of internal communication has resulted in a positioning of English as an immediate threat both to the use of other foreign languages, thus contributing to their "erasure" and to the Danish language in professional contexts. While this chapter provides evidence of employees actively rejecting the imposition of English (for example, by categorical deletions of any email in English!), it also highlights the theme of language practices that are inclusionary in theory but may serve to marginalize any non-majority language. Lønsmann notes that both non-English and non-Danish speakers can be targeted, such that when English is used for inclusivity of non-Danish employees, it may alienate and frustrate some Danish colleagues, whereas when Danish is used to foster assimilation and community, it may serve to exclude non-Danish speakers. Lønsmann argues that English as a corporate language is not a reliable panacea.

Florian Hiss continues the exploration of the role of English in language practices in different Nordic settings in Chapter 9, "English in Norway's multilingual North: A rhizomatic view on encounters with historical and transnational diversity." In this chapter, Hiss considers three case studies of the use of English in Northern Norway: in the linguistic landscape of Tromsø, in workplaces throughout the region, and at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. Thus, this contribution serves the vital distinction of describing a region where indigenous and minority languages exist alongside national and foreign languages. First, Hiss's photo documentation illustrates how English and Norwegian, though used side by side and in the same

communicative context, in fact serves a diglossic purpose, constructing two different language groups and users: on the one hand, English is used to target tourists, while Norwegian, on the other hand, addresses the locals. In other contexts, however, the divisions between languages becomes blurred. The Sámi culture is furthermore added to the mix, commodified in an appeal to tourists. Despite the use of languages to target different addresses, the incorporation of language play suggests multilingual competence. Second, Hiss presents findings from surveys and interviews carried out on employees from over 140 companies throughout Northern Norway. While English is framed as a language of inclusion and equal participation, it nevertheless creates ideological tensions between Norwegian and the languages of Sámi and Kven, and, in some ways, serves to further reinforce inequalities. The third case study concerning the use of English at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences shows that English can, somewhat unexpectedly, have a preservative function, as it mitigates the threat to Sámi presented by the use of Norwegian. Finally, Hiss puts the three cases in conversation with each other, applying a rhizomatic approach which highlights the interconnectedness of the cases and the fact that they do not stem from one position or role of English but rather each contribute to a constant renegotiation of language practices and ideologies in this multilingual setting.

The practice of engaging in language play and linguistic creativity is the main theme of Chapter 10, "Metapragmatics of 'bad' English in Finnish social media," by Samu Kytölä. In this chapter, Kytölä invokes theories from multilingualism research, metapragmatics and (super)diversity in digital communication to investigate how incidentally non-standard and deliberately creative usages of English, corresponding to "bad" and "deliberately bad" English, respectively, appear as a source of humor and jokes in online discourse in Finland. These usages trigger metalinguistic reflection and metapragmatic discussion focusing on how "bad" English and "deliberately bad" English invite different kinds of mockery, partly based on whether the language play reveals the user as a non-Finn or native Finn. This chapter thus addresses the use of English that is not imposed upon Nordic citizens, but rather is appropriated by them voluntarily as an act of creativity and identity construction. The significance of English language proficiency to Nordic identity, and how self-expression in English can be both unfettered and restricted by non-native status are addressed in the chapter's case studies of "bad" English in Finnish online football (soccer) forums.

The adoption of English by the relatively sparsely populated Nordic countries on the outskirts of Europe has long been touted as a necessary linguistic strategy to facilitate communication with the rest of the world and increase socioeconomic advantage. At the same time, the integration of English in the Nordic countries has been supported by such bottom-up forces as English-language popular culture and social media. The widespread use of English in the Nordics due to both public policy and cultural developments has resulted in the use of English as a lingua franca across all domains both within and between the Nordics. Further evidence of the use of English impacting upon all aspects of daily life can be found in its

use in intimate relationships. Exploring this latter theme, Kaisa S. Pietikäinen and Louisa Gühr contribute with the chapter, "English in Nordic multilingual families: Couple and family language practices." Drawing on interview data from four families, one living in Norway and the rest in Finland, the authors describe the use of English in the home setting, including emergent family language policies, practices, and processes such as code-switching and translanguaging. Chapter 11 thus draws parallels from other chapters in the volume, addressing, for example, the inclusive versus exclusive functions of English within family constellations. The choice to use English as a home language can, on the one hand, support and on the other hand, compromise partners' chances of learning the local language. The authors highlight the lesser importance the parents attach to English compared to other languages in parent-child interaction and the isolating effect that English could have on the children, which is why some families had developed measures such as an "English jar" to curb the use of English.

The volume concludes with Chapter 12, "English in the Nordic countries: Conclusions." This chapter offers a brief overview that both synthesizes the content of the chapters and clarifies how the volume advances research on the Nordic countries from the perspective of English as a world language. Significantly, the chapter features queries to prominent scholars of the field, who have remarked on the most important issues today as well as the future of English-related research in the Nordic countries. In this way, we hope the chapter serves not only to conclude the volume but also to point out potential paths of future research.

## Notes

1 There are different ways of spelling *Sámi*, for example, the Finnish spelling, *Saami*. The spellings used in this book vary according to context. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Florian Hiss in discussing Figure 1.1.
2 For this portion of the introduction, the authors gratefully acknowledge the input and contributions of Johan Strang.
3 www.norden.org/en/information/official-nordic-co-operation.
4 Finland was granted NATO membership on April 4, 2023; Sweden's membership was still being negotiated at the time of publication.

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# PART I

# Background and critical perspectives

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# 2

# THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC LANGUAGE SYSTEM

*Johan Strang*[1]

## Introduction

There was something reassuring about how naturally the joint press conference on April 13, 2022, between the Finnish Prime Minister, Sanna Marin, and Swedish Prime Minister, Magdalena Andersson, was conducted in English. Traditionally, Finnish political leaders have made much effort to communicate in Swedish with their Scandinavian colleagues in official settings. This has been a symbolic validation of the bilingual status of Finland, as well as a confirmation of its status as a Nordic country. The latter was particularly important during the Cold War period because it was by being Nordic that Finland aspired for a position on the western side of the Iron Curtain, despite having to deal with heavy Soviet pressure and ending up on the losing side of World War II (Koikkalainen 2010; Majander 2004). In 2022, however, there were no eyebrows raised against having an official press conference in English – in fact, more attention was given to Prime Minister Marin's leather jacket, which thrilled and confused the Swedish press (*Aftonbladet* April 13, 2022; *Expressen* April 13, 2022; *Dagens industri* April 13, 2022).

To be sure, the subject of the press conference – Finnish and Swedish NATO membership – was of great international interest, and the intention was undoubtedly to send clear signals across the Atlantic Ocean to North America by using English. But the choice of language also undeniably reflected how English is taking over from the three Scandinavian languages, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, in intra-Nordic communication. Usually, resorting to English is taken as a sign of a deteriorating Nordic communality, and Sanna Marin herself belongs to the group of (younger) Finnish politicians who are less comfortable

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with Swedish than their predecessors. On this occasion, the logic was different, or even the complete opposite. With a perceived rising security threat following the Russian aggression on Ukraine, the existential bond between the Nordic nations Finland and Sweden was stronger than ever before, perhaps with the exception of the Finnish Winter War 1939–1940. The choice of English during the press conference signaled efficiency, professionalism, and urgency. It was hardly insignificant that Finland, having trodden further along the path toward NATO, appeared to be in the driver's seat, while it was Sweden's turn to react to decisions and developments on the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia. Indeed, it seemed as if Finland had finally earned the respect of its so-called "bigger brother" and took part in the conversation on equal grounds.

In this chapter, I reflect upon the growing role of English as a language of communication between officials and citizens of the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the three autonomous regions – the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. As the example of Prime Ministers Marin and Andersson indicates, this is far from an uncomplicated issue. On the one hand, Nordic cooperation and the Nordic community remains closely associated with the Scandinavian language community. For some, it is the mutual comprehensibility of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish that makes the Nordic region a cultural entity with its own distinctive traditions, and from such a perspective, English threatens the very bonds that tie the Nordic nations and their peoples together. On the other hand – and this is the main provocation of this chapter – English can also have a liberating and democratizing role in leveling cultural and political hierarchies within the Nordic region itself.

The argument is simple: the Scandinavian language community is the prerogative of those who speak one of the three Scandinavian languages – Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish, but the Nordic region also comprises 5 million Finnish-speaking Finns, 350,000 people for whom Icelandic is a first language, as well as up to 100,000 speakers of the indigenous Greenlandic or Saamic languages. In addition, there is a growing number of migrants from outside the region whose first language is something other than a Scandinavian language.[2] For these language groups, the Scandinavian language community can constitute not merely a hurdle, but an instrument of distinction and discrimination that separates "genuine" from "less genuine" members of the Nordic community (Heller 1995; Rojo 2016). The Scandinavian language community is culturally important and deserves political support, but in this chapter, I emphasize the democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive function provided by English as the new lingua franca in the Nordic region.

The chapter begins with an overview of the status of the Scandinavian language community before moving on to a discussion of the cultural and linguistic hierarchies of the region, which can be referred to as the Nordic language system (de Swaan 2001). This opens up for an analysis of the growing

role of English in trans-Nordic communication: is English a help or a hindrance for Nordic cooperation and for sustaining the Nordic community in general?

## Is the Nordic language community in decline?

Following centuries of religious, national, and welfare state homogenization (see Chapter 1), the national majority languages of the Nordic countries have had a very strong position, but the history and politics of language differs across the region. Linguists usually divide the spoken Nordic languages into three main groups: 1) North Germanic/Scandinavian; 2) Finno-Ugric; and 3) Eskimo-Aleut (sign languages of the Nordic countries constitute a fourth group). The first group includes Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, as well as Faroese and Icelandic. Faroese and Icelandic are insular and conserved versions of West Scandinavian, no longer entirely comprehensible for Scandinavian language speakers on the mainland. The second group comprises the Finnish and Sámi languages, including the Finnic languages Kven and Meänkieli. Greenlandic, in turn, is classified as an Eskimo-Aleut language, related to the Inuit languages in Canada. In addition to these languages, there is a large number of minority languages, some of which have a long history in the region (e.g., Yiddish, Romani, German), and others which have arrived with more recent immigration (e.g., Greek, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Kurdish, Arabic, Somali, Polish, Chinese, Thai). Up until the 1970s, policies directed at both indigenous peoples and immigrants aimed at "civilizing" them in order to incorporate them as equal citizens. Learning the dominant majority language was an important part of this (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012).

There are hundreds of languages spoken in the region, but it is the mutual comprehensibility of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish that forms the basis of a shared regional identity. The idea of a "Nordic," not merely "Scandinavian," language community builds on the historical presence of Danish in Greenland, Faroe Islands, and Iceland, and of Swedish in Finland. This is a story with imperial and even colonial connotations, and a constellation that continues to be infused with more or less subtle manifestations of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991; see also Heller 1995; Rojo 2016).

The received view has for a long time been that the overall Scandinavian language community is in decline, and more often than not, the rise of English is singled out as one of the main culprits. Some scholars assert that there is a fair amount of nostalgia at play here. Every generation is concerned with its youth, and although older people usually understand the other Scandinavian languages better than young people do, scholars tend to suggest that this is because they have more experience with them than young people have. That is, there is an assumption that older generations were not so good at understanding Scandinavian when they themselves were young (Delsing and Åkesseon 2005,

115). The state of the Scandinavian language community is a complicated issue to study because of the many regional, social, and age-related variations that must be accounted for. Complementary studies have not been conducted over time, so there is no way of conclusively confirming or denying the deterioration narrative.

The most credible studies of the state of the Scandinavian language community are Øivind Maurud's (1976) *Nabospråksforståelse i Skandinavia* (Understanding of neighbor languages) and Lars-Olof Delsing and Katarina Lundin's Åkesson's (2005) *Håller språket ihop Norden?* (Does language keep the Nordic region together?), which both set out to investigate the population's actual knowledge of the Scandinavian languages. In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers have conducted several smaller studies, usually based on interviews or larger surveys on (mainly young) people's self-reported understanding and knowledge of the Scandinavian languages (e.g., Brink 2016; Frøshaug and Stende 2021). While the studies are all different in nature, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn from them.

First, the studies suggest that Norwegians understand the Scandinavian languages better than other speakers of Scandinavian languages do. Norwegians find it particularly easy to read Danish and to understand spoken Swedish. One explanation for this is that written Norwegian is very similar to written Danish, whereas spoken Norwegian often sounds more like Swedish than Danish (Delsing and Åkesson 2005, 74–75, 136; Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 4; Torp 2004, 70–72). Norway has also been part of both Denmark and Sweden, a history which arguably has manifested itself in a post-imperial habit of following news and debates in those countries. Another major reason why Norwegians find Danish and Swedish comparatively easy lies in their greater historical and political tolerance for dialects, a point taken up later in this chapter.

Secondly, the studies show that Danes understand Norwegian, especially written Norwegian, well, but have a harder time with Swedish. Correspondingly, Swedes understand particularly spoken Norwegian well but find spoken Danish quite difficult (Delsing and Åkesson 2005, 77–78). Outside of these three Scandinavian countries, it is the Faroese who understand the different Scandinavian languages the best – in fact, almost as well as the Norwegians do (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 4). The Icelanders and Greenlanders, by contrast, have a much harder time understanding the Scandinavian languages. The Swedish-speaking Finns (including the Ålanders) understand Norwegian and Danish at the same level as the Swedes, while their Finnish-speaking compatriots have even more difficulty understanding Scandinavian languages than the Icelanders and Greenlanders do. Finnish is not only a very different language than the Scandinavian ones, but also a larger and, as such, more self-sustainable language than Greenlandic or even Icelandic (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 14).

Another interesting observation in the studies is that many Scandinavian language speakers report that their first confrontation with a spoken foreign Scandinavian language is something of a shock (Brink 2016, 142). The preconception that one should be able to understand the other Scandinavian languages is often based on the similarity of the written languages. However, the preconception might also have grown out of political indoctrination conducted by official Nordic cooperation (the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers) as well as by civil society actors such as the Nordic associations, who often see the Scandinavian language community as the basis of Nordic communality. When talking to each other, Scandinavians sometimes "Scandinavize" their language, substituting single words or using phrases from the other languages. However, there is no established common Scandinavian-based lingua franca: when Nordic people say they communicate in "Scandinavian," the communication normally takes place in two or three different languages. To overcome difficulties, they tend to talk slower, explain things more elaborately, and use livelier body language (Uhlmann 2002).

Research also provides at least some support to the view that Nordic citizens understood each other better in the past; that is, there is some support for the notion that the Scandinavian language community is deteriorating (Delsing and Åkesson 2005, 115–135). Interestingly enough, the studies suggest that Norwegians understand other Scandinavian languages at a similar level as they did 20 or 50 years ago, whereas the Danes and the Swedes both have become less proficient in the other Scandinavian languages. Popular opinion holds that the Danish language is, if not deteriorating, then at least becoming more difficult to understand. This claim is commonly supported by the observation that a Danish radio or TV broadcast from the 1950s is more comprehensible for a Swede than a contemporary broadcast and by studies indicating that even Danish children have a harder time learning to read and write than their Scandinavian peers (Bleses et al. 2008).

The reasons for declining mutual comprehensibility among the Scandinavian language community are probably manifold. The studies point at mega-trends such as globalization and technological development (satellite television, internet, social media), or to economic and political transformations such as EU membership (Delsing and Åkesson 2005, 143–147). However, as the Norwegians' knowledge in Danish and Swedish is at a similar level as before, there seem to be other social and political factors involved. To put it bluntly: whereas the Norwegians seem to hold continued interest in Denmark and Sweden, the Danes and Swedes seem to have lost some of their interest in their Nordic neighbors and particularly in each other. At times, the countries have even served as each other's counter images in heated debates, especially when it comes to immigration policy (Jalving 2011; Sundström 2009).

To be sure, the studies also point at the increasing dominance of English as one of the main reasons for the declining Scandinavian language community. Nordic people today know English better than they did 50 or even 20 years ago, while their understanding of Scandinavian languages has declined (Delsing and Åkesson 2005, 105). A recent study indicates that 95 percent of young people think English is easy, and a staggering 65 percent think that it is sometimes easier to express oneself in English than in their first language (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 5). In intra-Nordic communication, the Norwegians stand out as those who most often stick to Scandinavian, Danes and Swedes use English as often as they use Scandinavian, whereas Finns and Icelanders tend to opt for English exclusively (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 5). The studies also emphasize that the languages are used for different purposes: English is preferred as a professional language because it is perceived as efficient and reducing the risk for misunderstandings, while in more informal meetings such as coffee breaks or at dinners, Nordic people often switch over to Scandinavian because it is more intimate and personal. On such occasions, English might be experienced as a bit formal and distanced (Brink 2016, 103–131).

## Hierarchies among the Scandinavian languages

From the outside, the Nordic region is often presumed to be a harmonious group of countries with few, if any, internal grudges. There have not been any intra-Nordic military conflicts since the Napoleonic Wars, and the five nations have learned to trust and consider each other as close allies. The four large Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden – are rather equal in population. There is no one nation that dominates the community in a similar way as, for example, England does in the United Kingdom. However, this does not mean that there are no internal hierarchies, or that the Scandinavian or indeed Nordic languages are equal to each other. On the contrary, there are some languages considered more central and others more peripheral in the region, and the languages compete with and accommodate each other in ways that should be analyzed from a political, economic, and sociological perspective (de Swaan 2001).

On a very basic level, the region consists of the old states Denmark and Sweden, which have a long history as semi-large empires, and the new nations Finland, Iceland, and Norway, all of which have a history as parts of Denmark and/or Sweden but gradually gained sovereignty in the 19th and 20th centuries. Arguably, this means that the people in the new nations have a historically conditioned post-imperial habit of following the debates and developments in the old states, whereas the Danes and Swedes tend to be less interested in their smaller and more peripheral neighbors. Indeed, it is not often discussed how contingent the Scandinavian language

community was first on the position of Copenhagen as a literary and cultural semi-center during the so-called "Scandinavian moment in world literature," and on the economic and political leadership of Sweden during the heyday of the social democratic welfare state in the 1970s. In the late 19th century, the most important Scandinavian publishing houses were located in Copenhagen, and it was through cultural mediators such as Georg Brandes and Harald Høffding that intellectuals from the more peripheral Nordic countries gained access to the intellectual centers on the European continent (Fulsås and Rem 2017; Nygård and Strang 2016). Reading and understanding Danish was necessary for aspiring intellectuals across the Nordic region.

Later, Sweden took over this intra-Nordic leadership position. Sweden emerged as an exceptionally successful and wealthy country after the Great Depression and World War II. In due course, the Swedish welfare state achieved a unique international position as a political beacon that pushed the frontiers of modernity in the eyes of progressives worldwide and certainly in the neighboring Nordic countries (Andersson and Hilson 2009; Childs 1936; Marklund 2013). Applying the words of the German historian Reinhart Koselleck (1979), Swedish society became a "horizon of expectation" in political debates across the region. It was to Sweden that intellectuals, policy experts, and politicians in the other Nordic countries looked for models to implement at home. Perhaps particularly in Finland, the rhetoric of "Nordicness" became a way of framing the Swedish people's home (*folkhemmet*) as the future of Finnish society as well (Kettunen 2001; Strang, Marjanen, and Hilson 2021).

The extent to which this Swedish political and economic leadership spilled over to the cultural sphere and further on to language relations is difficult to prove with any certainty. During the era of public service monopolies, Swedish radio and television were an important complement to Danish, Norwegian, and Finnish national TV in the border regions, much more so than the other way around (*Grannlands-TV i kabelnät* 1997, 45–49; Lindgren 2009; *Nordisk tv på tværs af grænser* 2019). Arguably, there was a similar asymmetry at play regarding other cultural expressions. Literature, children's literature, pop music, and various magazines were more often exported from Sweden to the neighbors than the other way around, meaning that the Scandinavian neighbors were exposed to Swedish culture and language more than the Swedes were exposed to Danish or Norwegian culture or language. Elsewhere, I have speculatively argued that Swedish culture, whether it was ABBA, Ingmar Bergman, or Astrid Lindgren, or politicians like Olof Palme, was permeated by the universal ambition of speaking to humankind, whereas Danish, Finnish, and Norwegian cultural expressions were more provincial and national in their outlook (Nygård and Strang 2017, 70–75; Strang 2018).

The fact that the Swedish leadership position has crumbled since the end of the Cold War has probably had a negative effect on the Scandinavian language

community. With the internationalization (or Americanization) of both the economy and the cultural sphere, it is no longer as much to Sweden that the Nordic neighbors look as a model. In fact, the role of Sweden has in some ways become almost the reverse. Sweden continues to represent the future for its Nordic neighbors, but it is in some ways a future that they seek to avoid. Polarized debates on immigration, neoliberalism, and Covid 19-measures, for example, have mutated the role of Sweden from a utopia that the Nordics hated to love, to a dystopia they love to hate (Strang 2021a). There are also other reasons for the decline of Swedish leadership in the region. Economic and social factors are crucial. Whereas Sweden pulled many immigrants from Finland in particular during the 1960s and ’70s, it is today quite common that young Swedes go to Copenhagen or Norway for work. Linguistically, this means that the neighbors no longer feel obliged to adapt to a Swedish hegemony, but that adaptation takes place more equally than before. The increased proficiency in English and the rising position of English as a primary language in various fields of culture, business, and academia are undoubtedly also contributing factors. On a political level, much effort has been put into leveling the hierarchies between the Nordic languages. In 1987, the Nordic governments agreed on a language convention stating that official authorities in the region should be able to provide service in Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish (Agazzi 2017). The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages raised political awareness around language problematics and contributed to the recognition of Finnish, Romani, Yiddish, and Meänkieli as official minority languages in Sweden (Landqvist and Spetz 2020).

Norway occupies a special position in the Nordic language system. As a vast and scarcely populated country, Norway is blessed with many different dialects that have more social and public functions than dialects in the other Nordic countries (Akselberg 2002; see also Chapter 9). This is plausibly one of the reasons why Norwegians tend to have few problems in understanding Danish and Swedish, which may appear as merely other variations of Norwegian. However, this also contributes to the asymmetric relationship with Denmark and Sweden, where the Norwegians understand and follow culture and debates in these countries much more than the Danes and Swedes follow Norwegian culture and debate.

Norway is in many ways a bastion of linguistic tolerance, but also of language struggle. In terms of written language, Norwegian was basically identical to Danish up until the 19th century, when some authors started experimenting by incorporating some local Norwegian words and syntax in their writing. It was also as part of the 19th century romantic nationalist movement that *nynorsk* “new Norwegian” was born, causing a language feud that carried into the 20th century. New Norwegian was created by the botanist and self-taught linguist Ivar Aasen (1813–1896), who gathered rural dialects mainly from the remote

fjord landscapes in western Norway. Initially, it was called *landsmål* (country/rural language), as opposed to *riksmål* (state language), which remained closer to Danish (Bull 2002). With independence in 1905, Norway became a bilingual country consisting of numerous spoken dialects, and two written norms, which in a 1929 reform were renamed as *nynorsk* (new Norwegian) and *bokmål* (book language). Today, some 10 to 15 percent of Norwegians use new Norwegian, and its official status means that it is taught as a compulsory subject in schools, and that official institutions are required to communicate in both written norms. Particularly significant is the mobilizing role that new Norwegian has had for the preservation and visibility of dialects in the Norwegian public sphere. Dialects were accepted at theaters, as well as on national radio and television at an earlier stage in Norway than in the other Nordic countries, where the strife toward centralization and standardization was stronger.

## Hierarchies among the languages of the Nordic countries as a whole

The linguistic hierarchies of the region become even more apparent when one looks outside of the three principally Scandinavian-speaking countries. Greenland and the Faroe Islands remain parts of the Danish Realm (*Rigsfælleskabet*), which means that while the Greenlandic (*Inatsisartut*) and Faroese (*Løgting*) parliaments have extensive authority over local affairs such as public services, police, town planning, welfare services, culture, and so on, certain issues such as monetary policies, citizenship, and foreign and security policy remain under Danish control. Historically, Danish was the main administrative language on both the Faroe Islands and Greenland. On the Faroe Islands, activity in schools and churches was conducted completely in Danish as late as the 1930s, and it was only in connection with the new Home Rule Act of 1948 that Faroese became the main official language. It took until 1975 before the high schools (*gymnasier*) switched from Danish to Faroese. Today, Danish remains as the official second language on the Faroe Islands, which is taught in schools at an early age – as, of course, is English.

In Greenland, the presence of Danish as an educational, administrative, and political language is strongly permeated by colonial problems. While the Danish colonizers originally were eager to learn the language of the native Greenlanders in order to spread Christian civilization, and therefore initially supported the evolution of the indigenous languages in education and culture, political administration remained wholly in Danish. After 1953, when the status of Greenland was changed from a colony to a county (*amt*), Danish became increasingly dominant as a language of education, public administration, hospitals, and industry (Brincker 2022). The Home Rule Act of 1979 as well as the Self Rule Act of 2009 strengthened the position of Greenlandic, but all

children are still taught Danish in school, and Danish remains strong among the political and administrative elites, some of whom do not even know Greenlandic. It has been suggested that everyone in an official position should at least commit to learning Greenlandic, but the issue is politically controversial (Gad 2009).

Greenland remains a postcolonial society where the elite population is more Danish than the subaltern, and the subaltern more Greenlandic than the elite. Danish represents a path to progress, but as the language of the former colonizer, it is also very difficult to combine with a Greenlandic (national) identity. English plays a crucial role in these debates on Greenlandic post-coloniality and independence. There is a movement toward increasing the role of English, for example, by replacing Danish with English as the first foreign language in schools, but precisely as on the Faroe Islands, some claim that Danish remains important as it enables the youth to seek free higher education in Denmark or other Nordic countries. At the same time, some scholars and commentators have argued that abandoning Danish in favor of the more "neutral" English could serve as a way of embracing modernity and providing global opportunities without excluding the Danish speakers in the same way as a monolingual Greenland would (Gad 2009). As such, English could have the democratizing effect of overcoming the binary tension between Greenlandic and Danish languages in the construction of a new post-postcolonial Greenlandic identity. In a society where the colonial tension is manifested in a language other than English, the new global lingua franca could play an emancipating role.

It is sometimes argued that in gradually phasing out Danish, the Faroe Islands and Greenland follow the path of Iceland, who earned sovereignty (in a personal union with Denmark) in 1918 and full independence in 1944. Crucially, however, the Icelandic language had a rather established position long before the political independence of Iceland. The Bible was translated into Icelandic already in the 16th century, in connection with the Lutheran Reformation. Instruction in schools was always in Icelandic, even if much of the reading materials were in Danish. That said, the position of Danish has undoubtedly been very strong in Iceland. In the 19th century, it was seen as an important goal to strengthen the proficiency in Danish among the Icelandic youth in order for them to get access to higher education at the University of Copenhagen. By way of paradox, the very same process also strengthened Icelandic nationalism, which gave rise to antipathies toward the position of Danish as an elite language in Iceland (Karlsson 2009). The same ambivalence continued to mark Icelanders' attitudes toward Danish also in the 20th century: political resentment was on an individual level often combined with an urge to learn Danish in order to get access to education, knowledge, culture, and entertainment. Today, Iceland is the only country in the world where Danish is taught as a foreign language in schools and the teaching receives support from Denmark. From an Icelandic point of view, the idea is arguably no longer to provide Icelanders with access

to Danish higher education – there are many domestic opportunities, and many Icelanders study in the USA or UK. Instead, teaching in Danish serves to signal the "Nordicness" of Iceland and to provide Icelanders with a key to the rest of the Scandinavian languages. The position of Danish is seldom a topic of controversy in Icelandic debates. However, in 1999, the government decided that English would replace Danish as the first foreign language taught in schools, and as such, it could perhaps be argued that the English language serves to loosen the ties to Denmark. At the same time, it needs to be emphasized that the Icelandic relationship to English has imperial connotations of its own, following the British pre-emptive occupation in 1940, and the American military presence during the Cold War. Today the dominating language debate in Iceland concerns the future of the Icelandic language itself, and in this discussion, it is definitively English rather than Danish that comprises the main threat.

The position of Swedish in Finland bears some resemblance to that of Danish in Iceland, with the important difference that Finland has had (and continues to have) a Swedish-speaking minority that has never exclusively been connected to political and administrative elites. Like Icelandic, the Finnish language has a long history and is by far the largest non-Scandinavian language in the Nordic region. Mikael Agricola, who translated the New Testament into Finnish in 1548, is generally considered the father of the written Finnish language. However, as Finland was part of the Swedish Empire until 1809, it was only during the period of romantic nationalism in the 19th century, when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, that Finnish developed into a political and cultural language able to support a nation (Hyvärinen et. al. 2003). For a long time, Swedish continued to have a privileged position as the main language of politics, culture, and economy in Finland, and the degree to which the Finnish language would strengthen in comparison to Swedish became a key issue for the national movement. Whereas only a diminishing faction of Finnish elites longed for a reunification with Sweden, the main struggle concerned whether Finland should be completely Fennicized, or whether it was possible to be a Finnish national(ist) in two different languages (Engman 2016). The language feud continued after the independence in 1917 and was often connected to debates regarding the geopolitical orientation of Finland. The so-called "nordists" (not least within the social democratic labor movement) supported a Scandinavian orientation, while others denied the value of Sweden and Scandinavia as a bridge to Europe. According to these groups, Finnish sovereignty and nationalism could be developed on its own, under German protection, or in cooperation with other border states to Russia (Meinander 2016). Approaching World War II and especially during the Cold War, Nordic orientation became a lifeline to the West, which meant that the Swedish language had a special geopolitical significance (Majander 2004). Even if the Swedish minority in Finland continued to decrease in proportion

(from 12.9 percent in 1900 to 7.4 percent in 1960), Swedish remained an official language, and Swedish skills were required for many official positions. The school reform of 1968 made Swedish a compulsory subject in Finnish elementary schools, which it has remained until today. Today, Finland is officially a bilingual country with approximately 5 percent of the population registered as Swedish speakers, mainly on the southern and western coastlines, as well as on the Åland Islands, which have an autonomous status not unlike that of Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

For some Finns, particularly within the national conservative and populist True Finns Party and the Association of Finnish Culture and Identity (*Suomalaisuuden liitto*), the status of Swedish in Finnish society has remained a source of irritation. Arguing that Finnishness and the Finnish language are inseparable from each other, they have attacked what they see as the unreasonable linguistic privileges of Swedish speakers in Finland. Some radicals have even used a de-colonial rhetoric of emancipation from the legacy of Swedish dominance and subjugation. Others have merely pointed to the futility of Swedish skills in an increasingly English-speaking world or argued that the instruction in Swedish compromises the teaching of other foreign languages such as German, French, Spanish, or Russian (Sundell 2015). As a result of these debates, the second domestic language was exempted from the high school exams in 2003, and in 2018 the government launched a "language trial" (*kielikokeilu*) whereby municipalities were allowed to introduce the possibility for pupils to replace Swedish with another foreign language besides English. Very few pupils turned out to be interested in participating in the trial, perhaps because Swedish remains a requirement for academic degrees and for many public positions (*YLE* May 5, 2018). There has also been a discussion in some larger cities on whether English should receive an official position comparable to that of Swedish in order to accommodate for the needs of a growing immigrant population (*The Guardian* February 11, 2021). Some Finland–Swedish politicians and media were concerned that this was a sneaky way of weakening the position of Swedish. In general, however, English is seldom juxtaposed against Swedish in the Finnish language debates, except perhaps in the discussions on Nordic cooperation.

## The English invasion

In terms of foreign languages, English has undoubtedly become dominant, even hegemonic in the Nordic region. The majority of the population knows English, usually at a quite advanced level (see Chapter 1). For most Nordic citizens, it is also the first foreign language that they learn in school and the primary language used in international interaction, both professionally and for leisure. As is emphatically clear from the other chapters in this volume, the worry today

is not merely that English is outcompeting every other foreign language, but that the national languages themselves are becoming threatened (Höglin 2002).

It is worth remembering, however, that the dominance of English in the Nordic region is very much a post-World War II phenomenon. In the early 20th century, the foreign language landscape in the Nordic region was more evenly divided between English, French, and German (and in Finland, Russian). There were regional, political and personal variations, but learned people were usually expected to know all three languages, at least to some degree. English had a strong position because of the historical prominence of the British Empire and because of a latent admiration for the USA, which, for many, not least within the labor movement, represented the dream of a more prosperous and democratic future (Cabau-Lampa 2005; Slagstad 2001; Sørensen and Petersen 2005). The number of emigrants to the USA was high particularly in Norway (second only to Ireland in American emigrants per capita; see Chapter 3), but also in various regions of Finland and Sweden. French, in turn, enjoyed support not only because of the position of Paris as a center for art and literature, but also as it was a traditional language of diplomacy, it had established itself as a center of organized international cooperation during the "first globalization" at the turn of the 20th century (Wright 2004, 118–135).

Traditionally, however, German was overall the main foreign language in the region. This had been the case at least since the Hanseatic Age or the Lutheran Reformation, not merely because of the strong linguistic affinity with the Scandinavian languages, but because the Nordic region in many respects belonged to the German cultural and political sphere (Cabau-Lampa 2005), but with some regional differences. Facing the northern Atlantic Ocean, Iceland and Norway had a great interest in Britain, both as a companion and as a competitor for fishing territories. In Denmark, the German language has a presence because of the 10–15,000 people-strong minority in southern Jutland. The proximity to Germany makes good relations and linguistic skills important, but there is also an anxiety about German imperialism, not least following the conflicts over Schleswig and Holstein in the mid-19th century. In Finland, by contrast, German contacts have often balanced Russian influence, and it took a bit longer for English to replace German as the first foreign language in schools or as an academic language. There were also different political connotations to the three dominant foreign languages: conservatives tended to prefer German, while liberals usually opted for either French or English. Cultural and political elites promoted French and German, while the middle classes wanted to learn English (Cabau-Lampa 2005).

Ultimately, it was mostly the outcome of World War II that brought about the turn to English in the Nordic region. The Anglo-Americanization of Nordic politics (NATO and anti-communism, for example in the form of *The Reader's Digest*), academia (Rockefeller grants, institutional support) and culture

(Hollywood, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Coca-Cola) has been subject to many interesting studies which point at a combination of American (and British) cultural imperialism as well as active appropriation at the receiving Nordic end (Åström and Kuorelahti 2021; O'Dell 1997; Sørensen and Petersen 2005; Thue 2006; see also Chapter 4).

There is a contemporary habit among European intellectuals to deplore how their own particular country has surrendered their national culture and language to American dominance, but there is a good case to claim that the level of enthusiasm for the English language and Anglo-American culture was particularly strong in the Nordic region. One can point to certain affinities in cultural values (protestant individualism) and to connections born out of the 19th-century emigration (see Chapter 3). More important, however, was arguably the fact that the Nordic countries since at least the early 19th century had accepted their position as small countries at the fringes of European civilization, and their fate as "translation cultures" (Stenius 2004). Nordic intellectuals knew that the "real" discussions were taking place elsewhere and in foreign languages, and that they had to travel abroad and learn foreign languages to take part in these discussions. Indeed, the very role of an academic, author, or artist in a peripheral culture was to act as an importer or translator from "more advanced" cultures (Nygård and Strang 2016). Peripheral cultures are forced into a form of flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, and there was undoubtedly something extraordinarily unsentimental in how the Nordic countries put aside years of engagement with German culture and language in favor of embracing the new Anglo-American hegemony. Learning English and knowing American (and to some extent British) culture became a sign of modernity and progressivity already in the 1930s (Marklund and Stadius 2010; Thue 2006).

There are always good reasons to be skeptical toward the global dominance of English, as achieved not only through the soft power of popular culture, but also by brutal colonial violence (de Swaan 2001; Wright 2004). Of course, in the Nordic region, there was little in terms of violent subjugation, and as such, it would perhaps make more sense to understand the triumph of English in terms of "self-colonization" (Kiossev 1995; Nygård, Strang and Jalava 2018). From this perspective, the difference between the local and the colonizing culture is not as categorical; instead, there emerges hybrid adaptations that themselves become part of the local national canon. Accepting the status of English as a global lingua franca has been one of the strategies by which the Nordic countries, as small, export-driven nations have dealt with globalization and become one of its main beneficiaries. To be sure, linguists are increasingly concerned that the advance of English is bulldozing local cultures and entire languages (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1997) but accepting and adjusting to a global hegemon can also be a conscious strategy for survival for a small society, whether it is 10 million Swedes or 50,000 Greenlanders.

## The languages of Nordic cooperation: Are Scandinavian and English mutually exclusive?

The Scandinavian language community has been of huge importance for the political movements that have sought to unite or to enhance cooperation and integration in the region. The history of Nordic cooperation is usually traced back to the Scandinavianist movement of the mid-19th century, and the Scandinavian language community was central from the beginning (Ekman 2010). Originally a movement among students who traveled across the Øresund for joint gatherings, Scandinavian (pan-) nationalism was construed around the shared Norse history, culture, and language (Glenthøj and Ottosen 2021). Whereas the aim of uniting the Nordic peoples into one nation failed, the Scandinavianists and their successors did manage to forge a shared Nordic identity, which did not compete with the five nationalisms in the region but developed into a fundamental part of them. The shared Scandinavian language was central also to the cooperation that developed in civil society and among professional groups such as lawyers, doctors, labor unions, etc., at the turn of the 20th century, as well as to the Nordic associations that were founded to promote Nordic relations in the aftermath of World War I (Hemstad 2008; Stadius 2019).

After World War II, when the Nordic countries founded the Nordic Council in 1953 as an official forum for cooperation between their countries, it was self-evident that the language of the organization would be Scandinavian, and this was also the case for the Nordic Council of Ministers, which was established in 1973. It was not until the mid-1970s when some Finns started to ask for an improvement of the position of the Finnish language in official Nordic cooperation. This was undoubtedly connected to the massive emigration of Finns to Sweden, and the slow emergence of a Sweden-Finnish identity. In 1976, the Finnish left-wing MP Marjatta Stenius (later Stenius-Kaukonen) provocatively used Finnish at the plenary debates of the Nordic Council, and already the following year, simultaneous interpretation to and from Finnish was introduced, a practice that in the 1980s was extended also to cover Icelandic (Wendt 1981, 68 and 314).

In terms of policy, the Scandinavian language community has been considered fundamental to the Nordic identity and has therefore had a high priority. The Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers have invested heavily in language courses, exchange programs, and in furthering primary school teaching in the (other) Scandinavian languages. Of high symbolic importance is also the Nordic Council Literature Prize, awarded since 1962, even if it is also given for novels written in non-Scandinavian languages (Mai 2016; Wendt 1981, 317–329). In 1978, the Nordic Council of Ministers founded the Nordic Language Secretariat (*Nordisk språksekretariat*) in order to coordinate and bolster cooperation between the national language councils,

but it was shut down in 1997 following a major reform and streamlining of the Nordic Council of Ministers after accession to the EU by Finland and Sweden. It was also the Nordic Council of Ministers that forged the previously mentioned Nordic language convention in 1987 (Agazzi 2017).

The politics of language has never been a straightforward issue for the official institutions of Nordic cooperation. The Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Minsters continue to prioritize the Scandinavian language community, but English is gaining ground. A major turning point occurred in the early 1990s, when the Nordic countries used official Nordic cooperation to assist the Baltic States on their path toward independence, and further on into the EU and NATO. The Nordic Council of Ministers established offices in the capitals of the Baltic countries, largely operating in English, and at the Nordic Council sessions simultaneous interpretation was offered in English to accommodate guests not only from the Baltic countries, but also from other regions of Europe (Strang 2016). Even if Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania never joined the Nordic Council/ Nordic Council of Ministers apparatus, cooperation between the Nordics and the Baltics became increasingly important, and this cooperation – for example, within the Nordic–Baltic 8, NordForsk, or the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) – takes place in English.

The role of English grew further in the new millennium as the Nordic Council of Ministers tried to respond to the international interest in the Nordic region by launching various region-branding programs targeting a global audience, for example, through the New Nordic Food initiative or the Nordic Cool exhibitions in Washington and Seoul (Kharkina 2013; Strang 2021b). English is likewise the main language in Nordic defense cooperation, which has developed quickly during past decades. Already before the Finnish and Swedish NATO applications in 2022, many of the exercises and strategic deliberations were conducted in English under NATO command and involving other non-Nordic NATO countries. English is also the official language of Nordefco, the organization established in 2009 to coordinate Nordic defense cooperation. Interestingly enough, the dominance of English does not seem to have been harmful for the language skills at the Finnish defense ministry, which has been praised for its outstanding competences in Swedish (Häggman 2013).

Surveys initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers indicate that Nordic citizens think the Scandinavian language community is important. However, they also make it emphatically clear that people in general believe there are other things beyond language that brings the region together. In particular, people tend to point at the welfare state, the social and political system, and its values, as well as national security and defense. Language is usually relatively far down the list (Andreasson 2017; Frøshaug and Stende 2021). The most ardent supporters of the Scandinavian language community are not found within the official institutions of Nordic cooperation, but among Norwegians

and Swedish-speaking Finns. It is hardly a coincidence that these two groups also constitute the two most privileged partners of the Scandinavian language community. While the Norwegians tend to understand every version of Scandinavian, the Swedish-speaking Finns are usually understood by anyone in the region. Indeed, it is sometimes suggested that the Scandinavian language community would be in a better state if everyone had the ears of the Norwegians and the mouth muscles of the Finland-Swedes.

As indicated previously, the great tolerance toward dialects in Norwegian society and public debate means that the Norwegians tend to understand various versions of Scandinavian better than Danes or Swedes. However, it also means that Norwegians tend to have stronger ideological beliefs about language, dialects, and the Scandinavian language community. Norwegian politicians at the Nordic Council often speak passionately about the importance of understanding neighbor languages (*nabospråk*), and the Norwegian Nordic Association has prioritized language as a key element of the "Nordicness" they seek to promote. Since 2010 they have been awarding an annual Nordic language prize to an individual or an institution "who in an innovative manner contributes to strengthening Nordic language comprehension" (*styrke den nordiske språkforståelsen*). Looking at the previous winners, however, the prize undoubtedly seems to be focusing on the *Scandinavian* language community rather than on the trans-Nordic comprehension of other Nordic languages such as, for example, Finnish or the Sámi languages – let alone English (*Foreningen Norden i Norge*, 2023).

The Scandinavian language community is cherished by the Swedish-speaking Finns because it provides them with an argument in defense of the status of Swedish in Finland. If intra-Nordic communication switches over to English, the special status of Finland-Swedes as a bridge to Scandinavia (or the West) is lost, and thus the legitimacy of Swedish as an official language in Finland is compromised. While the reasoning seems logical, it is also arguably a bit shortsighted. In insisting that trans-Nordic communication must take place in Scandinavian, the Swedish-speaking community is perhaps a bit too eager to switch its position of subordination to a position of dominance (Heller 1995, 379). More importantly, however, there is a risk that Swedish speakers monopolize the Nordic discourse for themselves, which hugely damages the position of Nordic cooperation in Finland, and thus also, by way of paradox, the position of the Swedish language in the country. The lazy practice in official institutions of handing over Nordic relations to a Swedish-speaking Finn, instead of to someone who is specialized in the issue at hand, is in itself a clear signal of the weakened interest in Nordic cooperation, but it also further contributes to the marginalization of Nordic cooperation in Finland. If one wants to improve the position of Swedish in Finland, one needs to make Nordic cooperation and the Nordic community important for the Finnish-speaking majority (Strang 2022).

Often, this means being open for English, because it serves as an invitation to trans-Nordic engagements on more equal terms.

To be sure, one must acknowledge the fact that there are differences in the proficiency of English among the Nordics as well, differences connected to social status, or the level of education, and other things that are important to be aware of and work against politically (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). There is no such thing as a neutral language in which everyone can participate on equal terms, but the mere fact that English is a foreign language to (almost) all Nordic citizens means that it can play the role as a third space for trans-Nordic interaction. No one is forced to surrender to the neighbor, something that might be especially difficult when there is no single and self-evident hegemon among the Nordic countries or languages.

Ultimately, it is a matter of reflecting on one's privileges. The Scandinavian language community is a prerogative of those who speak one of the three Scandinavian languages. It serves consciously or unconsciously as an instrument of division, which separates core members of the Nordic community from the rest. The battles with and against these (hidden) hierarchies have always been an issue for the Finnish-speaking Finns, who were also the first to revolt against the institutionalization of these privileges at the Nordic Council, but it is an issue for the Icelanders as well, not to mention those who speak one of the indigenous Greenlandic or Saamic languages. Even more crucially, equating the Nordic community with the Scandinavian languages risks alienating the growing number of people who have ended up in the Nordic region as immigrants. It is crucial for the future of Nordic cooperation that these people learn to appreciate the Nordic community, but it is difficult to imagine this would be happening in the Scandinavian languages. For someone who has learned Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish as a second or third language, it is not self-evident that this proficiency also provides a key to the other Scandinavian languages. For an immigrant in Finland, the Finnish language itself is enough of a challenge, and for them the Nordic community will remain a mystery if it is dependent on their knowledge of Swedish. Indeed, perhaps we also should consider whether we, in putting too much weight in the Scandinavian language community, are narrowing our definition of "Nordic" a bit too much. Is there a danger that "Nordicness" becomes too much a matter of local, historical, and even genetic relations? Such considerations quickly veer into exclusive and nationalistic discourse.

Finally, is it really a binary choice between English and Scandinavian? If we frame the future of the Scandinavian language community as dependent on standing firm against the advance of English, we are setting ourselves up for a battle we cannot win – or indeed, a battle we have already lost. Whether we like it or not, English is already the primary lingua franca, not merely for intra-Nordic communication, but for much of what we do in our working lives and particularly what the younger generations do in their daily lives. Stubbornly insisting on

speaking Scandinavian at every Nordic meeting is counterproductive, as it tends to exclude some speakers, as described in this chapter. English can serve as a door opener to the Scandinavian language community. In my experience from the academic world, one of the best ways of starting up a Nordic network is to have a first larger international seminar to which one invites a couple of non-Nordic guests, from Germany, the UK, or elsewhere. They serve as an excuse for arranging the seminar in English, which means that everyone is comfortable accepting the invitation and engaging in the discussions. The Nordic participants are able to get to know each other professionally and on an equal ground in English, but tend to switch over to Scandinavian during coffee breaks or dinners. After a couple of meetings, the time might even be ripe to engage in professional discussion in Scandinavian. In this way, English can sometimes serve to strengthen not only Nordic communality but also the Scandinavian language community.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to reflect upon the role of English in the Nordic language system from a historical, cultural, and political point of view. The rise of English as a global lingua franca has undoubtedly meant that Nordic citizens, to an increasing extent, communicate with each other in English rather than in their own regional languages. The Scandinavian language community is in decline. At the same time, it is worth remembering that such a community always was and continues to be the privilege of speakers of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. Representatives of other language groups have often felt themselves excluded, and for them English can serve as a door opener.

The point here is not to argue that we should resign before the English invasion and stop protecting our national languages or, indeed, the Scandinavian language community. Neither is the argument that the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers should switch to English. There are still sound cultural and symbolic reasons for using Scandinavian, as the mere quest for a language community has important region-building functions. It is, however, also important that the institutions continue their efforts to be more inclusive toward the non-Scandinavian Nordic languages, such as Finnish, Icelandic, Inuit, or Saami. At the same time, the role of English will continue to grow, as foreign interest in the Nordic countries is likely to form an important part of the agenda of the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers in the future. This should not be seen as a threat, but as an opportunity to strengthen the Nordic community. The dominance of English in the Nordic region, as elsewhere, is the result of cultural, economic, and military imperialism, but there are nonetheless occasions where the English language provides a democratic space for communication on equal grounds. The Nordic community is a case in point.

The most important challenge for the Scandinavian language community is not to defeat infiltration of the English language, but to make Nordic cooperation and the Nordic community useful, interesting, and rewarding for as many people as possible. It is important to stop thinking about English and Scandinavian as mutually exclusive: the more we interact with each other in any language, the better. As such, Sanna Marin and Magdalena Andersson's English press conference should not merely be seen as a sign of a deteriorating Nordic communality, but also as a positive signal that serves to strengthen the ties between the Nordic countries – and thereby also, arguably, the Scandinavian language community.

## Notes

1 I want to thank the editors of this volume, the ReNEW seminar and especially Tuire Liimatainen, Stefan Nygård, and Eeva Sippola for valuable comments on earlier versions of the chapter.

2 The exact number of migrants with a non-Scandinavian language is difficult to estimate. Among the Nordic countries it is only bilingual Finland that registers a first language of its citizens. According to the figures from 2021, roughly 480,000, or 5.8 percent of the population, had a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish, or Saami. For other Nordic countries, one has to rely upon estimates, which indicate figures between 7 and 15 percent (Parkvall 2015).

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# 3

# SHIFTING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND THE LANGUAGES OF THE NORDIC REGION

*Elizabeth Peterson*[1]

## Introduction

This chapter for the most part presents a general overview of language contact situations between the languages of the Nordic countries and English. The contact scenarios presented here differ from those described in later chapters as this chapter is concerned with traditional encounters in which speakers of different languages enter, either temporarily or over the long term, into the same shared physical space or territory. An important, even obvious, fact to establish at the outset is that there has never been a time when the English language or, more accurately, the language varieties that eventually gave rise to emergent English, have not been in contact with the languages of the Nordic countries. In fact, the term "contact" is in some ways an anachronism. This is because the English language and the Scandinavian languages – the most common mother tongue languages in the Nordic countries (see Chapter 1) – emerged from a common, shared history: the modern-day constellation of Germanic languages derive from a set of related historical vernaculars in Western and Northern Europe. While many might assume, therefore, that contact with English is a largely contemporary phenomenon, in fact the languages under scrutiny have a common core that goes back in time several millennia. The reality, then, is that the languages have gone off on their distinct trajectories, only to continually bump into each other in various contexts over the ages.

This chapter describes some of the historical periods of interaction between English and the languages of the Nordic countries, leading up to the present day (see also Chapters 4 and 5). The information in the chapter is organized into four main parts. The chapter's first section describes the common roots

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of the Germanic languages, a language family that includes English and the Scandinavian languages. This relationship established, the chapter then moves on to discuss outward movement of people from the Nordic countries into English-language territories, which in this chapter mostly means present-day United Kingdom and the Americas. The chapter's third section switches perspective to discuss English coming into contact with Nordic-based languages in the Nordic region. The chapter concludes by offering a prelude to the language contact phenomena characterizing the contemporary era, thereby laying a foundation for the following chapters.

## The distant past: Shared origins of English and the Scandinavian languages

The Scandinavian languages collectively constitute the most represented language family among inhabitants of the Nordic region. They are also the most common mother tongue of the majority of the population. The Scandinavian languages are closely related to English through their common origins as members of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. This means that at some point during the development of the modern-day languages English, Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish, they were all closely related dialects that emerged from speakers in the same place, before each going on its own trajectory. In fact, language historians have postulated that the different varieties of Proto-Germanic and emergent Germanic languages would have been mutually comprehensible around 200 BCE to the extent that varieties of English are mutually comprehensible today (Hoad 2006, 10).

The term *Germanic* is used to describe an intermediary stage of some 3,000 years (from about 3,000 BCE) during which the dialects that later became modern-day languages developed from northwest Proto-Indo-European. Germanic, therefore, does not refer to a language, but to a stage of development as well as serves as a label for a group of related languages (Kallio 2012, 225). This relationship is shown in a traditional tree style in Figure 3.1. The tree relationship, with its branches and nodes, captures the historical common roots of the group of modern-day languages, but blurs the fact that, among other things, there is not a clear way of distinguishing between related languages, and especially closely related languages (for an overview, see Salmons 2018). It is well known in linguistics that the modern-day notion of what constitutes a language is linked in large part to its political and social status. From a purely structural perspective, there is no neat boundary between one language and another, as features of languages tend to exist on a continuum, gradually merging into related features of a closely connected language. For this and other reasons, many language scholars have

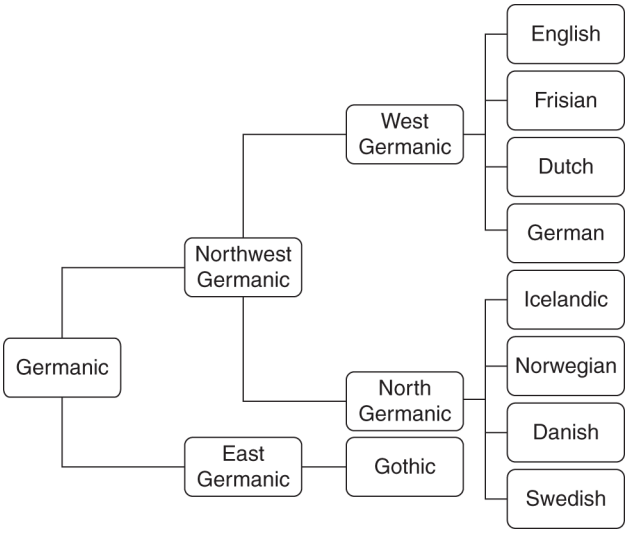


**FIGURE 3.1** The Germanic languages. Reproduced based on Kallio (2012).

moved away from the sort of depiction in Figure 3.1, but it is deemed essential here to highlight the common origins of the languages in question.

From these common origins in Proto-Germanic, the Germanic languages are divided into three groups: West Germanic, which includes English, German, and Netherlandic (Dutch);[2] North Germanic, which includes Danish, Swedish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Faroese; and the now extinct East Germanic, which included Gothic and a few other now extinct varieties (see Figure 3.1). During their development into distinct members of the Germanic language family, the speakers of these emergent languages would have been in contact not just with each other, but also with other languages, such as the Finno-Ugric languages (Bammesberger 1992, 28; Kallio 2012; Salmons 2018, 20). Kallio (2012) notes common word forms dated to the Stone Age that connect Old Norse, Old English, Old High German, Pre-Finnic, and Finnish, as well as describing hundreds of loan words from an early stage of Germanic that appear in Finnic languages. These linguistic connections serve as a reminder that language contact is not a modern phenomenon: it has always been the norm.

### *Contact in the British Isles: The origins of English*

The story of English, including its origins, successes, and history is one that has been told by multiple authors from multiple perspectives. The vantage point in this chapter differs somewhat from previous accounts in that it is told from

a Nordic-centric perspective. That said, some key factors about the history of English should be established.

A date that stands out for scholars of English is 449 CE, the year attributed to the first arrival of groups of settlers – some would say invaders – to the British Isles from the northwestern coast of continental Europe (Bede 731 [1990]). This movement of people, who were speakers of West Germanic languages, marks the initial stirrings of what would eventually crystallize as the English language, which is also classified as a West Germanic language. Prior to their arrival from mainland Europe, the territory now known as the UK and the Republic of Ireland was inhabited by people who spoke Celtic languages. Celtic languages, of course, still exist in the UK and Ireland in their contemporary forms: Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, and Manx. The Germanic-language migrants who came to the British Isles from the west coast of Europe established settlements that, over time, eventually gave rise to Anglo-Saxon populations and the first stage of the English language, Old English (Robinson 1992). Old English is a cover term for a stage of development of the English language that spanned about 700 years and consisted of an "unstable" collection of related dialects (Irvine 2006, 33). As part of its further development, Old English was impacted by a series of important historical events such as the actions of King Alfred the Great of the West Saxon Kingdom (871–899 CE), who advanced the use of (Old) English as a unifying language and as a language of cultural prestige (Irvine 2006, 34). Some 120 years later, a Danish man, Cnut, also served to unify various kingdoms, including England, Denmark, and Norway, historical facts which further emphasize the links between the regions.

### *Contacts in the Nordic region: The origins of the Scandinavian languages*

The main language groups in the Nordic region are North Germanic languages and Finno-Ugric languages. The Inuit family of languages is represented in Greenland. Speakers of Saamic and Finnic languages began expanding into the Nordic region around 3000 years ago, with Finno-Karelian varieties coming to inhabit the greater part of their present-day areas by the 7th to 16th centuries (Abondolo and Valijärvi 2023). By around 1000 CE, different Germanic-language groups, including the Northern Germanic-language group and the Western Germanic-language group, had become distinctive enough from each other that they are classified now as different but related language families (Hoad 2006). However, there seems to be disagreement or at least a lack of consensus about when and how the North Germanic languages – Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish – became distinct enough from one another to refer to them as independent languages (Haugen 1976; see also Hoad 2006). This situation is not entirely unlike today (see Chapter 2): as mentioned previously, a language's

status ties in closely with social prestige and notions of nationhood. Most scholars refer to the North Germanic languages spoken in the Nordic region around 1000 and later collectively as "Old Norse." The speakers of Old Norse were mainly inhabitants of the Nordic region who based their economic system around trade and exploitation, namely by what we now call the Vikings. Vikings, a term used to refer to Nordic populations during the Middle Ages, are known for their success in establishing and improving on trade and settlement routes across not only Europe but other continents (Northrup et al. 2015, 938). During this period, contacts with the inhabitants of the British Isles are historically well attested, an outcome of extensive trade, exploitation, settlement, and wars. It is against this backdrop that we can begin an exploration of contacts between the languages of the Nordic countries and English, with the initial forms of contact extending, for the most part, outward from the Nordic region toward the British Isles.

## Contact with English outward from the Nordic region

The Middle Ages, for the purposes of this chapter defined as approximately 700 until about 1400, are the period during which there was sustained outward movement of speakers of Scandinavian languages from the Nordic region into places where they came into contact with speakers of English. Within the British Isles and indeed imprinted on the English language, there is ample evidence of contact between speakers of Old Norse – the Vikings – and speakers of English. There is also evidence of extensive contacts between Old Norse and Old English, as the latter began its transformation into Middle English. These contacts began in earnest with sustained Scandinavian settlements in the British Isles starting in the late 800s. Scandinavian settler influences, especially in the northeastern part of England into Scotland, have been historically preserved in the names of towns such as Whitby, Selby, and Westhorpe (Fellows-Jensen 1991); these can be compared to placenames in the Nordic countries such as Karleby, Saeby and Nordtorp.

### *The Middle Ages*

During the time of permanent Scandinavian settlements in the British Isles, the pre-existing language situation was relatively complex. The Celtic languages were, at that time, still widely spoken by the people who had inhabited the area prior to arrival by Germanic peoples, although the number of Celtic language speakers began to diminish rapidly (Townend 2006). The Germanic settlements over time developed into Anglo-Saxon populations who spoke Old English, and speakers of Celtic languages appear to have shifted toward speaking Old English, as well. Latin continued to be a language of education and Christianity throughout the Middle Ages, serving as an additional language, not as a

mother tongue. Against this backdrop, language contacts with Old Norse left a permanent mark on the development of English, overshadowed in influence only by French, also in the medieval period, precipitated by the Norman conquest of 1066. Together, these linguistic forces caused Old English to alter over time from being a synthetic language, a term meaning a language with multiple case endings, to an analytic one, meaning a language with relatively fixed word order and a relative lack of case endings. Present-day, Modern English is classified as an analytic language.

Numerous grammatical changes in English, as well as additions and changes to vocabulary, are associated with contact between Norse languages and English. Such extensive influence hints at sustained and widespread contact, which is indeed supported by historical facts. Townend (2006, 66) notes that "spoken Norse […] formed the first language of a substantial immigrant community," mostly people from Denmark and Norway – as well as a few Swedes – who were both geographically widespread and sustained in settlements spanning generations. The English language as a whole has incorporated vocabulary and grammatical features from Old Norse, for example, the words *husband*, *ill*, *knife*, *sky,* and the pronouns *they/them/theirs* (Townend 2006, 74). Language contacts were so intensive during the period starting in approximately 700 that some scholars have even argued that Modern English could be classified as a Northern Germanic language (Emonds and Faarlund 2014). However, this decidedly Nordic perspective on the history of English was addressed – and debunked at length – by historians of the English language, including a compelling discussion of how to establish language relationships relying mostly on structural features (Bech and Walkden 2016).

The Norse languages have influenced both English as a whole and dialects of English in the UK. The centuries from about 700 to 1000, until approximately the time of the Norman French invasion of England, marked a series of political conflicts and agreements between Norse people and rulers of England. From 878, after a series of military defeats, the English ruler Alfred the Great and Guthrum, a Danish ruler, agreed on a boundary stretching diagonally stretching diagonally across England, separating the geographical area into English-ruled territories and Danish-ruled territories. This area still marks a dialect boundary today, with the northern dialects, especially the far north into Scotland, showing, for example, Norse influenced words such as *bairn* 'child' and *kirk* 'church'. In some cases, what had been northern dialect features have become established parts of modern-day English. For example, even though the third-person verb ending *-s* is now considered standard in English, it used to be in variation with *-th*, for example, in verbs such as *walks/walketh, has/hath*. The *-s* form was northern, and the *-th* form was southern (see, e.g., Auer 2018).

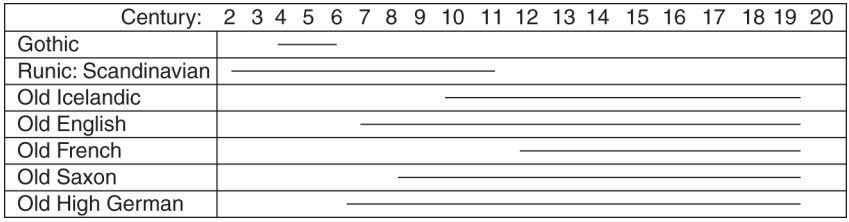


**FIGURE 3.2** The Germanic languages and their documentation. Reproduced based on Bammesberger (1992, 29).

The Middle Ages, which in the context of this book means approximately the 700s to the 1400s, saw the emergence of the first-known written manifestations of the Germanic languages. By the Middle Ages the Germanic family of languages had split into different but related varieties, ushering in a time when it is possible to accurately refer to "language contact" as opposed to "mutual language development." In other words, to assume the possibility of language contact between English and the Scandinavian languages depends on the underlying assumption that they are, in fact, different languages.

The earliest known texts that can accurately be referred to as "English," written in the Roman alphabet as it is today, date from the 700s (Bammesberger 1992, 28). This relatively late date makes sense considering that English emerged from a collection of West Germanic dialects: it took time for the collection of dialects to morph into a language system, Old English, that could be considered distinctive enough from its predecessors to be labeled a language in its own right. It took even more time for this emergent language system to be recorded in a distinctive written form. By way of comparison, the earliest known runes in what could be called "Scandinavian" are attested some 500 years earlier, as these languages were already on the trajectory toward their modern-day incarnations. The earliest known example of written Germanic, incidentally also in runic form, is from a spearhead found in modern-day Ukraine and dating from about 250 BCE (Salmons 2018, 99). This is not to say, however, that Scandinavian languages are "older" than English. As the information in this chapter demonstrates, languages are part of a continual process; there is (usually) no clear beginning or ending point. It is also crucial to point out that the information in Figure 3.2 refers to written language, which by its nature lags behind spoken language.

### *The colonial period*

The era beginning in approximately the 1500s marks a major change in the European context toward expansion and innovation. Advances in shipbuilding, navigation, and related technologies, inspired by technologies in China and the Arab world, led to a rapid increase in the movement of people and goods. Settlement colonies and exploitation colonies around the world were exerted and established by European powers.

In terms of language, this was the beginning of the spread of English, with settlements established in the Americas in the early 1600s, and later in Africa and the South Pacific (Schneider 2011). Not just English, but also other languages originating in Europe took hold around the world during this time, through colonization. The area of the Caribbean, for example, is to this day the home of several so-called Creole languages, meaning a language with traits from European languages and others, such as African languages, whose speakers came into contact and formed a new language variety.

While European powers such as England, Belgium, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal are those most known for colonization and mass movement of people, including, notably, millions of enslaved Africans, there seems to be less general knowledge about Nordic involvement in these activities. Denmark, for example, operated a plantation colony in what is now the US Virgin Islands, which prior to 1917 was known as the Danish West Indies. Even today there are Danish words in local English creoles, for example, *frickadella* 'meatball' (Danish *frikadelle*), *gade* 'street' (Danish *gade*), *beel* 'car' (Danish *bil*, from automobile), *skaal* 'cheers' (Danish *skål*), and *potekari* 'pharmacy' (Danish *apotek*) (Bøegh 2018).

The period starting in approximately 1650 is typified, then, by the movement of people, and therefore also their language, outside of the European context and into the world at large. The period can be seen as a prelude to globalization, more intense networks, and connections between larger distances. The countries of the Nordic region were active participants in these activities. With European colonization established in locations throughout the world, the stage was set for an outpouring of migrants from the European continent to the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific. As usual, the reasons for migration from Europe were connected to a series of social and natural phenomena, such as war, famine, and illness. The Nordic countries, like other countries in Europe, experienced the movement of people from the European continent to locations throughout the world. Here, such movement to English-speaking places is highlighted, particularly to North America. From approximately 1700 onward, the largest migrant groups from Europe were from the British Isles, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany. Later, these migrants were joined by those from other countries, including from Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and, in addition, the Nordic countries (Baran 2017).

The nations comprising the Nordic region were not, at the time, the unified bloc they might appear to be today. Indeed, Denmark and Sweden, both powerful kingdoms, fought against each other in a number of wars up to and including the 19th century (Frost 2000; Salonen and Jensen 2023). During the 1800s, political, trade, and governing alliances led to distinctive relationships with European powers outside the Nordic region, but not necessarily with each other. During the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800s, Sweden ended up for various reasons as an ally of England, while neighboring Denmark was an ally of France. During this time the Kingdom of Denmark lost its provenance over Norway in 1814 and then much of its southern territory, which is today the northern part of Germany, Schleswig-Holstein. Changes in the economic system (due to the breakdown of the serf system), industrialization, alterations to trade routes, widespread famine, disease, social unrest, and ultimately changes in government all led to enormous social upheaval. In short, the time was troubled and rife for out-migration, and North America and various other colonial centers offered the opportunity for a better life.

### *Emigration from the Nordic countries to English-speaking regions*

Most of the migrants to North America from the Nordic countries were relatively poorer people from rural areas. In terms of demographics of the Nordic region, the number of migrants who left was staggering; some rural towns were nearly depleted of their populations. Norway, for example, saw widespread emigration that was outnumbered per capita only by Ireland (Johannessen and Salmons 2015). By the year 1930, which marks an end to mass migration from the Nordic countries to North America, Norway lost some 850,000 members of its population to emigration. More than 810,000 of these Norwegians moved to the USA, where they flowed via chain migration to newly white settlements in places such as Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota (Johannessen and Salmons 2015, 10).

Sweden, the largest of the Nordic countries in terms of population, lost more than 1 million of its people to North American migration. Starting in earnest in the 1840s, due in large part to crop failures, most Swedish emigrants settled in the American Midwest, with the largest concentration in Minnesota and Illinois (Johannessen and Salmons 2015, 12). Around one third of Swedish emigrants settled in growing US cities such as Chicago (Johannessen and Salmons 2015, 12). Icelandic emigrants, on the other hand, tended to gravitate toward rural settings. Some 15,000 Icelanders (out of a population of about 70,000 Icelanders at the time) settled mainly in the Canadian Interlake region north of Winnipeg in Manitoba and around Wynyard in Northern Saskatchewan, as well as in Pembina County in North Dakota in the USA (Johannessen and Salmons 2015, 9).

The initial wave of Danish migration to North America is distinct from that of the other Nordic countries because its main premise was joining a new American religion: the Mormons. The first several thousand Danes who migrated, mostly from rural Jutland, were converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as the church is known today. Thus, the state of Utah became the destination for the initial influx of Danes, although the majority of Danish migrants came later and settled in the Midwest. By 1870, Wisconsin had the highest number of Danish immigrants, and in 1890, the state of Iowa had the highest number (Kühl and Peterson 2018).

Finnish migration came somewhat later, starting in earnest in the 1870s, and is characterized predominantly by male laborers (Kero 2014, 41). At the time, Finland had the governing status of being a Grand Duchy of Russia. Some 389,000 Finns migrated to North America between 1870 and 1920, about one fifth of whom returned to Finland.[3]

A few distinguishing factors characterize the Nordic migrants to North America. In terms of racial hierarchies, they were for the most part considered "white," which allowed them certain privileges in a highly racialized climate (Baran 2017). In addition, the vast majority of them were Lutheran, a Christian protestant religion which likewise adapted well to the overarching social expectations of mainstream North American society. Finally, in terms of languages, the vast majority of Nordic migrants to North America spoke as their mother tongue a language which, as pointed out previously in this chapter, is closely related to English. It has been proposed that one reason for the "success" of integration of Scandinavian migrants in the US setting is their ability to adapt into the majority, de facto main language: English (Grøngaard Jeppesen 2010). Furthermore, due to similar education acts across the Nordic countries, largely a response to the Lutheran reforms, Nordic migrants usually were literate in their native language.

These observations duly noted, it would nonetheless be remiss to present an image of Nordic acceptance into the North American milieu that was without strife. Indeed, there are ample examples of difficulties fitting in with existing migrant groups and people of other religions, as well as complexities coming from lifestyle differences and language barriers. For example, the following extract, from a twelve-page life history written by Andrew Nielsen, a migrant to Utah territory from Jutland, highlights his desperation, exclusion, as well as his language difficulties. The extract describes his actions after arriving in Salt Lake City, Utah Territory (it was not yet a US state), from Denmark, in 1862. The passage, written in 1912, highlights his level of literacy in his native language, Danish, but shows that he was never able to achieve a high level of literacy in English.

> *… when I got some [wooden tools] mad I put them in a flouer sake, put them on my bake up in the City I went, aqwiped with another empty flouwer sake*

*and a little boked to get Molasse in I suppose you can emagen how nice I fell could hardly speake an Englise word but had to trey to make them understand I wont some for my famelie to eat.*

'When I got some [wooden tools] made I put them in a flour sack, put them on my back and up into the city I went, equipped with another empty flour sack and little bucket to get molasses in. I suppose you can imagine how nice I felt. I could hardly speak an English word but had to try to make them understand I wanted something for my family to eat.'

(Diary of Andrew Nielsen, 1916, archived at the Family History Center, LDS Church Headquarters, Salt Lake City)

The purpose of this overview of migration from the Nordic countries is to demonstrate the ways in which the languages of the region have intertwined with English during the modern period. The language contact at this time was characterized by migration out of the Nordic countries, which has led to numerous studies and accounts of heritage Nordic-based languages in these new locations. As with the dialects of English in Great Britain in previous centuries, the languages of the Nordic settlers to North America have left an imprint especially on dialects in US and Canadian English (Moquin and Salmons 2020).

## English coming into contact with the Nordic-based languages inside the Nordic region

We now shift our perspective to look at the same span of history from a different vantage point. Whereas the previous section accounted for languages leaving the Nordic region – along with the people who spoke them – and arriving in English-speaking territories, we now observe contacts with English within the context of the Nordic region. That is, the perspective shifts from looking out from the Nordic region to looking inward. Immediately, a major distinction comes to the forefront: whereas the time beginning approximately with the Middle Ages features a dispersion of Nordic-based languages and their speakers away from the Nordic region, there is no comparable influx of English speakers arriving to the Nordic region during the same time period.

It is certain, however, that there was contact between English and Nordic-based languages in the Nordic region starting in the Middle Ages, but contacts in the Nordic setting were probably minimal, and most are not documented through historical record. The records that do exist offer mostly information about military and trade. There was a high level of trade throughout the North Sea during this period, depending largely on who was allied with whom and which sea channels were open to shipping in certain waters. For example, a declaration from 1653 describes a struggle between the kingdoms of Denmark and England (Denmark Sovereign 1653). The declaration, printed in London

in 1653 by Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, was translated from the Danish into English by a man named Edward Smith. The declaration is a response from King Frederick III of Denmark to a complaint that English-controlled merchant ships were not allowed to leave the Copenhagen harbor due to a military conflict between Denmark and England. The example demonstrates the kind of language contact which is historically preserved through written records. The fact that the English is a translation of an original Danish text highlights that there would not have been mutual understanding between the speakers involved in the incident, rendering a translation necessary. Such a scenario is in stark contrast to the situation with English today.

Other historical evidence is incidental, depending on whether English speakers and speakers of the languages of the Nordic region had the means or need to leave behind a written record of their encounters. For example, there are a few accounts of travel by English people to the Nordic countries, such as the diaries of Ethel Brilliana Tweedie (Tweedie 1898), a diarist who traveled to Iceland and Finland – among numerous other places – in the late 1800s, as well as an "anonymous" English gentleman (Th–M– 1772) who traveled through Denmark in the 1770s. The letters and diaries created by such travelers have contributed to the overall discourse of the Nordic countries being "exotic" and "periphery" through the gaze of the chroniclers.[4] The "anonymous gentleman" notes in his English-language letters that he used French as a lingua franca to converse with "the most learned Danes." While in Copenhagen, the same author describes relates a conversation in English, "with a friend who has been in England and speaks our language."

As highlighted through the experiences of the "anonymous gentleman," there was no particular impetus or reason for everyday people in the Nordic region to have interest in English during this era, and certainly not to use it. English was just another foreign language, and not a particularly important one at that (see Chapter 2). As indicated by the experiences of the "anonymous gentleman," there is evidence of some people knowing some English, but it was relegated almost exclusively to the upper classes as part of overall elite multilingualism, a facet of involvement among those who "were academically educated, well-traveled individuals, skilled in languages – virtual renaissance figures, who participated in artistic circles and were interested in various social, political, and cultural issues" (Kortti 2014, 7). It was common for at least noble families to teach their children some English, but this was in addition to French, German, Latin, Russian, and other languages.

The information in this section serves to highlight the fact that during this relatively long period time of history, roughly 1000–1900, the majority of contact between the languages of the Nordic countries and English was due to migration outward from the Nordic region. Contact with English within the region was mostly limited to incidental trade and travel interactions, with

some evidence of English learning among the upper classes. Some English words found their way into Nordic languages as borrowings (discussed further in Chapter 5), but at this point in time the interaction was, compared to today, scant.

### *Contemporary Nordic immigration and English language contact*

Phenomena subsequent to – and as a result of – World War II have combined to create an opportunity for English to gain a strong and enduring foothold in the Nordic countries. Sweeping social changes and the movement of people have coincided with the monumental force and influence of global superpowers, especially the USA. Already in the 1930s, a main aim of the British Council, which spread English-language teaching throughout the globe (including to the Nordic countries) was to aid in increasing sympathy toward British nationalism in part through the spread of the English language (Pennycook 2017; Saraceni 2019). At the same time, the Nordic countries, through their openness to economic growth and a place on the world stage, invited the use of English without reservation. English emerged as the most taught foreign language in schools by the 1970s (see Chapter 4). Facility in English meant a place at the global table. Thus, an interesting and critical characteristic of the widespread adoption of English in the Nordic countries is that it entered by invitation, not through colonialism or direct exploitation. This openness to English has resulted not in displacement of the national languages (although see Chapter 6 in this volume), but rather in large-scale multilingualism reflecting a wide range of proficiencies.

The events of World War II led to Sweden emerging as the Nordic country with the most wealth and stability, as it attempted to affect a position of neutrality throughout the war. Sweden was the only Nordic country that was not occupied, saw active combat on its territory, or was bombed during World War II. For this and various other reasons, such as size and historical dominance, it is not surprising that Sweden emerged as a trailblazer as an early developer of the social welfare system. The development of the social welfare state coincides with several other phenomena related to increased use of English. For example, the post-World War II period also marks a distinct contrast in migration patterns: whereas the previous era was characterized by emigration from the Nordic countries to other locations throughout the world, the 1960s and 1970s ushered in an era of immigration to the Nordic countries, at least relative to what existed before.[5] While it is commonly accepted wisdom that the 1960s mark the beginning of large-scale migration into the Nordic countries, it is a fallacy to assume that immigration was something new; on the contrary, previous migration both among the Nordic countries as well as from other regions has, naturally, always been a part of the local history (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir, and

Toivanen 2019). That said, contemporary migration is distinct from previous eras due to two main reasons: an increase in the sheer number of migrants and an increase in migrants from regions outside of Europe. From 1990 to 2016, the overall population of the Nordic countries grew by 15 percent, with net immigration constituting two thirds of this increase (Heleniak 2016). Migration has increased in each of the five Nordic countries since 1990, with immigration to Sweden outnumbering the other countries (Østby and Gulbrandsen 2022).

While there is an overall increase in the amount of immigration to the Nordic countries, immigrants who speak English as a mother tongue constitute a small minority of overall immigrants. People from the UK, the USA, India, and Pakistan rank among the five highest migrant groups into some, but not all, of the five principal Nordic countries. The highest level of immigrants based on home countries varies across the Nordic countries. In Denmark, Romanians and Germans are the largest groups, while in Finland, Russian immigrants have been the highest number for several years. In Iceland and Norway, Polish immigrants are by far the largest group. In Sweden, people from India are currently the largest immigrant group. These statistics are brought to the forefront to demonstrate that an overall increase in the use of English is not linked in a large-scale way to native speakers of English through traditional, face-to-face contact brought on by migration. Rather, an increase in overall immigration is linked to the use of English as a lingua franca (Filppula et al. 2017), which is likewise linked to overall global trends and the use of English. This fact is brought up to highlight a shift in input and interaction from the previous era: face-to-face interaction with native speakers of English has been superseded by interaction with other non-native speakers on a large scale, and this interaction is augmented by a tremendous level of input through various media channels (see Chapter 4).[6]

## Conclusions

When it comes to language contact between English and the languages of the Nordic countries, there is a long relationship that predates even the notion of contact. That is: there is a common ancestor, Proto-Germanic, that links the biggest languages of the Nordic countries to English through their shared history. Once these languages split into their own trajectories, there was a long period of time, extending more or less to the current era, when contacts between the languages in question had to do mostly with the languages of the Nordic region moving outward into the world, through the form of Viking exploits, followed by migration to colonized territories such as North America. These contacts led to relatively extensive influence of Scandinavian languages on the formation of present-day English, including both dialects in the British Isles as well as features that have become part of standardized English. In addition, immigrants

from the Nordic countries to North America have contributed to the formation of dialect features of North American English through language contact there. These contact outcomes differ in some ways: in the Middle Ages, extensive settlement and sustained contact led to a high level of interaction and changes in English, but in the context of North America, the migrant communities switched quickly to becoming speakers of American English, leaving a smaller imprint on the English language there.

In the current era, starting approximately after the World War II era, there has been a marked change in the language contact scenario: rather than the languages of the Nordic countries moving outward into the world, there is an influx of the use of English. This advancement is linked to massive social changes, including immigration, modernization, globalization, and popular culture. As highlighted in the chapters that follow, these circumstances have led to a host of social concerns about languages, not least that the languages of the Nordic countries are now at risk of being forever altered, mutated into forms of English, or giving way to English altogether.

## Notes

1 I wish to thank the audience at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Society of Finland for comments on this paper. Thanks also to Eeva Sippola, Johanna Laakso, Johan Strang, and an anonymous reviewer for valuable feedback on an early draft.

2 A problem with the depiction in Figure 3.1, as pointed out for example by Salmons (2018) is that Yiddish is not included. Other depictions of the Germanic languages include Yiddish as a West Germanic language.

3 There is evidence that the migrants who returned to Finland brought with them certain items of American English which entered to some extent into dialects of Finnish. For examples, see Virtaranta 1993. In addition, Professor Johanna Laakso, a native of Ostrobothnia in Finland, recalls hearing expletives such as *voi sanomapitsi!* during her childhood, a Fennicized version of the phrase "oh son of a bitch!" (personal communication, February 15, 2023).

4 This tradition, it should be noted, continues to the modern era. For example, Diana Webster, a retired English lecturer in Finland, has published a book about her initial impressions of Finland when she arrived in the 1950s. Other books, such as *The Nordic Theory of Everything* and *NØrth: How to Live Scandinavian*, clearly capitalize on this sense of exoticism as well as Nordic exceptionalism (see Chapter 12).

5 In general, the Nordic countries are not known for being open to immigration, although systems vary widely throughout the Nordic region, with Sweden historically being the most liberal and Finland, Denmark, and Iceland being the most conservative. The relationship to migration, like in other places in Europe and the world, has become a source of great social and political tension in recent years.

6 The migration situation in the modern period leads to a very complex set of issues that is not properly addressed in this book. The role of English as a global language and as a strong additional language in these contexts means that many migrants never really have the opportunity or hence the desire to learn the national languages, which can have a strong counter-effect against their integration and acceptance into Nordic society – one factor among many.

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# 4

# ANGLICIZATION OF THE LANGUAGES OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## Popular culture and everyday discourse

*Kristy Beers Fägersten*

### Introduction

In an article from a 1959 issue of the *Modern Language Journal*, Charles Nichols, an American Fulbright scholar in Scandinavia, surveyed the status of English studies in Scandinavia, claiming that the "facility with which English is spoken in Denmark, Norway and Sweden" (Nichols 1959, 321) was due to the effectiveness of language instruction. Indeed, Nichols attributes the "success" of language teaching in Scandinavia to three factors: the motivation to learn English, the early introduction of English at school, and above all, the quality of university programs in English studies (1959, 321). With regards to motivation, Nichols noted, for example, the number of self-organized social clubs throughout Scandinavia devoted to speaking English and learning about England. Nichols also marveled over how early (in age) school children are introduced to English as part of the primary school curriculum, as well as how early (in history) English was included as a program of study at the universities of Copenhagen and Oslo – in 1800 and 1820, respectively. Clearly impressed, Nichols outlined the requirements for undergraduate and graduate degrees in English studies. At universities in Denmark and Norway, these included coursework in Old and Middle English and reading lists comprising the King James version of the Bible, as well as Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, among other members of the literary canon; degree candidates were also expected to be able to translate these works. The quality of English studies in Scandinavia was furthermore attested to by the contributions to the field by prominent Scandinavian scholars at various universities and the on-going development of English studies programs to include American literary history and criticism (Nichols 1959, 323).

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Pahta (2008) and Hansson (2021), in their turn, have provided more contemporary reviews of the state of English studies in Finland and Sweden, respectively. Pahta notes the establishment of English studies at Emperor Alexander's University of Finland, with the first permanently appointed lecturer in 1830, followed by a roster of successors until the first professorship in 1907, which was to be Finland's only professorship in English for 30 years. From the late 1930s, however, chairs in English began to proliferate at Finnish universities, culminating in over twenty professorships by the late 1990s. Like Nichols, Pahta is keen to acknowledge the contributions to English studies by specific scholars, and also points out the subject area's shift in scholarly focus over time, from intersections of philology, literature, and culture to more distinct and separate programs of study defined by either linguistic or literary orientation. The current scope of scholarship has increased, however, to reflect growing interests in "present-day spoken language and computer-mediated communication" (Pahta 2008, 17).

In her 70-year overview of English literary studies in Sweden, Hansson (2021) testifies to a similar development of the field in Sweden as in Finland. For example, English as a university subject (distinct from German philology) started in the early 1900s and focused on historical and grammatical studies of the language, with chairs in English literature not established until the 1950s. Shortly thereafter, doctoral dissertations in English at Sweden's universities began to skew toward literary as opposed to linguistic topics, such that in the last decade of the 20th century, the ratio was three to one. Hansson notes, however, that from the turn of the century, "there has been a noticeable shift in English literature towards topics concerned with contemporary cultural practices" (p. 30). Strengthening the "preference for modern and contemporary literature" is:

> a wider definition of literature [that] accommodates topics that veer towards media studies and digital humanities. There is, for example, growing interest in new genres and cultural forms such as science fiction and fantasy or film and TV that did not form part of the subject before cultural studies began to gain ground.
>
> *(Hansson 2021, 45)*

Moen's (2006) historical overview of the development of American studies as a university subject in Norway identifies it as an outgrowth from American history curricula offered by English departments, complementing the teaching of the English language and English-language literature. Like Nichols, Pahta, and Hansson, Moen takes care to name specific department chairs and professors, tracing the evolution of the subject via the shifting research focus areas of such academic leaders. An example of such a shift in the focus of American studies in Norway is toward popular culture, with Moen noting that, "hardly in any other

European country has American popular culture had such a broad and profound impact, beginning in earnest after World War II and increasing steadily to the present" (Moen 2006, 21).

Any documentation of the history and development of tertiary English studies in Iceland either does not yet exist or is impervious to search efforts. English is certainly associated with education and academics, and Iceland's oldest university, the University of Iceland, offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in English studies (including linguistics, literature, and culture). However, its usage in the educational context is more instrumental in nature, seen as essential to internationalization efforts (Albury 2014, 108). Instead, the general impression is that the current status of English in Iceland is not so much the result of a deliberate development of English as an academic subject, but rather the outcome of Iceland's geo-political history. From the 1940s, Iceland saw a shift in foreign language education from Danish to English, which was emerging as the lingua franca of Europe (Cogo and Jenkins 2010, 271; Rasmussen 2002, 29, in Albury 2014, 108). After World War II, Iceland was also the recipient of substantial aid from the European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan, which entailed the nation's first exposures to media broadcasts, courtesy of the American military base (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2010, 12). English in Iceland was thus introduced – not insignificantly – via American (popular) culture (Svavarsdóttir 2008, 442), and English consequently has dominated Icelandic media and entertainment ever since (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2009, 49).

Nichols's (1959) reported impressions of English studies in Scandinavia predate the late 20th-century ascendency of Anglophone popular culture, and for this reason they provide a useful historical context for understanding the magnitude of the role of popular culture in the changing status of English and English studies in the Nordic countries. Whereas the English language as well as Anglophone culture and literature were affiliated with university education and intellectual pursuit from the late 19th century to mid-20th century, the development of English studies as an academic subject in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland shows evidence of, if not a progression away from its historical foundation, a nevertheless more pronounced embrace of contemporary linguistic phenomena and new literature, both of which are often connected to popular culture. This development can be seen as a likely response to the ever-increasing presence and global influence of the English language and Anglophone cultures, but more significantly, it highlights the power of bottom-up forces to challenge top-down decisions of what the field of English studies represents.

This chapter aims to explore the status of English-language popular culture throughout the Nordic countries with regard to its relation to attitudes toward English, and its effect on everyday discourse. To this end, the preceding overviews

of the background and development (or lack thereof) of English as an academic subject in the Nordic countries reveal an important shift in the symbolic capital of English. While English as a linguistic system and Anglophone literature and culture once symbolized erudition and high intellectual pursuits, the abstract idea and concrete manifestations of English in the Nordic countries are now more likely to invoke Anglophone popular culture and media artifacts. This chapter thus presents a transnational overview of the effects of the stronghold that the English language enjoys in the Nordic countries as a result of the wholesale adoption of English-language popular culture.

## Popular culture as a de facto English-language educator

Historically, the early introduction of English into Nordic school systems and its promotion as key to industrial progress, international trade, and socioeconomic advancement represented top-down language policy. However, while impressions of Nordic citizens' singular knowledge of English and characteristic Anglophilia were, in the mid-20th century, attributed to such institutionalization, contemporary proficiency levels in English are associated first and foremost with the enthusiastic embrace of (if not obsession with) Anglophone popular culture and media. Recognition of the Nordic-wide policy of early integration of English in elementary school curricula remains robust, but it is essentially the exposure to and engagement with unadulterated English-language popular culture that is most likely to be credited for the high levels of English proficiency among the Nordic populations.

It is of little matter if this is true, but the widespread belief in the story of Anglophone popular culture as an effective language educator renders it a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students do not believe that they can learn more English in school than they do playing English-language video games or watching American television series, and thus the national educational systems lean into contemporary popular culture materials. Hansson worries that such "presentism" pits innovation and stability against each other, such that a "lack of historical orientation […] means that certain knowledge areas are beginning to be lost […]" (2021, 49), a concern that is validated by observations of a trend toward more modern and contemporary materials in English literature studies in higher education (Dodou 2020a, 2020b).

Popular culture is usually contrasted with less-accessible high culture (Merskin 2008; Storey 2018), and popular culture artifacts are intended to be consumed by the masses. Popular culture has thus been defined as:

> social practices and activities in which people can engage without significant training, education, or cost. Typically associated with youth culture and quick to morph or fade, pop culture practices and activities are often construed

> as forms of leisure that allow for personal expression, afford pleasure, and create community
>
> *(Weinstock 2021, 20)*

In this chapter, the term "popular culture" is used in a more concrete sense to refer to any example among a "broad range of manifestations" that can include "pop music, shows, and movies available in cinemas, on TV, and streaming services, online video clips and podcasts, video games, comics, cartoons, and memes, to name but a few" (Werner 2022, n.p.). In the Nordic countries, Anglophone popular culture is dominant, as it is globally. Indeed, English – and particularly American English – is the reigning language of popular culture worldwide (Crothers 2021; Werner 2022).

In contrast to the practices of central and southern Europe, English-language popular culture in the form of television series and feature films are not subject to dubbing in the Nordic countries, a fact which is repeatedly lauded as the key to English-language proficiency among Nordic citizens (Preisler 2003; Rindal 2015; Schurz and Sundqvist 2022; Simensen 2010; Þórarinsdóttir 2011; Tyrkkö et al. 2021 – to name but a few). For example, the website, "How Widely Spoken" (www.howwidelyspoken.com), dedicated to "Exploring the prevalence of languages around the world," provides an overview of "Spoken English in Scandinavia," featuring separate pages for English in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland. For each of the countries, it is confirmed that English is very widely spoken, and that this is due in large part to early education in English and exposure to English-language popular culture. For instance, the Sweden, Denmark, and Norway pages include the following observations, respectively (emphasis added):

- As with other Scandinavian countries, *TV shows and film also tend not to be dubbed into Swedish*, instead shown in their original English-language form with Swedish subtitles. This allows the younger people especially to pick up more "live" spoken English, which, on top of the already rigorous training they receive in schools, means they are very adept at speaking and understanding English by the time they are adults.
- English is prevalent in the wider culture and not just in schools. *Films and TV shows are often broadcast undubbed in the original English-language form with Danish subtitles*, so youngsters get such regular exposure to English even outside of the classroom that they can't help but pick up the language and become adept at speaking and understanding it.
- [T]here is far more immersion in English-language culture in Norway and other Scandinavian countries than in other parts of the world. *They are constantly exposed to films and TV shows in English for example, which over time helps them to pick up the language much more than just learning in a stale classroom environment.*

The page concludes with the entry, "Why are the Scandinavians so good at English?" Here, four reasons are noted, including: 1) lexical similarities between English and most of the Nordic languages; 2) early inclusion of English instruction in schools; 3) undubbed, English-language popular culture; and 4) an openness to learning and using English. These reasons support each other mutually, but it is first and foremost the exposure to and engagement with English-language popular culture and media that is most likely to be credited for a high proficiency in English (Breivik 2019; Voulgari et al. 2014). As such, Anglophone popular culture, at least in the collective conscience, assumes the greatest responsibility for the celebrated and mythicized exceptional skills in English.

Throughout the Nordic countries, the subject of English is included in primary school curricula from as early as the first grade. At the same time, children are exposed to English outside of the school context, which jumpstarts their acquisition process. The result is the distinct impression that the educational system offers no additional value, and that "extramural English," especially via popular culture, has become the ersatz instructor (Arnbjörnsdóttir 2018; Sundquist and Sylvén 2016). Indeed, among young people, English-language popular culture is cited not as just a complement to, but rather as superior to formal education in English. For example, in Hilmarsson-Dunn's 2005 survey (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2009), an Icelandic student wrote that "… computer games were my teacher from the seventh grade" (cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson 2010, 258). Similarly, Beers Fägersten's (2017a) analysis of Swedish YouTuber PewDiePie (real name: Felix Kjellberg) characterizes his claims of having learned English through playing video games in the following way:

> [R]ather than crediting formal instruction, which is included in all Swedish school curricula, Kjellberg's statement suggests that he may distinguish between the English he was taught in school and the English he was exposed to (and acquired) through video games – presumably a distinction based on formality and perceived authenticity – and effectively positions the latter as the more valid, ratified, and/or relevant variety.
>
> *(Beers Fägersten 2017a, 4)*

This conclusion is in line with the observation that exposure to and engagement with extramural English negatively affects students' enthusiasm for the formal study of English (Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller 2013).

The identification of early school instruction in English, undubbed English-language popular culture products, and an openness to learning and using English as key contributing factors to the high level of English proficiency among the Nordic populations also highlights their mutually supportive interplay. In the next section, the relationship between these factors is considered in terms of different sources of exposure and attitudes to English.

## Revisiting English from above, English from below

While English has been explicitly promoted in Nordic societies in the domains of education, industry, and commerce, it is perhaps most saliently present in popular culture and media, as reviewed in the previous section. Thus, equally represented in the Nordic countries is what Preisler (1999, 2003) has identified as "English from above" and "English from below," with the former serving pragmatic purposes of communication and the latter allowing expression of identity and style. The paradigm of English from above vs English from below acknowledges that the linguistic practices that characterize a speech community, such as the extensive use of English among the populace of the Nordic countries, may be less imposed upon them from institutions and more autonomously appropriated as an active construction of discursive identity. In other words, the language used in channels of popular culture, such as feature films, broadcast television, streaming services, print media, social media, and digital media, can be considered the result of a process in which linguistic practices are appropriated from below by non-institutional actors as opposed to imposed from the top down by policy makers. The engagement with Anglophone popular culture and subsequent use of English, for example, represents language change that, according to Phillipson (2001, 25):

> is less determined by the way establishment values are propagated top-down, via the obligatory learning of English as foreign language […] and much more by bottom-up, identity-driven choice of language to indicate group values, as in choice of style, communicative activities, and language, signaling membership of internationally oriented sub-groups.

Preisler's (1999, 2003) conceptualization of English from above and English from below establishes a dichotomy between, on the one hand, institutionalized English that reflects a top-down form of language policy and targets pragmatically oriented communication related to trade and transactional activity, and on the other hand, individualized English that reflects a bottom-up approach to self-expression, socialization, and community-building within subcultures. However, due to the massive impact of English-language popular culture within the Nordic countries, Preisler's dichotomy must be revised. English from below is no longer relegated to subcultures, but rather English-language popular culture has rendered subcultures mainstream – a fact that Preisler readily acknowledges (Preisler 2003, 122). It is the mainstream status and unchallenged dominance of English-language popular culture which, consequently, prompts a dismantling of the dichotomy of English from above and from below. English from above is perhaps a relic from a time when the institutionalization of English was a strategy or a matter of language policy. Now, the domains of English from above

have been blurred by English from below as mainstream popular culture, which may previously have been a vehicle for English to enter into Nordic society from below, but is now permeating and even dictating what was previously considered English from above. This is evident, for example, in the increasingly salient orientation toward and integration of popular culture phenomena in tertiary English studies programs (as presented earlier), and in primary and secondary education, where targeted norms "may in practice be overruled by varieties that the pupils are exposed to outside the educational system" (Simensen 2010, 474; see also Breivik 2019; Hult 2017; Jensen 2017; Leona et al. 2021; Schurz and Sundqvist 2022; Sundqvist 2009, 2020). Participation in English-language popular culture has also become a Nordic industry, particularly in the field of entertainment, with Nordic actors, directors, producers, musicians, artists, and digital and social media entrepreneurs making outstanding contributions. English-language popular culture thus calls into question the accuracy of Preisler's above/below dichotomy, as English from above now answers to the forces of English from below, nullifying any opposing directionality. The effects of this development are explored in the following sections.

## The effect of popular culture on language use

English is *the* global lingua franca, so its usage indexes an international flair. Indeed, it has been noted that, especially among young people of the Nordic countries, the use of English corresponds to the practice of "doing being international" (Haberland and Preisler 2015, 20). The use of English thus represents not only communicative but also symbolic purposes. Attitudes toward English may influence both its usage and reception, and English-language popular culture, in its turn, may influence each of these. The following sections focus on attitudes toward English in the Nordic countries specifically with regards to openness to English influx, and how this openness manifests in specific types of code-switching influenced by English-language popular culture.

### *Attitudes toward English and Anglophone popular culture*

When pondering, "Why Are the Scandinavians so Good at English?", the How Widely Spoken-website notes "an openness to learning and using English" among the main explanatory factors. This openness has been investigated and compared from a transnational Nordic perspective, which has confirmed common positive attitudes toward learning and using English (e.g., Norrby 2015), but also revealed some important differences. For example, Vikør (2010, 27) concludes that the Nordic countries (including the Faroe Islands) differ in their tendencies toward linguistic purism (i.e., opposed to foreign influence) vs linguistic liberalism, with the scale ranging from Icelandic (most purist)

to Danish (most liberal) communities, book-ending the Faroese, Nynorsk, Finnish, Finland Swedish, Bokmål, and Sweden Swedish communities. Smaller linguistic communities (such as Iceland and the Faroe Islands) or the existence of an alternative variant (such as Nynorsk), correlates with more wariness of English influence. Similarly, Sandøy and Kristiansen (2010a) have identified a distinction between central and peripheral communities, based on their "mountain peak model," whereby the geographically central communities of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden are characterized by linguistic liberalism, while the east or west peripheral communities of Icelandic, Faroese, and Finland Swedish tend toward linguistic purism. These differences, in their turn, correlate to "a similarity vs. difference distinction in terms of the linguistic relationships to English" (Sandøy and Kristiansen 2010b, 151) – in other words, the central communities are similarly open to English and distinguish themselves from the peripheral communities, which are similarly opposed to English.

It should be noted, however, that opposition to English mainly concerns threats of domain loss or unnecessary English loanwords (Gjersvik 2021; Kristiansen 2005; Albury 2014; see also Chapter 6), whereas attitudes toward English-language (especially Anglo-American) popular culture are highly positive in the Nordic countries (Albury 2014; Norrby 2015). In fact, as discussed above, English-language popular culture is generally credited for successful and enjoyable language acquisition, and it is acknowledged as a resource for linguistic nuance and stylization (Phillipson 2008; Preisler 2003). The effects of widespread exposure to and enthusiasm (particularly among younger generations) for English-language popular culture can be observed in everyday discourse, as discussed in the following sections.

### *Code-switching as a Nordic characteristic*

While there are many terms and overlapping concepts in the bilingualism and language contact literature, code-switching can for simplicity's sake be considered the umbrella term for the phenomenon of the simultaneous use of two languages in one conversational exchange. Code-switching thus predictably and predominantly occurs among bilingual speakers sharing the same or overlapping linguistic repertoires (Grosjean 1982; Poplack et al. 1988; Wei 2005; Woolard 1989). This shared linguistic background of interlocutors automatically establishes them as members of an in-group, which code-switching can either serve to confirm or help to establish. Code-switching therefore frequently functions as a communicative strategy for achieving social goals, including to signal interpersonal relationships (Blom and Gumperz 1972), to redefine social roles (Myers-Scotton 1988), to manage social relations (Auer 1988), or to identify with alternative values (Preisler 2003).

The prominent role of English in the Nordic countries and its consequent infiltration of both high-status and low-status domains has helped encourage

an ideological shift in the view of English as a foreign language to English as a second or non-foreign language. This shift is meaningful, as it reflects both the ever-increasing use of English across domains, and the progression beyond the approach to the language as merely a source for lexical borrowing (see Chapter 5) to the use of English as a valid, viable code for (inter- and intra-) Nordic communication, especially among younger generations. Höglin (2002, 56) notes that, for example, while Swedish has been completely replaced by English in certain domains, the dominance of English is actually best understood as extensive code-switching, which, in informal conversation among youths is estimated to be as often as once per minute. Among Lønsmann's (2009) two groups of teenage subjects, distinguished as participating in subculture or non-subculture activities, code-switching from Danish to English occurred on average every 9 or every 50 seconds, respectively. Leppänen (2007) noted in various online fora (concerning gaming, hip-hop, fan fiction, and weblogs) a range from sporadic code-switching from Finnish to English to almost exclusive use of English among Finnish youths; similar observations were made by Almestrand (2021), whose teenage Norwegian subjects engaged in frequent code-switching to English in a gaming context.[1]

In the Nordic countries, there is thus ample evidence that language usage is evolving in the form of frequent code-switches to English, which itself is more and more a function of consumption of English-language popular culture (Hult 2017). The use of English on television or in films, music, or the Internet serves as input, often handily packaged, that consumers may easily appropriate and ultimately repurpose. Indeed, switches to English have been shown to be predominantly characterized by two phenomena: 1) the incorporation of idioms, formulaic language, or other simple phrases; and 2) the citation of popular culture sources (Sharp 2001). As an example of the former, Höglin (2002, 56) found Swedish-English code-switching in informal conversation among youths to be characterized by the use of such fixed phrases as, "That's not my business," "No problem," "Shit happens," and "Back to basics." Similarly, Sharp (2007, 231) and Beers Fägersten (2020, 100–101) have noted the salience of such idioms or formulaic phrases as "Check it out!", "Give me a break," or "Go to hell!" in Swedish interaction. However, unmixed utterances of longer strings of English or complete clauses also characterize Nordic code-switching behavior. Often, these can be traced to popular media sources, as reviewed in the next section.

### *Popular culture-sourced code-switching*

The act of quoting from television, films, music, or other forms of popular culture is not unique to the practices of code-switching to English in the Nordic countries; rather, it is a widespread and predictable consequence of media consumption (Harris et al. 2008; Sierra 2021; Smyers 2016). However, so frequently are, for instance, Swedish-to-English code-switches in the form of quotations from

televisual media, that Sharp (2007) identified it as a phenomenon that she calls "the quoting game." In Sharp's data, the quoting game would begin when one interlocutor's code-switch to English referenced a specific media source, thereby triggering continued media-quoting behavior from another interlocutor. The call-and-response nature of the quoting game is playful and social, but both the introduction and subsequent recognition of media-sourced material in interaction work in tandem to create solidarity among the interlocutors, especially younger generations (Sierra 2021). Furthermore, in the Nordic context, where English is a foreign language, an English-language media reference represents an indexical code-switch on two levels, fostering solidarity via common interest in both 1) consuming English-language popular culture; and 2) invoking popular culture references (Beers Fägersten 2020). However, among her study population of young adults, Sharp noticed explicit expressions of waning appreciation of the quoting game. In other words, interlocutors developed a sensitivity to over-engagement in the game, reaching what Sharp termed a "tolerance threshold" (Sharp 2007, 233). A game can only be sustained so long, but the interlocutors' return to Swedish may support the data on openness to English, which indicate a general resistance to a full transition to English in certain domains (Sandøy and Kristiansen 2010b).

### *Swear word-sourced code-switching*

The observation of such phrases as "Go to hell!" and "Shit happens" among the otherwise innocuous English-language idioms and formulaic expressions previously mentioned is significant, as it suggests an indiscriminate appropriation of English-language swear words and swearing practices. In the Nordic countries, code-switching to English for the purpose of swearing is so widespread that Beers Fägersten (2020) has proposed "swearing switches" as a term to refer to instances of this distinct kind of code-switching. In Sweden, swearing switches can be observed not just in casual conversation (Beers Fägersten 2012, 2018), but also in Swedish print and online news media, mass advertisement campaigns, as well as in popular culture products, featuring prominently in the titles of feature films, television series, and fiction and non-fiction literature (Beers Fägersten 2014, 2017b). The practice of using English swear words is not unique to the Swedish context; "fuck" in particular, and to a lesser extent "shit," have entered the lexicons of, for example, Norwegian (Andersen 2014; Fjeld et al. 2019), Danish (Fjeld et al. 2019; Lønsmann 2009; Rathje 2011), Finnish (Hjort 2017; Vaattovaara and Peterson 2019), and Icelandic (Fjeld et al. 2014), in both their native forms and in language-specific orthographic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic adaptations (further explored in Chapter 5). In fact, although Iceland skews toward a high level of language purism (Vikør 2010) and a low level of openness to English loanwords (Albury 2014; Sandøy and

Kristiansen 2010a), these tendencies do not seem to apply to swearing, according to the following quote:

> Living in modern day Iceland, I have been influenced. When I slam the car door on my knee, I catch myself blurting out curse words in English with great fury, most commonly the ones used to describe poop and copulation. However, I am a fervent supporter of language preservation because of the history, culture and richness each language possesses.
>
> *(Þorvaldsdóttir 2006, cited in Albury 2014, 105)*

Beers Fägersten (2017c, 2020) provides examples of how exposure to swear words in English-language popular culture leads to subsequent appropriation in the form of swearing switches in Swedish. However, the appropriation of popular culture-sourced swearing occurs with little to no acknowledgment of actual (as opposed to fictional) Anglophone sensibilities toward swearing. Instead, the use of English-language swear words draws on the general knowledge of 1) the stereotype of Anglophone (especially US) popular culture as characterized by frequent swearing; 2) the taboos of swearing that persist in native Anglophone cultures; and 3) the tendency for Swedish speakers to appropriate the fictional use of swear words while being unaware of or even unconcerned with these associated taboos (Beers Fägersten 2020, 141). The mirth and impunity with which swearing switches occur represent the essence of the use of English-language swear words for overtly humorous purposes (Chapter 10), whereby Anglophone norms are both blatantly and whimsically flouted (Beers Fägersten 2014, 2017a, 2020).

## English as a *lingua ludica* and a *lingua maledicta*

As a global language, English can neither be conceptualized as one variety nor can it be claimed as the property of one nation, population, or speech community. Like their global counterparts, Nordic users of English have adapted English to their own purposes, both leaving their own marks on the language, and allowing English to effect change on their respective languages (Chapter 5). Nordic varieties of English can now be recognized, and while there are perhaps distinct differences between, for example, Swedish English and Finnish English, it is the similarities that testify to a variety of English as a Nordic language.

While Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish can be used as mutually intelligible languages among Scandinavians (Chapter 2), it is more and more common that English is used as a lingua franca in inter-Scandinavian communication, just as English is the lingua franca for inter-Nordic communication. In general, the use of English as a lingua franca tends to correspond to specific communicative functions and domains; Phillipson (2008, 250) has identified several such domain-based categories of English as a lingua franca, including 1) English as a *lingua economica*, corresponding to the language of corporate

globalization; 2) English as *lingua cultura*, signaling values and norms of a society, country, group, or class; 3) English as *lingua academica*, used as a medium of instruction and for international collaboration in higher education; 4) English as *lingua emotiva*, affiliated with advertising, entertainment, and popular culture; 5) English as *lingua bellica*, corresponding to the language of military aggression; and 6) English as a *lingua frankensteinia*, symbolizing the subtractive use of English, that is, when lingua franca English threatens the survival or prestige of other languages.

English as a *lingua economica*, *lingua cultura*, and *lingua academica* represent the results of the institutionalization of English, or English from above (Preisler 1999, 2003), countered by *lingua emotiva*, or English from below. Both English from above and from below contribute to the potential of English as a *lingua frankensteinia*. According to Beers Fägersten (2020), however, the use of English as a second language, a foreign language, and a lingua franca in Swedish society not only challenges the Frankensteinian evaluation of English, but also highlights the inadequacy of *lingua emotiva* to account for the expanding scope of English from below. The impact of Anglophone popular culture on the use of English in the Nordic countries exposes the need to identify additional *lingua* varieties, and Beers Fägersten (2020, 188) has suggested English as a *lingua ludica*. This category corresponds to the use of English as a (foreign or second) language of play and humor (Siegel 1995). English-language play in second language, foreign language, and lingua franca communication establishes the essential role of speakers' native languages in effecting the linguistic incongruities vital to language play, thereby defending against the use of English as a linguistically predatory practice. English-language play may, in other words, serve preservatory purposes. The use of English as a *lingua ludica* also serves as a reminder that English lingua franca communication need not reflect a domain-specific purpose but may simply provide an outlet for or inspire linguistic creativity (Beers Fägersten 2020, 190).

The non-native use of English swear words is a global phenomenon, but one that is particularly prevalent in the Nordic countries. The trans-Nordic practice of engaging in English-language swearing switches (Beers Fägersten 2020) in popular culture productions (Beers Fägersten 2017a, 2020; Rathje 2017), in print media (Beers Fägersten 2014, 2017b; Hjort 2015), in digital and social media (Andersen 2014), and in conversation (Höglin 2002; Lønsmann 2009; Sharp 2001), serve to establish English as a *lingua maledicta*, that is, the preferred language for swearing. It is not the case, however, that English swear words supplant or threaten the status of their native counterparts (Chapter 5). On the contrary, Beers Fägersten (2017a, 2017b, 2020) has argued that the use of English-language swear words in Swedish society is so prominently at odds with Anglophone native-speaker norms that swearing in English is more associated with humor than with harm. As such, swearing in English further establishes English as a *lingua ludica*. English-language swearing, especially

when humorously framed, serves to preserve the power of native swear words. Censorship practices targeting native swear words but not English swear words reasserts the potency of the former while normalizing – even neutralizing – the latter. In Sweden, the titles of the wildly successful film *Fucking Åmal* (Moodysson 1998) or best-selling book *Aldrig fucka upp* (Lapidus 2008) have helped to make English swear words mainstream, evidenced, for example, in the frequent occurrence of English swear words in Swedish radio and television. A particularly illustrative example is the use of English swear words in Sweden's public television-sponsored broadcast of the 2017 national song contest, *Melodifestivalen*, which featured songs including lyrics such as "I just don't give a fuck" or "when you look so fucking beautiful" and hosts opening the show with, *Välkommen till Melo-fucking-difestivalen!* (Welcome to the Melody-fucking-festival!). The fact that these usages were approved for such a traditionally family-friendly program testifies to the status of English swear words as entertaining as opposed to offensive. However, vocal complaints lodged by some viewers of *Melodifestivalen* suggest that the more English swear words are appropriated and especially integrated into the native language systems, the more likely they are to be recognized, over time, as native swear words, attributed the same strength, and subsequently experienced as offensive (Beers Fägersten 2020, 2021).

## Conclusion

The wide distribution and cultural impact of Anglophone popular culture is not a uniquely Nordic but rather a global phenomenon. However, the Nordic-wide dedication to and embrace of imported popular culture in its original English-language format has proven decisive for the promotion of learning and using the English language, and, subsequently, is related to a high level of proficiency in English. Anglophone popular culture has had an indelible impact on the attitudes toward and usage of English in the Nordic countries. Indeed, it seems to eclipse any similar effects of either Nordic traditions of stringency in higher education studies of English or of the pan-Nordic investment in early English education. An ever more pronounced orientation toward popular culture can thus be expected to characterize the domain of English-language education in the coming years.

There is evidence, however, that the close association between the English language and popular culture has fostered a Nordic-wide relationship to English that deviates from native Anglophone norms, whereby the filtering of English through popular culture encourages the use of English as a language of play and imbues a distance to its affective properties. Furthermore, the increasing salience of Anglophone popular culture, media, and entertainment in the Nordic countries results in a tendency to favor the English language for the production of and engagement with popular culture. This development perhaps calls for yet another category of English as a lingua franca, proposed as English as a

*lingua oblectatia*, or English as a language of entertainment. The use of English in Nordic popular culture productions may develop to be the norm rather than the exception. As such, the cycle of Anglophone influence may even evolve to include the Nordic imprint on English-language popular culture.

## Note

1 It should be noted, however, that these domains are particularly affiliated with English, such that similar use of English may extend to non-Nordic contexts as well.

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# 5

# LANGUAGE CONTACT AND LANGUAGE CHANGE

## Impact on the languages of the Nordic countries

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### Introduction

The previous chapters in this book have illustrated that, at this point, there have been several decades leading up to the current era which are characterized by relatively intense language contact between English and the languages of the Nordic countries. A shared characteristic of this cross-Nordic language contact is that English, as the most influential donor language in the current era, is not a territorial language, nor is it a first language for the majority of the speakers involved. Peterson (2017) characterizes this type of language contact as "foreign-language contact," drawing attention to the fact that English does not hold any official protected status in the Nordic countries, and furthermore that it is a language that is learned, not normally acquired through intergenerational transmission.

This particular type of language contact, involving a language which is non-native to the vast majority of the speakers within the territory in question, has also been characterized as "remote," "extra-territorial," "non-contiguous" and "lean" (see Peterson 2017; see also Meyerhoff 2006; Sayers 2014). The existing research on language contact tends to focus on communities of native speakers of a language who come into shared physical space or contact with speakers of another native language. The language contact scenario described in the Nordic countries thus becomes relatively complex and also distinct, as it incorporates a range of realities including second language acquisition and language learning, as well as top-down versus bottom-up use of language (see Chapter 4). Indeed, the language scenario in much of the Nordic countries calls for a reification of what constitutes a "native" speaker of English, and, by extension, what constitutes a second- and foreign-language speaker (Lønsmann et al. 2022).

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In terms of language contact, these complex realities lead to a number of possible outcomes, some on par with findings on bidirectional language contact, and others more typical of unidirectional contact. For example, Andersen (2014) and Peterson (2017) point out that the incorporation of pragmatic elements from English, including swear words, discourse markers, and vocatives, offers evidence of contact extending beyond a rather predictable list of domain-related content words pertaining to leisure activities, travel, information technology, advertising, higher education, and so on. While such features are also widely borrowed in bidirectional settings, a few features set them apart in unidirectional settings. Termed "pragmatic borrowings" (Andersen 2014), such linguistic elements have the possibility to enter into everyday discourse across a wide range of speakers in a number of different settings, thereby affecting the receiving language and community at a profound level. As an example, the apology marker *sorry* and the swear word *fuck* are frequently used in the five national languages spoken in the Nordic countries. As a further testament to their embeddedness, unlike other English borrowings, these elements lose their property of symbolically marking a speaker as proficient in English; that is, citizens of the Nordic countries can and do use English pragmatic borrowings without having high proficiency in English once the borrowings have taken a foothold in everyday language. This is because the borrowings have ceased to function as elements of English and effectively take on a life of their own in the receiving community, taking on nuances of meaning, grammatical properties, and social indexes in the process.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the extent of integration of English-sourced borrowings in the languages of the Nordic countries. The first part of the chapter focuses on general tendencies of language contact in the Nordic setting, while the second part focuses on the finer-grained details of semantic and social integration of borrowings from English, including morphological and orthographic adaptation, and, finally, interactive practices.

## Linguistic evidence of language contact

Influence from English on other languages is part of a global trend, not something specific to the languages spoken in the Nordic countries. Similar developments are taking place in other languages as well, for example, other languages of Europe. What sets the Nordic countries apart, and offers a prime location for further investigation, is the fact that inhabitants have exhibited sustained and widespread overall proficiency in English for several decades already, and the overall Nordic populations currently rank among those in the world that have the highest proportion of English speakers (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in this volume). Therefore, we are able to observe the outcome of several decades of relatively high intensity language contact.

In language contact settings in general, Poplack and Sankoff (1984, 103–105) suggest four parameters to estimate the integration of borrowings into a receiving language, as well as how to distinguish borrowings from code-switching: 1) frequency of use; 2) native-language synonym displacement; 3) morphophonemic and/or syntactic integration; and 4) acceptability by native speakers. To this list we would add a fifth element which is in contrast to item 2) and complementing item 4): variation of a borrowed variant with a heritage form. Research on pragmatic borrowing demonstrates that forms borrowed from English into the languages of the Nordic countries are not, contrary to widespread belief, taking over or displacing heritage forms, but rather emerge as stylistic variants. For example, the work of Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) on the English borrowing *please,* nativized as *pliis* in Finnish orthography, occupies a relatively narrow range of social and pragmatic functions in Finnish compared to the ubiquity of *please* in English. In this chapter we make use of Poplack and Sankoff's parameters in our overview of the integration of English-sourced borrowings into the languages of the Nordic countries.

## Frequency of lexical borrowings from English

We first focus on the frequency of English borrowings in the languages of the Nordic countries. The frequency of recent lexical borrowings was the subject of the joint Nordic research project *Moderne importord i språka i Norden* (=MIN, "Modern imports in the languages of the Nordic countries"). One part of the study involved measuring the frequency of borrowings in newspapers for a two-day period in the year 1975 and a two-day period in 2000 (Selback and Sandøy 2007). The comparison shows that Icelandic, Faeroese, and Finnish have relatively fewer borrowings from English, 10–22 per 10,000 words, while the central Scandinavian languages – Swedish/Finland-Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian – show a much higher frequency of 53–67 borrowings from English per 10,000 words. The conclusion of the study was therefore that Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish/Finnish-Swedish were more open to lexical borrowings from English than, for example, Icelandic, which tends to be more purist and leaned toward coining native-stock terminology for new concepts (Kvaran 2007, 186). However, as pointed out by Kvaran (2007), it is important to note that these results were based on analysis of a formal register: printed texts in daily newspapers. While speakers of Icelandic have been shown to be relatively conservative and purist regarding formal and written language, different findings might emerge from a study of everyday spoken interaction. This notion is summarized by Kvaran (2007, 17) on the relationship between Icelandic and lexical borrowings:

> In Iceland, language purists have been very active for a very long time, and they have also had their influence on vocabulary. For the longest time,

> a battle was fought against Danish influence with good results in written language, but Danish words and expressions lived a good life in the spoken language (and many of them are still used). The same can be said about English and American influence today. Therefore, it is difficult to investigate the status of borrowings in the language. It is known that they exist in the spoken language, while it is more difficult and often quite hard to find them in print.
>
> *(Authors' translation from the Danish)*

As pointed out in this quotation, spoken language behaves noticeably differently from written genres, especially formal written genres. In Icelandic, adjectives such as *nice*, *cool*, and *happy*, orthographically adapted as *næs*, *kúl* and *happí*, have been used for decades[1] in spoken Icelandic without ever acquiring recognition as a part of Icelandic vocabulary; they are either not listed or they are minimally noted in dictionaries such as *Íslensk nútímamálsorðabók* and *Íslensk orðabók* as not fully accepted or informal. There is an element of gatekeeping at play: English borrowings that are associated with spoken language and youth culture rarely find their way into formal written language and formal accounts of language, but nonetheless they exist and thrive in social media, informal spoken language, and computer-mediated language (cf. Friðriksson and Angantýsson 2021; Isenmann 2016).[2]

Spoken language and informal written genres thus become a prime location for investigating borrowings from English, yet finding and gaining access to adequate amounts of data to measure borrowings can be a challenge. A way of circumventing the issue of availability of spoken data is to make use of questionnaires that focus on vocabulary. In the late 1990s, Kotsinas (2002, 37–61) conducted a large-scale study with an aim of comparing English influence on youth language in the Nordic countries. From 1997 to 2000, a questionnaire was sent to primary and secondary schools in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland. The questionnaire contained 55 different words or concepts considered a likely source for slang words. The list contained nouns, verbs, and phrases that referred, for example, to the categorization (girl, boy, police) and characteristics (nice, beautiful) of people, body parts (breasts, face), partying (drinking, dancing) and sex life (sexual organs). The students who responded to the survey, then between ages 14–19, were instructed to spend about 45 minutes writing as many slang words as they could think of, based on the list of categories. From the resulting lists generated by the respondents, the overall proportion of English-sourced words was calculated. The words generated included English borrowings adapted to the recipient languages in various ways, for example, *paya* 'pay,' as well as native words that exhibited semantic shift due to influence from English, for example *hög* 'high [on drugs]' and *suga* 'suck' in the Swedish data.

According to the results (Kotsinas 2002, 41), the responses from the Danish and Norwegian students demonstrated a higher proportion of English borrowings, 23.2 percent and 21.2 percent, respectively, compared to the Swedish speakers in both Sweden and Finland, at 17.1 percent and 18.2 percent, respectively.[3] As Kotsinas (2002, 42) points out, however, variation in the overall proportions could be due to the linguistic background of the students who responded to the survey in each country, as well as their social background and the distribution between urban and rural areas.[4] In Sweden, the study focused largely on schools in which other minority languages play an important role (Kotsinas 2002, 42), and the relatively low numbers in the Finland-Swedish data might be explained by the fact that Swedish slang in Finland is heavily influenced by contact with Finnish (Forsskåhl 2002).

Even though the results were not published for Icelandic, the student questionnaire was also distributed in Iceland. The questionnaires that were analyzed show that around 23 percent of the responses were borrowings from English (Hilmisdóttir 2018, 65). The questionnaire was used again in a follow-up study in Iceland in 2020. A comparison of the results from the two Icelandic studies shows that during the twenty years that passed between the studies, the number of English responses more than doubled, reaching 47 percent of the total responses in 2020 (Jónsdóttir 2021, 405). The study has not been repeated in the other Nordic countries, so further comparison is not possible.

One of the questions posed by Kotsinas was whether there were similarities between the Nordic countries; that is, whether they were borrowing the same terms from English, or whether the borrowings differ from one language to another. The results showed that the frequency differed from one language to another, but around one third (35 percent) of the English responses overlapped in two or more Nordic languages (Kotsinas 2002, 46). Some of the words were unique to one language or were unusually popular in one language compared to the others. For example, the noun *king* and the native form *kung* meaning 'fun' or 'great person' were common in the Swedish data but were not mentioned in the other languages (Kotsinas 2002, 51). Twenty years later, in the Icelandic follow-up study, the English nouns *king* and *kingsi* (*king* + dimin.) appeared as a popular term to describe people who are "fun/funny." Also in the Icelandic studies, both in 2000 and 2020, the adjective *happy* was one of the most frequent English words, while it was barely mentioned in the other Nordic countries.[5] This indicates that well-known slang words gain popularity and spread locally within each language, and that each language has its own unique vocabulary of English words that are established and accepted as a part of informal, spoken youth language.[6]

At the same time, a large portion (one third in the Kotsinas study) of shared lexical borrowings from English across Nordic languages suggests it is not a coincidence which English words or phrases are likely to gain popularity in

Nordic youth language. With increased influence of American popular culture (see Chapter 4), and with the rise of social media and smart technology, it is likely that the similarities are even more evident in the 2020s than in 2000. If we go even further back in time, before the internet, smart devices, and widespread access to English-speaking entertainment, colloquial language and slang were often more locally oriented. This, in turn, caused many problems for inter-Nordic communication (cf. Molde 1981, 25; see also Chapter 2). The high presence of overlapping English borrowings in informal settings could lead to a certain level of shared understanding across Nordic countries even without resorting to English or Scandinavian as a lingua franca (see Kotsinas 2002, 60).

## Major domains of lexical borrowing

During the second half of the 20th century, the majority of early English loanwords in the North Germanic languages were from the technical domain (cf. e.g., Graedler 2002, 61). The main motivation for these borrowings was to fill lexical gaps in the receiving languages, or what Bloomfield famously referred to as cultural borrowings (Bloomfield 1933). Consequently, the majority of the borrowings were nouns or nominal phrases that referred to new technology (e.g., *radio* and *telefon* 'telephone' in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish and *internet* in all the Nordic languages).

Even if the terminology for new technology was in many ways similar in the Nordic countries, each language community had its own language policy. While Sweden, Denmark, and Norway were open for lexical borrowings, Iceland, along with the Faroe Islands and Finland, had a more conservative approach which was based on a long, purist tradition (Ottósson 1990). Hence, instead of borrowing and adapting new words from English, there was a general consensus among the Icelandic public, as with Finns and the Faroese, to coin new terms through native-sourced resources (cf. Kvaran 2007). Electrical engineers were the first profession in Iceland who formed a committee responsible for the terminology within their field. Today, there are around 50 terminology committees in Iceland in fields such as economics, medicine, computer science, and geology (cf. Kristinsson 2007, 52–54). Here, it should be stressed that this work is driven by actual users of language and experts in their respective scientific fields. A consequence of this type of language committee is that published Icelandic texts tend to have fewer borrowings from English than equivalent publications in Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish, as shown in the MIN-study (e.g., Selback and Sandøy 2007, 137). This generalization, however, fails to capture certain nuances about modern Icelandic. For example, as noted earlier in this chapter, it is not unusual for English borrowings to live side by side with native terms, including new native terms. Examples include the pairs *stjórnmál/pólitík* and *hlaðvarp/podcast*. In such cases, the native words are typically relegated

to formal and written genres, while the borrowings from English are widely dispersed in everyday spoken interaction. Furthermore, the use of the English borrowings can, in some cases, produce particular stylistic effects: a text can appear even overly technical, professional, authoritative, objective, and pedantic (cf. Graedler 2002). As an illustration, when Icelandic geologists were asked whether they preferred English borrowings or native Icelandic terminology, they claimed that they use Icelandic terms in public discourse, since that is what the general public knows and understands, while they preferred English/international terminology in conversation in academic contexts. According to the geologists who were interviewed, the native terminology did not sound adequately scientific (Teixidó 2012, 40).

More recent English borrowings often link to indexes of a modern lifestyle or to indicate good knowledge of international popular culture. Lexical borrowings are, for example, used strategically in advertising to create a particular stylistic effect, for example, to show that the product in question is new, urban, and international (cf. Graedler 2002, 61 for Norway). Adjectives such as *crazy* and *cool* and well-known catchphrases are used to create associations with international culture, youth, and modernity. In everyday conversation, similar motives also apply. For example, in Finnish, the English borrowing *pliis* 'please' is more associated with young and urban speakers while the native counterpart *kiitos* aligns with standard language usage and social distance (Peterson and Vaattovaara 2014). In youth language, speakers may use English borrowings to show that they are well versed in international pop culture, e.g., in American hip-hop culture, or in specific TV shows that are important for their peer group (see also Chapter 4). Such borrowings include not only words (*what, dude*) and short phrases (*oh my god*), but also clausal units (e.g., *you ain't seen nothing yet*, or quotes such as *winter is coming*, from the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, also found as trending memes).

## Classifications of borrowings

According to the MIN-study discussed earlier, 89.5 percent of English borrowings used in Nordic newspapers, excluding advertisements, were nouns. This high number shows that nouns are good candidates for borrowing in language contact situations (see also Thomason and Kaufmann 1988), especially if we compare this number to the results of Sandøy (2007, 140), who showed that nouns account for only 22.6 percent of the vocabulary in Norwegian texts. In other words, nouns, as "content words," seem to serve as a center of gravity for language borrowing in contact situations. When the language contact cuts deeper, other parts of speech become increasingly important as items of interest, for example, function words and discourse elements (cf. the work of Matras 2020, who places discourse elements at the top of the borrowing hierarchy).

According to Sharp's (2001, 65–66) study of incorporation of English-sourced lexical items in Swedish, the distribution between parts of speech depends on the degree of formality. Her study shows that nouns account for 78 percent of all English borrowings in more formal conversations that were recorded at Swedish workplace meetings, while nouns accounted for only 37 percent of the English borrowings in informal youth conversations. The same trend is evident when the results of the Icelandic MIN-study are compared with a study on Icelandic youth language. According to the MIN-results, in Icelandic newspapers 92.9 percent of the English borrowings were nouns (Selback and Sandøy 2007, 26), while nouns comprised only 49.5 percent of the overall English borrowings in conversation between two boys playing video games (Hilmisdóttir 2021, 130). However, it should be noted that the categorization of the borrowed items differs. While the MIN-study focused on traditional parts of speech and included all lexical borrowings from 1950 (not just those from English), the study on Icelandic youth language only included borrowed units that were not considered part of the Icelandic language.[7] Furthermore, the youth study had a more holistic approach to borrowed units. Hence, nominal phrases were treated as a single unit and not split up as nouns, adjectives, and free-standing articles in a phrase such as *a good guy*. Table 5.1 shows the distribution of the borrowings/English words in the newspaper texts of the MIN-study; for comparison, Table 5.2 shows the distribution of English words in Icelandic gaming conversations.

As Table 5.2 shows, informal youth language is characterized by the use of pragmatic borrowings (Hilmisdóttir 2021, 128; Hilmisdóttir 2023). In the last decades, there has been an increase in the borrowing of linguistic elements that have pragmatic or interactional functions, not only in Icelandic but overall in the languages of the Nordic countries. Pragmatic borrowings carry signals of attitudes, index social categories, register the epistemic status of an interlocutor, and structure discourse and perform speech acts such as greetings and apologies, among other functions. Pragmatic borrowings include politeness phrases (*sorry*, *please*) responses (*yes*, *what*, *yeah*), discourse-structuring devices (*okay*, *aight*,

**TABLE 5.1** Distribution of lexical borrowings in Icelandic newspaper texts

| *Part of speech* | *%* |
|---|---|
| Nouns | 88.4 |
| Adjectives | 7.2 |
| Verbs | 3.6 |
| Adverbs | 0 |
| Interjections | 0.4 |
| Prepositions | 0.4 |
| Total | 100 |

**TABLE 5.2** Distribution of English words in Icelandic gaming conversations

| *Borrowed units* | *%* |
|---|---|
| Nouns (and NPs) | 49.5 |
| Free-standing adjectives | 5 |
| Verbs (and verb particles) | 12 |
| Adverbial phrases | 0.6 |
| Pragmatic borrowings | 26.3 |
| Longer expressions | 6.6 |
| Total | 100 |

*of course*), address terms (*guys*, *bro*, *dude*), swear words (*fuck*, *shit*, *oh my god*), and hortatives (*come on*, *let's go*). The use of pragmatic borrowing is mostly limited to informal language and is considered to be more frequent in youth language, spoken interaction, and on social media.

As an example, in Extract 1, two Icelandic teenage boys, Svenni and Bogi, are playing the computer game *Grand Theft Auto*. At the beginning of the excerpt, Svenni poses a question regarding the rewards in the game (line 01). The excerpt has three examples of English-sourced nouns, a question pronoun, and an indirect borrowing (*gaur* 'dude').

Extract 1: Rewards for finding a treasure: IYL-comp (a transcription key for the featured extracts is included in the Appendix in Chapter 11)

(S=Svenni, B=Bogi)
→01 S *hvað fær maður fyrir* ***treasure***
"what does one get for **treasure**?"
→02 B *a- það er örugglega fimmtíu* ***ká*** *örugglega sko*
"a- probably fifty **kay** probably"
03 (0.9)
→04 S ***wha::t***
→05 S ***gaur*** *(0.3) getur þú merkt á* ***mappið***
"**dude**, can you mark on the **map**?"

In Extract 1, the two Icelandic teenage boys used the English words *treasure* and *mappið* "map." In the first instance, line 01, the noun is unadapted, while in line 05, the second noun, *mappið*, is used with an Icelandic definite article. In both cases, the boys are referring to phenomena that are tied to the game, and it is not unlikely that the words *treasure* and *map* appear in English on the screen while the boys are playing.

## Adaptation

One of the main revolutions of the digital age is the easy access to spoken English. Through the internet and smart technology, the inhabitants of the Nordic countries have constant and easy access to audio material in English. This, in addition to the enormous success of North American and British cinema, music, and entertainment, has changed the ways the people in the Nordic countries are exposed to English (see Chapter 4). As shown in a recent study on digital language contact, young Icelanders typically watch cartoons and play computer games in English long before they start school (Sigurjónsdóttir and Nowenstein 2021). As a result, it has become more and more common that people in the Nordic countries are exposed to English by hearing it spoken rather than through written texts, or what is referred to as a component of bottom-up learning (see Chapter 4). This, in turn, may have substantial consequences for the formal adaptation of English borrowings used in the languages spoken in the Nordic countries in the near future, especially regarding pronunciation.

When an English borrowing enters the recipient language it can go through a process in which it is adapted to the new environment in various ways. In some cases, the borrowing may entail a simple process of using a lexical unit from one language in a new context, without altering the structure or function of the etymon (i.e., the original English form). However, a closer look at borrowings in their new context shows that this is rarely, if ever, the case. On the contrary, English borrowings go through the "filter" of the receiving language. The outcome, in other words the form and function of the borrowing in the recipient language, depends on various factors such as the structural features of the language in question, the existing vocabulary, tradition, official and unofficial language policy, governmental language planning, and the primary users of the term in the receiving language. In the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the adaptation of borrowings from four different perspectives: 1) meaning, connotations, and context of use; 2) morphophonemic adaptation; 3) spelling; and 4) interaction and adaptation.

## Meaning, connotation, and context of use

English borrowings can be divided into three main categories from a semantic point of view: 1) those with a full copying of the semantic content of the source language; 2) those with partial copying of the semantic content; and 3) those that have developed new meanings in the receiving language (cf. Andersen 2014, 19; Kvaran and Svavarsdóttir 2002,100–101).

The first category includes terminology and words, in particular nouns, that have a clear denotative meaning (cf. Kvaran and Svavarsdóttir 2002, 100). This includes words that are used in all the Nordic countries, such as *email*, *blogg,*

*podcast*, and *internet*. In the second category, there are polysemous words that have a limited use in the receiving language. Icelandic examples include the verb *læka* 'like,' which is used exclusively in the context of giving "likes" on social media platforms. Similarly, the verbs *followa* 'follow' and *posta* 'post' are used only in the context of social media. The third category includes words that have acquired a new meaning or function in the receiving language. For example, the verb *fíla* 'like, dig' comes from the English verb *feel*, but has acquired a new meaning in Icelandic slang: *ég fíla þessa hljómsveit* 'I like this band.'

In cases in which English borrowings are in apparent competition with heritage words, the competing words are seldom completely interchangeable. In some cases, the two words have partly different functions, best viewed as variation or as a distribution of labor, based on setting, speaker, and intended social function. An example of this is the Finnish adverb *noin* 'about' and the English borrowing *about*. Even though *noin* is considered a semantic equivalent to the borrowing *about*, the latter has taken on a specialized meaning in Finnish. As Nykopp (2017, 19) demonstrates, *about* is sometimes used in Finnish with the meaning "something like" or "nearly," and it tends to collocate with numbers. The Finnish word *noin*, in contrast, is used across a range of meanings and with a full range of collocates.

In other cases, the choice between an English borrowing and a heritage variant may depend on the connotations they invoke; that is, what kind of social categories or styles with which they are typically associated. By choosing an English borrowing, for example *please* or *sorry*, a speaker can indicate informality. In Finnish and Icelandic, *pliis/plís* is rarely heard in formal contexts. Vaattovaara and Peterson (2019) conducted a matched guise test on Finnish speakers in Finland and showed that the use of *pliis* is primarily associated with relatively young, urban, educated females, although in practice these social categories do not exclusively constitute the users of *pliis*. Furthermore, *pliis* was found in their study to index social closeness and specific social styles such as irony or begging. In a 2019 study, the same researchers found, via a matched guise test, that the English borrowing *shit* in Finnish is preferred in a nominal inflection (the Finnish partitive, *ihan samaa vanhaa shitt**ii*** 'the same old shit') indexing the urban setting of Helsinki. Respondents to a matched guise test (Vaattovaara and Peterson 2019), which was distributed as a survey, exhibited great opposition to the inflection of the same form in a standard Finnish or rural variety of the partitive form (*ihan samaa vanhaa shitt**iä*** and *ihan sa**mm**aa van**a**haa shittiä*, respectively), offering clear evidence that the English borrowing has strong associations with Finland's urban center, so much so that it has affected the grammatical adaptation of the word *shit* into Finnish (Vaattovaara and Peterson 2019).

## Morphophonemic adaptation

As demonstrated through the previous examples of Finnish and Icelandic, formal integration of English borrowings includes adaptation to the morphological and phonetic system of the receiving languages. The adaptation depends also on the morphological system of the receiving language. Of the North Germanic languages, Faroese and Icelandic have a more elaborate morphological system than Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. Finnish, as a Finno-Ugric language with a high level of morphological cases to mark number, tense, and location (among other functions), can be considered to have a more complex morphological structure than the Scandinavian languages of the Nordic countries.

In Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, borrowed nouns are typically assigned the common gender (*utrum*): *babe – baben* (Dan.), *beib – beibsen* (Nor.), *cop – copsen* (Fin-Swe.), *friend – frienden* (Swe.) (Kotsinas 2002, 55). During recent decades, the use of the English *s*-plural has been on the rise, as evidenced in borrowings such as *kiwi**s**, airbag**s**, skanner**s**,* and *emoji**s***. The *s*-plural has the highest frequency in Danish, but it is absent in Icelandic and Finnish (Jarvad 2007, 205). Unlike the other Nordic languages, English-sourced nouns in Icelandic are mostly neuter, even in cases where the referent is a human being, as in *beib – beibið*, 'babe.' This could be because neuter is morphologically unmarked (i.e., it has a zero ending) and has a simple declension.[8] Table 5.3 shows the declension of the neuter noun *beib* 'babe' in Icelandic. The definite article is in brackets.

The following examples of the words *snooze*, *mess*, and *mail* are taken from diary entries by Icelandic teenagers in 1999, all treated as neuter (Hilmisdóttir 2001, 149):

Extract 2

> *Ég ýtti á "**snoozið**" á vekjaraklukkunni minni* […] 'I pushed snooze on my alarm clock […].'

Extract 3

> það er alltaf allt í **messi** […] 'everything is always in a mess […].'

Extract 4

> […] *þar sem ég fékk tvö **mail** frá Sevilla* '[…] because I got two mails from Sevilla.'

**TABLE 5.3** The declension of the neuter noun *beib* 'babe' in Icelandic

| *Case/Number* | *Singular* | *Plural* |
|---|---|---|
| **Nominative** | beib(-ið) | beib(-in) |
| **Accusative** | beib(-ið) | beib(-in) |
| **Dative** | beib-i(-nu) | beib(-un)-um |
| **Genitive** | beib-s(-ins) | beib-a(-nna) |

In Extract 2, the English-sourced noun *snooze* is adapted to Icelandic by adding the definite article, *ið*. In Extract 3, *mess* acquires an *-i* ending, marking it as dative singular. Finally, the neuter noun *mail* is used with the neuter form of the number *tveir* (two): *tvö*, although there is no observable adaptation in the noun itself. In some cases, especially when English borrowings have become an established part of the receiving language's vocabulary, nouns gain a nominative ending which marks them as masculine (*-i* or *–ur*) or feminine (*-a*) gender. Vernacular words from the World War II era, such as *gell**a*** 'gal,' *skvís**a*** 'good-looking woman,' from "squeeze," *sjopp**a*** 'convenience shop,' and *gæ**i*** 'guy,' are all examples of English borrowings that have integrated morphologically into Icelandic by adding *–a* (fem.) or *–i* (masc.). More recent examples of slang words that are not yet established grammatically include the nouns *beib**a*** – fem. 'babe,' *king**si*** **–** masc. 'king, a great guy,' *fell**i*** – masc. 'fellow, friend' and the slightly humoristic and playful *sjitt**ur*** – masc. 'shit.'

A recent study of the English borrowings *fuck* and *shit* in Finnish (Peterson, Biri, and Vaattovaara 2022), based on a corpus study of Finland's largest online forum, Suomi24, showed a high level of integration of borrowed swear words into computer-mediated discourse in Finnish. The word *fuck*, for example, manifested with six different nominal case endings in the data: genitive *(fuckin*), partitive (*fuckkia*), plural partitive (*fuckeja*), inessive (*fuckissa*), elative (*fuckista*), illative (*fuckiin*). It should be noted, however, that the adjectival form of *fucking* occurred without modification:

Extract 5

*takaisin siihen* **fucking** *tiskiin päin*
back 3SG.ILL fucking.NOM bar.ILL toward
"Back toward the fucking bar"

Indeed, in recent years, from around 2000, there seems to be an increase in the use of morphologically and phonetically non-adapted words in the languages spoken in the Nordic countries (cf. Bijvoet 2019, 21 for Swedish).

## Spelling

Even though the Nordic languages use an alphabet that shares many of the same letters with English, the pronunciation of each letter or letter combination varies from language to language. Furthermore, each language uses characters that are not a part of the English alphabet, for example diacritics and special letters such as *æ*, *ö*/*ø*, *å*, *þ*, and *ð*.[9] (see e.g., Omdal 2008b, 18–19).

When a lexical borrowing enters a recipient language, the word can be used with English orthography or adapted to the recipient language (e.g., *nice* vs *næs* in Icelandic). The MIN-study from 2000 shows that Icelandic has the highest rate of local orthographic adaptations (48 percent of all borrowings) while Danish has the lowest (7 percent) (Omdal 2008a).[10] Despite strong similarities between Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, Norwegian (at 44 percent) has a strong tendency to use a standardized orthographic adaptation. As an example of this, the Danish noun *tape* is spelled *teip* in Norwegian (Omdal 2008a, 164). Regarding Swedish, there is a stronger tendency to adapt the orthography in Finland-Swedish (23 percent) than Sweden Swedish (17 percent) (Omdal 2008a, 179).[11]

As Omdal (2008b, 20) points out, the adaptation of English borrowings into the recipient languages is not only dependent on structural features such as orthography and morphology, but the language users may make individual choices depending on a number of factors, including style, platform, and interlocutor. Language policy may also play an important role, for example, through institutions that receive specific funding to protect standardization of official language and to issue orthographic dictionaries. In Norway, there is a long tradition of official language planning regarding new borrowings, which may explain the high rate of orthographic adaptation of English borrowings in Norwegian compared to Danish and Swedish (Omdal 2008b, 19).

The orthographic treatment of English slang is another issue. Slang and informal spoken language are typically learned through audio or audiovisual material, for example, music, television series, or video clips. The borrowings are also used in informal contexts among friends. This, along with playfulness, can lead to wide variation in the spelling of English words. For example, an Icelandic slang survey conducted by Jónsdóttir (2021, 392) showed the following variations of the noun *girl*: *girl*, *gurl*, *gorl*, *girll*, *girlll*, *giirl*, *giiirl*, *girllllll*, *guuurl*, *gurrrrl*.

In some cases, frequently used slang words develop a standard orthographic form, either adapted or non-adapted. Such is the case with the adjective *nice*, which has been used as a part of informal Icelandic from the 1980s. As shown by Jónsdóttir (2021, 64), the form *næs* is gaining popularity, constituting 82.3 percent of all instances in the Icelandic slang study (cf. also Isenmann 2016, 78). The Icelandic spelling is perhaps also supported by the fact that

the entry *næs* appeared in the authoritative dictionary of Icelandic in 2002 (*Íslensk orðabók* 2002) – albeit labeled with two question marks to indicate it is not "fully acceptable." Since then, the adjective has appeared as a slogan in a high-profile advertisement campaign for the Icelandic Red Cross (*Vertu næs!* 'Be nice') and later in newspaper advertisements by the airliner *Niceair*. In other instances, the adapted orthographic form of borrowings has not gained popularity over time. Examples of this are the verb *message* and the adverb *actually*. Both of these borrowings are frequently used in informal Icelandic, and neither has developed an adapted orthographic form. An explanation for this might be that these forms are relatively difficult to render in Icelandic orthography compared to *næs*.

The examples show that the orthography of borrowings is not straightforward. An English borrowing may or may not develop a standardized written form, and this form may or may not be adapted into the receiving language. The development of a written standard depends on many factors, such as the context in which the borrowing is typically used (informal vs formal, written vs spoken language), the frequency of use, the familiarity with the borrowing in written form, the phonetic features of the word, and the use of the word in public discourse such as advertising campaigns.

## Interaction and adaptation

As with other types of borrowings, pragmatic borrowing is not a simple process in which linguistic items are simply transplanted from one language to another. Although the integration of pragmatic phenomena such as swear words and particles such as *okay* and *pliis* may seem straightforward, a closer analysis shows that these items are not necessarily used in the same way in everyday interaction in the receiving language. Instead, when a pragmatic item enters a receiving language, "there is a distinct probability that it ceases to function like the donor form from the source language" (Peterson 2017, 122). The borrowings are shaped and molded in conversational settings in the recipient language, which in turn may also affect the functions of the receiving language's pre-existing forms. This includes not only the phonetic and prosodic level, but also the interactional function of the borrowed item and the social categories associated with it. To illustrate, *jess* 'yes' is used in Icelandic, Swedish, and Finnish as a strong response to a positive event, for example, when someone scores a goal in a soccer game. Another typical context for *jess* is during pre-closings of a conversation, when a speaker is preparing to end a conversation and leave (cf. Schegloff and Sacks 1973). However, in Icelandic, *jess* is not used as an answer to a polar question, which is one of its central functions in English. In such cases, speakers of Icelandic typically use the native form *já* 'yes.' Although *jess* is

also used in the other languages spoken in the Nordic countries, for example, in Swedish and Finnish, a detailed analysis of conversational data may show fine-grained differences between the receiving languages that are not obvious at first glance. Thus, widespread borrowings such as *fuck*, *please*, and *what* may work in different ways in each language or language community.

A detailed analysis of discourse particles shows the complexities and distinctions of the same linguistic form across various languages. For example, a cross-linguistic study on the interactional function of *okay* in thirteen different languages, including Danish, Finnish, and Swedish, showed not only the common traits of *okay* in the receiving languages but also the peculiarities of *okay* in specific languages (Betz, Deppermann, Mondada, and Sorjonen 2021). Furthermore, when a particle is borrowed from one language to another, it does not only affect the use of the borrowed item. The new addition may also initiate a process of reorganization of a system (cf. Betz and Sorjonen 2021, 27–28). As an example, Betz and Sorjonen (2021, 26) point out that longitudinal studies focusing on the use of *okay* in the receiving languages can offer clues to how the particle "progressively integrates into existing systems of discourse particles […] and how this integration affects (shifts, limits) the range of uses of other particles."

## Summary and conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, prolonged contact with English – albeit unidirectional contact – has left its mark on the linguistics systems of the contemporary Nordic region. A noteworthy result to come out of the research conducted in the current era is that forms borrowed from English tend to no longer be cultural loans, nor are they displacing heritage variants. Rather, the borrowed forms appear to be in social and grammatical variation with existing forms, instigating a reshuffling of these, as demonstrated through borrowings such as *about* in Finnish, which has a restricted range compared to the heritage form *noin*. It is also clear that the stylistic and social functions of English borrowings distinguish them from the standard forms in the receiving languages; indeed, it is critical to note that, across the languages of the Nordic countries, contemporary borrowings from English are not likely to succeed as accepted borrowings into the standardized, protected varieties of the domestic languages. Rather, English borrowings are relegated to specific social functions, such as personal closeness, informality, and youth styles.

There are a few clear omissions in this chapter. One of them is an overview of the pronunciation adaptations of English borrowings into the languages of the Nordic countries. This is because, at present, analyses of pronunciation are somewhat lacking. That said, one of the main research questions in the MIN

project, mentioned earlier in this chapter, was to investigate how speakers of Nordic languages pronounce English borrowings in their own languages. This study revealed that recent borrowings tend to show greater variation regarding pronunciation, while older borrowings tend to be more phonologically integrated. Also, as the authors point out, social changes and increased contact with English in spoken form, as discussed earlier in this chapter, has resulted in a lower percentage of phonological adaptation than before (Svavarsdóttir, Paatola, and Sandøy 2010, 50–51).

A final note is warranted regarding fears about the loss of domains (see Chapter 6) and erosion of domestic languages, with some members of the Nordic populations worrying that their languages are gradually becoming Nordic versions of English. Research on language contact and borrowing in the Nordic countries does not tell a story of language demise. Rather, borrowings from English are associated with predictable segments of the population who are historically associated with change and innovations, including youth and urban dwellers.

## Notes

1 All three adjectives are listed in the first Icelandic slang dictionary (Árnason, Sigmundsson, and Thorsson 1982).
2 Isenmann (2016, 81) argues that English borrowings are used in computer-mediated communication as a strategy to create "conceptual orality," which she defines as "aspects associated with (informal) spoken language."
3 The number of informants varies between the countries: Sweden N=2,105; Norway N=435; Denmark N=297, and Finland N=261 (Kotsinas 2002, 41).
4 In Sweden, urban areas showed a higher percentage of Anglicisms than rural areas (Kotsinas 2002).
5 For further information on the notion of happiness in the Nordic countries – and how the concept does not translate well into the languages of the Nordic countries – see Levisen 2014.
6 This does not take into account issues such as structural adaptations or semantic shifts, which also vary from one language to another.
7 This means that the lexical item is not listed in Icelandic dictionaries or is marked as "not fully accepted."
8 In a study on English borrowings in Icelandic youth slang, Hilmisdóttir (2001) analyses the gender of English nouns in conversations on the radio and in diaries. Out of 59 Anglicisms, 61 percent were treated as neuter nouns, 25.5 percent were masculine, and 13.5 percent feminine. The numbers do not include nouns that are ambiguous, that is, used in a context in which gender is ambiguous.
9 The pronunciation of these letters varies between the Nordic languages, and, therefore, they are not transcribed with IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).
10 Danish also has the highest portion of English borrowings (Omdal 2008, 179).
11 According to Mickwitz (2008, 158), the difference between the two variants of Swedish is caused by the high frequency of borrowings in texts published in Sweden. The Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland adhere to a stricter norm and use fewer borrowings than their colleagues in Sweden.

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# 6

# BEYOND THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY

## English and language ideological tensions in the Nordic countries

*Janus Mortensen*

### Introduction

In 2021, the Nordic Council of Ministers published a report on the linguistic situation in the Nordic region (Frøshaug and Stende 2021). Based on a questionnaire involving 2,092 respondents aged 16–25 in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland, the report set out to explore whether "the Nordic Language Community" – never clearly defined in the report but seemingly taken to comprise "the closely related and mutually intelligible neighboring languages Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish" as well as Finnish, Faroese, and Greenlandic (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 7, 11) – exists. Interestingly, the language most frequently referred to in the report is English, cf. Figure 6.1, which shows the languages mentioned in the report and the number of times they are referred to, in order of decreasing frequency. English is not a Nordic language, and it has no official status in any of the Nordic countries, so the ubiquity of the language in a report on the Nordic language community may – at first glance – seem rather odd. Yet, given the widespread use of English in the Nordic countries, its presence nevertheless makes sense. English may not count as a Nordic language, but it is very much part of the sociolinguistic landscape in the Nordic countries – sometimes seen as a friendly "mate," sometimes as a "monster" that threatens the local languages (see Norrby 2014).

In the report, this dilemma is clearly illustrated when the authors, on the one hand, matter-of-factly conclude that "English has become an everyday language for young people" in the Nordic region. Many respondents even find "that it is sometimes easier to express oneself in English than in one's own language"

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(Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 28; see also Chapter 2). On average, this is true for 65 percent of the respondents; for Danish respondents the figure is even higher, at 70 percent. On the other hand, 62 percent of the respondents are also reported to state that "English has a strong influence on their native language," and the authors express concern that "to some extent, the spread of English entails the displacement of Nordic languages" (Frøshaug and Stende 2021, 31). So, English is clearly established as a standard feature of the sociolinguistic landscape in the Nordic region, but we can also identify some concern about the English language, especially how it may influence local Nordic languages and their role in society.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at these seemingly contradictory stances toward English in the Nordic region and what lies behind them. Seeing language ideologies as "the beliefs and attitudes that shape speakers' relationships to their own and others' languages, mediating between the social practice of language and the socioeconomic and political structures within which it occurs" (Cavanaugh 2020, 52), I suggest that the case of English in the Nordic countries can be taken as a prime example of language ideological tensions caught up in complex processes of ongoing sociolinguistic change. Since the 1990s, the role of English in the Nordic countries has often been discussed with reference to the notion of "domain loss," and the chapter therefore opens with a brief historical sketch of this debate, with an emphasis on how the debate has played out in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. There are important differences between the Nordic

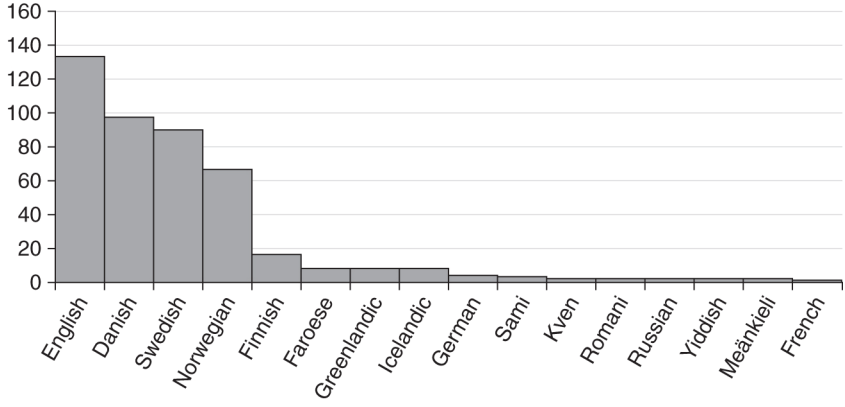


**FIGURE 6.1** Mentions of named languages in the report *Does the Nordic Language Community Exist?*

*Note:* The report was published simultaneously in English, Finnish, Icelandic, and Norwegian. The numbers here are mine, based on the English version.

*Source:* Frøshaug and Stende 2021.

countries, but a systematic account of similarities and differences unfortunately lies beyond the remit of this chapter. Following the general overview, the chapter then takes a closer look at some of the processes that helped shape the domain loss debate and which have been influential in shaping past and present perceptions of English in the Nordic countries. The third section of the chapter looks at attitudes toward English among members of the public, drawing on survey studies conducted in the Nordic countries and recent examples from the public debate in Denmark. I conclude the chapter by arguing that although discussions about English as a threat or an opportunity are still ongoing today, the current language ideological climate is not exactly the same as it was in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, and it may be time to (re)consider whether the binary view of English as a threat or an opportunity is the most relevant way to conceptualize the role of English in the Nordic countries. It was probably *never* relevant to think in binary oppositions of this sort, but it has nevertheless been a recurring feature of the public discourse around English in the Nordics, and it is therefore taken as a starting point here, even though I recognize that it comes with the danger of perpetuating the very practice that the chapter seeks to challenge.

## The domain loss debate – a brief historical sketch

Discussions about language vitality and endangerment are well known in the sociolinguistic literature and also common in popular discourse (Duchêne and Heller 2007), but the notion of "domain loss" appears to be particular to the Nordic context (Hultgren 2016) where it denotes a certain (imagined) relationship between English and the Nordic languages. According to Simonsen (2016), the notion "implies that even well-established languages like the Scandinavian ones may be in danger of being degraded by English and eventually fall out of use in key sectors of society" (Simonsen 2016, 136). Similarly, Hultgren explains that the concept refers to "the idea that the growing use of English in key transnational domains, notably higher education and multinational corporations, will lead to the official national languages (Swedish, Danish, Finnish/Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelandic) ceasing to develop, losing status and eventually not being used at all" (Hultgren 2016, 153). Note how the notion of domain loss, although in principle not limited to specific languages, is in fact tied directly to English and its relation to the Nordic languages. Domain loss refers quite specifically to an imagined scenario where English comes to be used in specific societal domains in the Nordic countries, for example, higher education or the corporate sector, *at the expense of* local languages (see, for example, Chapters 7 and 8, this volume).

The idea of domain loss first started to emerge in language-political debates in the Nordic countries in the late 1980s (see e.g., Lund 1989a, 1989b, 96). Over the next couple of decades, it increasingly gained traction, not least as a

prominent trope in an impressive number of language-political reports which emerged around the beginning of the new millennium.[1] However, as pointed out by several scholars, the notion of domain loss can be said to lack theoretical precision (see e.g., Haberland 2005; Hultgren 2016; Preisler 2005; Salö 2014; Simonsen 2002). Jarvad (2001, 31) quotes Haberland for describing the term as connotatively precise but denotatively weak. The term is typically invoked with reference to Fishman's notion of domain (Fishman 1965, 1972), but only in a very general and not particularly accurate sense (for discussion, see Haberland 2019). The idea that languages can be said to "have" and, by implication, "lose" domains has been questioned (Simonsen 2002), and the same goes for the idea that, for instance, higher education or academia can meaningfully be construed as a single, coherent domain (Preisler 2005). So, while language scholars in the Nordic countries have certainly helped promote the notion of domain loss (for a detailed analysis of this in the Swedish case, see Salö 2014, 2016; for Norway, see Linn 2010) and also produced empirical reports designed to measure the extent to which domain loss can be attested in various domains (see e.g., Hultgren 2013; Jarvad 2001), it is probably true to say that the success of the term should mainly be attributed to its wide popular uptake and considerable political impact beyond academia, where it has often been used to point to English as a threat.

Although the perceived influence of English on the lexicon of the Nordic languages is often lamented by public commentators (for a recent example from Denmark, see e.g., Nielsen 2020; Reher 2021), this form of language contact has typically not been a major concern of professional linguists. The main worry has been related to domain loss as "language shift" (cf. Hultgren 2014) where English might replace the local language(s) in one or more functional domains, for example, higher education or the corporate sector. This position is exemplified by the following comment by the Danish linguist, Jørn Lund, speaking on behalf of the Danish Language Council in 1989:

> *Det er ikke en udbredt opfattelse I nævnet, at nationalsproget skulle være truet. Det kan miste domæne, men sprogsystemet er intakt.*
>
> It is not a widespread view in the council that the national language is under threat. It may lose domain, but the language system is intact.
>
> *(Lund 1989b, 96, author's translation)*

The language system is not seen to be under threat; the potential danger relates to domain loss. Writing about the perception of domain loss in Sweden, Salö (2014) similarly contends that "elements of English in Swedish are generally thought of as irritating, untidy or superficial – but rarely are they construed as threatening the future of the Swedish language" (Salö 2014, 83–84). The potential danger lies in domain loss as language shift, resulting in English being

"used extensively in contexts where Swedish previously prevailed" (Salö 2014, 83–84).

In Norway, the Norwegian Language Council initially took a more defensive stance with regard to English loanwords (as did in fact the Swedish Language Council) and launched "a campaign against the influence of English" around 1990 (Simonsen 2016, 134). According to Simonsen, "the chief concern" of the Norwegian campaign was to show that the Norwegian language should not be seen as inferior to English, "but it was also suggested that ['needless' or 'unfavourable' English] words might hamper communication in Norwegian, damage the orthography and eventually maybe even threaten the language system" (Simonsen 2016, 134). According to Simonsen, the campaign received support from the political system, but "the general public remained indifferent" and the Danish Language Council called the campaign "purist." A recent report on the language situation in Norway, published by the Norwegian Language Council (Røyneland et al. 2018), does not focus on lexical borrowing from English as a threat to Norwegian as a language system, but there is still a distinct focus on the danger of domain loss understood as "language shift," particularly in academia, where English is seen to make inroads at the expense of Norwegian and other languages (Røyneland et al. 2018, 47–48).

Interestingly, although it occasionally still crops up, the notion of domain loss seems to have lost some of its appeal as part of public discourse in recent years, at least in the Danish context. This is illustrated by Figure 6.2, which shows the frequency with which "domain loss" has been mentioned in the three major Danish broadsheets from 1995 until 2021. The notion was very popular throughout the first decade of the 21st century which saw the publication of several language political reports (cf. endnote 1), but it seems to have lost momentum over the last decade. This trend continues into 2022 and 2023, with only three texts in the three broadsheets mentioning domain loss from January 2022 until April 2023 (in all cases from *Berlingske*).

## Sociolinguistic change in the making

What caused the domain loss debate to arise, and why did it enter the scene exactly at the time it did? For a long time throughout the 20th century, especially following World War II, English began to play a quite prominent role in the Nordic countries, not least as a subject in the educational system (see Chapter 4) without drawing too much negative or critical attention to itself, (although not all commentators were equally thrilled by what was often referred to as "Americanization," see Sørensen 2022). So, what caused the tide to turn in the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium? The answer to this question is undoubtedly complex, but it is possible to identify certain sentiments that

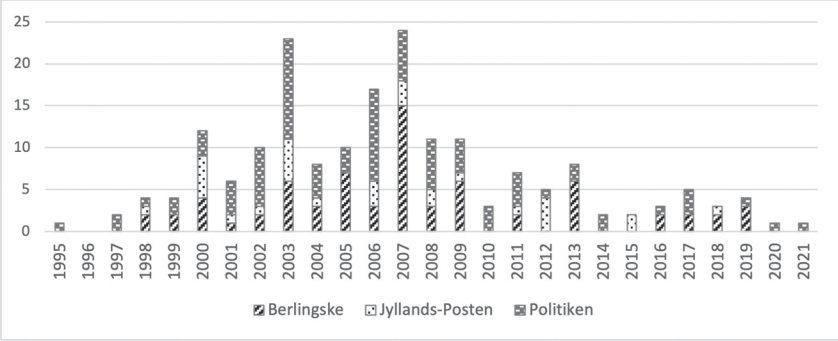


**FIGURE 6.2** Number of texts with the word *domænetab* (domain loss) in three Danish broadsheets, *Berlingske*, *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken* 1995–2021.

*Data source:* Infomedia. Reproduced with permission from Mortensen and Haberland (2021, 132).

influenced the situation, including "romantic nationalism, anti-immigration, anti-Americanism and anti-bureaucratisation" as proposed by Hultgren (2020, 19; cf. Hultgren 2014). These factors were undoubtedly all relevant, but in the following, I would like to discuss three *underlying processes* concerning political, social, and economic change which I take to be central for the rise of the domain loss debate: 1) increased political Europeanization; 2) intensification of processes associated with globalization, particularly in the private sector; and 3) internationalization of European higher education. The processes are clearly interrelated – and sometimes the terms are used more or less interchangeably in the literature – but I believe they can be considered sufficiently distinct to merit separate attention.

As far as political Europeanization is concerned, it seems fair to say that the domain loss debate is – or was – inextricably linked with the strengthening of the EU in the 1990s. As Milani (2007) notes in a study of language-political documents from 1990 to 2002 in Sweden, "linguists and politicians became concerned with the future of Swedish during a period of economic, political and identity crisis […]" in which the dominant Swedish political party, the Social Democrats, "were shifting from a skeptical to a positive attitude towards the European Union" (Milani 2007, 177). Sweden became a member of the EU in 1995, and among the many debates this membership gave rise to was the question of how the Swedish language would fare as part of a multilingual supranational political institution such as the EU (see Chapter 2). Thus, in 1997, the Swedish Language Council was charged with drafting an action program for the promotion of Swedish, providing answers to questions such as what "an increased European and global integration may imply for the Swedish language" (*Regeringsbeslut* [government decision], April 30, 1997, quoted in Milani 2007, 172. Milani's

translation). Although English is not explicitly mentioned here, it is clearly lurking in the shadows.

Although Denmark had been a member of the EU already for some decades in 1995 (having joined the European Communities in 1973), the Swedish debate about language policy in relation to the EU and the hegemony of English in the EU was mirrored by similar debates in Denmark, where Phillipson's notion of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) constituted an influential backdrop for language-political discussions (see also Haberland et al. 1991; Phillipson 1994). In 1988, the European Parliament Information Office in Copenhagen issued a VHS tape with a 22-minute documentary on the role of the Danish language in the EU (at that time referred to as "EF" in Danish), addressing questions such as "Is it acceptable that Danish public servants have to work in French and English because the translation to Danish does not appear until later?" and "How well can you actually do in the EU [EF], if you only speak your mother tongue?" (Nielsen 1988, my translation of text from the cover blurb). The video exemplifies how the increased political integration represented by the European Communities at the time gave rise to certain language related anxieties. The advent of a supranational political entity alongside (or above) the European nation-states represented a challenge to the national languages, national identity, and not least the strong ideological link that has been established between them as part of nation-state building (see e.g., Oakes 2001).

Globalization of the commercial sector is another process that has been closely linked to discussions about domain loss. When used in public discourse, the meaning of the term "globalization" is often difficult to pin down, but in broad terms it can be taken to refer to an intensification of processes that allow goods, services, capital, information, technology, and people to flow across national borders. Globalization is thus a process – or set of processes – closely related to the process of Europeanization discussed above, but with a more distinct emphasis on market forces on a "global" scale. To participate in the increasingly global market, many companies in the Nordic countries introduced English as a corporate language in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s as a response to globalization (see Chapter 8). In language ideological terms, English had become established as the language of "the market" (Haberland 2009), and the switch to English was therefore seen as a "natural" choice for many companies who had ambitions of participating in this global market. In the language-political debate, this was seen as an example of potential domain loss because the introduction of English as a corporate language could threaten the status of the local languages in the business domain (Jarvad 2001; Lønsmann 2011; Røyneland et al. 2018, 14).

Interestingly, nominating English as the corporate language did not – and does not – always translate into English-only practices (see Chapter 8). Workplaces where English is the nominal lingua franca will in practice be multilingual,

and the local language will often play a particularly important role alongside English. Jarvad (2001, 23) even refers to the practice of establishing English as a corporate language as a *distanceblænder* – a Danish expression denoting that something looks or sounds good when perceived at a distance but may not be what it seems when inspected up close (see also discussion in Lønsmann, Mortensen, and Thøgersen 2022). So, introducing English as a corporate language does not necessarily make the local language obsolete.

Still, the concern that English may be taking over at Nordic companies, threatening not only the local language in the workplace but also its speakers has been a recurring theme in the domain loss debate since the 1990s. My point here is that this language ideological debate has taken place as part and parcel of wider discussions about globalization. As Figure 6.3 illustrates, drawing on data from a corpus of Danish newspapers from the 18th century until the present day, globalization was established as a common theme in public discourse in Denmark around the turn of the millennium, just as – or just before – domain loss also became the talk of the town (cf. Figure 6.2). Obviously, the two graphs cannot be used to establish causality in any strict sense between domain loss and globalization. Still, the way the two concepts were frequently treated as two parts of the same story in discussions over the introduction of English as a corporate language indicates their interconnectedness and illustrates how the domain loss debate was not merely about language change but also about social and societal change more broadly.

The concern that English – as part of Europeanization and globalization – may upset established practices and hierarchies is not necessarily unfounded

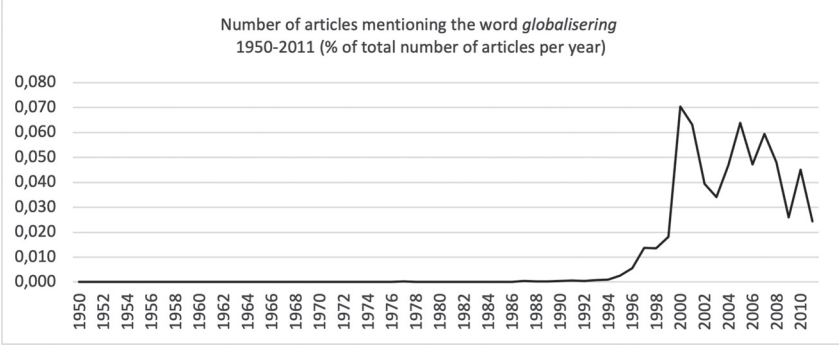


**FIGURE 6.3** Number of articles containing the word *globalisering* (globalization) in percent of the total number of articles in the database.

*Note:* Data: Smurf, an interface developed by KB Labs – the digital lab at the Royal Danish Library, which "visualises how use of language in Danish newspapers has evolved since the 18th century" (http://labs.statsbiblioteket.dk/smurf). *Globalisering* first appears in 1953 in the database, but it is not until much later that the word is mentioned with sufficient frequency to be noticeable in the graph.

(see e.g., Lønsmann and Mortensen 2018; Phillipson 2003), but there is also a strong language ideological dynamic at play. In the introduction to this chapter, I presented Cavanaugh's definition of language ideologies as "the beliefs and attitudes that shape speakers' relationships to their own and others' languages, mediating between the social practice of language and the socioeconomic and political structures within which it occurs" (Cavanaugh 2020, 52). To understand how this may play out in the relationship between English and the Nordic languages, the following excerpt from an opinion piece from the online version of a local Danish newspaper, *Fredericia Dagblad*, is quite suggestive. The piece was written by Susanne Eilersen, the deputy mayor of the town of Fredericia, representing the right-wing Danish People's party.

> *Jeg har talt med rengøringsassistenter, der kun har udenlandske kollegaer som de ikke kan kommunikere med, og derfor er meget alene og isoleret på jobbet, da de ikke føler de kan begå sig i en diskussion på engelsk. Eller dansker der ikke kan få ansættelse i produktionsvirksomheder, hvis de ikke kan kommunikere på engelsk, fordi man skal være kollegaer med udlændinge, der ikke kan tale dansk. Ja i læste rigtigt…… "Danskere der kan ikke få job, fordi DE ikke kan tale engelsk med en udenlandsk kollega" …. Vi taler om ufaglærte jobs i Danmark, det er hovedrystende.*
>
> I have spoken to cleaners who only have foreign colleagues with whom they cannot communicate and therefore are very much alone and isolated at work, since they do not feel that they can participate in a discussion in English. Or Danes who cannot get employed in industry if they cannot communicate in English because their colleagues are foreigners who do not speak Danish. Yes, you got that right. … "Danes who cannot get a job because THEY cannot speak English with a colleague from abroad." … We're talking about unskilled jobs in Denmark, it is shocking.
>
> *(Eilersen 2021)*

On the surface, Eilersen's complaint is about language – and English in particular. She positions the use of English at Danish workplaces as an anomaly and thus seems to subscribe to the language ideological position often referred to as "one-nation one language," which functions as an underlying premise for many language-political discussions in Denmark (Lønsmann 2014). However, as Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) point out, "ideologies of language are significant for social as well as linguistic analysis *because they are not only about language*" (1994, 55 my emphasis). In this case, Eilersen's comments may be about language on the surface, but they also contain a thinly veiled critique of the socioeconomic and political changes that have led to the emergence of an ethnically more diverse labor force in Denmark. Thus, in this case, tensions ostensibly related to language – English vs Danish – are in effect proxies for more deep-seated social, political,

and economic struggles associated with Europeanization, globalization, and the patterns of mobility and migration these processes entail.

Internationalization of European higher education started in earnest in 1999 with the Bologna process and the ambition to create a contiguous European Higher Education Area (see www.ehea.info). One of the aims of the Bologna process was – and continues to be – to promote linguistic pluralism and support the multilingual nature of the European Higher Education Area (Fabricius, Mortensen, and Haberland 2017). Yet, ironically, because of the increased use of English as the dominant medium of instruction, the process has arguably resulted in *less* linguistic diversity (Ljosland 2005). Looking at the language-political reports that emerged in the first decade of the 21st century, there is no doubt that university internationalization of education as well as research was seen as a major threat to the Nordic languages. This is reflected in the pan-Nordic *Declaration on Nordic Language Policy* (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006) which represents the culmination of the language debates that started in the Nordic countries in the 1990s. In the declaration, published simultaneously in Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Sámi, Swedish, and English, it is made clear that "the basis for Nordic language policy is that the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society are and will remain strong and vital, [and] that those [languages] that are essential to society will remain so" (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006, 92). According to Jónsson et al. (2013), the entire declaration is in essence ("*i praksis*") about the prevention of domain loss (Jónsson et al. 2013, 86), though the term is actually never mentioned directly.

One of the areas singled out for concern is higher education and science more generally. As a bulwark against potential domain loss in the university sector (and beyond), the declaration presents the notion of "parallel language use," defined as "the concurrent use of several languages within one or more areas" where "none of the languages abolishes or replaces the other; they are used in parallel" (Nordic Council of Ministers 2006, 93; see also Chapter 7). Talking specifically about the role of English, the declaration specifies that the support of a parallel language policy requires:

- that it be possible to use both the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society and English as *languages of science*
- that the presentation of *scientific results* in the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society be rewarded
- that instruction in *scientific technical language*, especially in written form, be given in both English and the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society
- that *universities, colleges, and other scientific institutions* can develop long-range strategies for the choice of language, the parallel use of languages, language instruction, and translation grants within their fields

- that Nordic terminology bodies can continue to coordinate terminology in new fields
- that business and labor-market organizations be urged to develop strategies for the parallel use of language

*(Nordic Council of Ministers 2006, 94 author's emphasis)*

As the list illustrates, "science" (mentioned in four out of six bullet points) was considered an area where it was particularly important to implement the principle of parallel language use. Why was this so? As I have already alluded to, the concern was in no small part caused by the general process of internationalization, which was making an impact across Nordic universities at the beginning of the millennium. Up until this point, teaching at Nordic institutions of higher education had been (mostly) monolingual for the better part of a century, with universities relying almost exclusively on the "national" language(s) as the medium of instruction (for the case of Norway, see Bull 2004; for Denmark, see Mortensen and Haberland 2012; for Sweden, see e.g., Teleman 2003: 224–234). For publication purposes, more languages were used – in addition to English – and this would also have been the case for the texts that students read. But for most of the 20th century there was a close tie – a naturalized link, we might say – between the universities as national institutions and their reliance on the national language as the dominant language for teaching and learning.

The modern form of internationalization prompted by the Bologna process upset this balance. The development came with new ideas about what universities should and could be; they were no longer *only* or *necessarily* seen as institutions serving society and the common (national) good. Instead, they came to be seen as commercial enterprises, competing in a global market for research funding, customers (students and research staff) and rankings (see e.g., Knight 2008). As the language of "the market" (Haberland 2009), English was the linguistic marker and driver of this development (Mortensen 2020). In this sense, English, once again, came to function as a symbol, or perhaps more accurately as an index of social and political change, and this change was not welcome by all. Preisler (2005) identified two sides in the debate in Denmark: "the followers," who embraced the use of English, seeing it as a natural and necessary manifestation of internationalization vs "the concerned," who saw the use of English as a threat to the status of the Danish language and to educational quality (see e.g., Davidsen-Nielsen 2009, 2017). Interestingly, the latter group, according to Preisler, tended to represent "the educational and cultural elite." Although there were (and continue to be) plenty of good reasons to question the ubiquity of English and its assumed universal relevance as a language of science, we may also note that many of the strongest critics represented "the old guard," who stood to lose the most from the changes that English introduced and indexed (for an analysis of the discipline of history in Sweden in this regard, see Salö 2017). So, once again,

we may see that the concerns over English are quite clearly language ideological, "mediating between the social practice of language and the socioeconomic and political structures within which it occurs" (cf. Cavanaugh 2020).

## What do "real people" say?

So far, the views on English presented in this chapter come from prominent stakeholders in the language-political debate, particularly politicians and language experts. The latter group, which, as we have seen, includes inter alia university professors and members of the national language councils, has been very influential in shaping the debate. In this section, we turn to the question of what so-called "real people" (Preston 1998) have to say about the role of English in the Nordic countries. Over the years, a number of survey-based studies have investigated exactly this question (see e.g., Leppänen et al. 2011; Preisler 1999). In 2004, the pan-Nordic MIN project (*Moderne importord i Norden* "Modern import words in the Nordic region") (see e.g., Sandøy 2002; Kristiansen 2005) asked respondents in the Nordic countries several questions regarding English (see also Chapter 5). Interestingly, the survey showed that there were considerable differences between the countries. This is illustrated in Table 6.1, which shows the responses for one of the questions posed in the survey (all questions in the survey were phrased in the local language; the English translation in Table 6.1 is from Kristiansen 2005). As the figures indicate, many Danish respondents were positive regarding the role that English had come to play as a corporate language, or "language of business" as it is phrased here. The same goes for the Norwegian respondents, whereas the respondents in Sweden, Finland, and the Faroe Islands were more negative, while Iceland took the prize with a total of 77 percent of the respondents expressing a negative attitude toward English as a corporate language.

Commenting on the overall degree of English-positivity reflected in the survey results (not just the question covered in Table 6.1, which produces a slightly different picture), Kristiansen concludes that, ranging from most to least positive, the Danish respondents are at the top, Swedes come in second, Norwegians third along with Finnish and Faroese respondents (with some variation), while the Icelandic respondents come last (Kristiansen 2005, 167). Kristiansen suggests that the overall pattern found in the study "testifies more to the vitality of traditional ideological differences [between the Nordic countries] than to the detraditionalising force of globalisation" (Kristiansen 2005, 155). What he means by this is essentially that the traditional language ideological/political orientations of the Nordic countries – where some are more purist than others – appear to carry over into the "era of modern globalisation" (Kristiansen 2005, 168) and shape how positive or negative the populations in the different Nordic countries are vis-à-vis English.

**TABLE 6.1** Number of responses (in percent) to the question: *"Some enterprises have made English their language of business. What is your attitude to that, are you positive or negative?"*

| | *Norway (n=1000)* | *Denmark (n=1000)* | *Sweden (n=1094)* | *Iceland (n=801)* | *Faroe Islands (n=537)* | *Finland (n=1000)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Positive | 39.1 | 50.6 | 27.5 | 11.1 | 25.1 | 34.9 |
| Negative | 37.6 | 30.1 | 46.9 | 77.3 | 60.3 | 40.7 |
| Neither positive nor negative | 18.6 | 16.2 | 20.7 | 9.0 | 10.1 | 15.8 |
| Uncertain | 4.7 | 3.1 | 4.8 | 2.6 | 4.5 | 8.6 |

Note: All figures taken from Kristiansen and Vikør 2006, 215–35; the translation of the question into English is taken from Kristiansen 2005. Figures for Finland represent Finnish-speaking respondents, Swedish-speaking Finnish respondents are not included here. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland had around 1000 respondents each; Iceland had 800 while the Faroe Islands and Swedish-speaking Finland had around 500.

Having just reviewed the domain loss debate and how it swept across Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (all included among the countries that are relatively positive toward English) Kristiansen's argument may seem difficult to fit into the picture. If we take Denmark as an example, the views expressed toward English as part of the domain loss debate were hardly positive, although there were clearly different stances and plenty of contesting views at play. How does this match with the fact that the MIN project found Danes to be the most positive respondents in the Nordic countries when it comes to English? To answer this question, more comprehensive analyses are called for, but I would like to suggest that part of the reason could be that the domain loss debate was in essence a debate among cultural and political elites whose views and concerns did not in all cases mirror the views and concerns of the general population (cf. Salö 2016, who argues that language experts were central in constructing and promoting the notion of domain loss in the Swedish context). The general public may simply have taken a more pragmatic stance toward English, viewing it neither as a threat nor as an opportunity but as something which was simply just "there." This interpretation is seemingly supported by Kristiansen, when he observes that the national averages for the attitudinal questions in the MIN survey tended to range around the mid-point, leading him to conclude that "today's Nordic peoples do not excel in strong feelings towards the English influence" (Kristiansen 2005, 168).

Other studies have found more positive attitudes toward English. In a qualitative interview study where 49 Danish participants shared their reflections on their answers to questions in a questionnaire (partly based on the MIN survey), Thøgersen (2010, 304) found that "very few" of his respondents "expressed any fear over English's 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson 1992, 2003)." Instead,

respondents tended to subscribe to a discourse that sees "English as a more or less culturally neutral lingua franca" (Thøgersen 2010, 304). Similarly, in a survey on "the Danes and the English language" conducted in the second half of the 1990s, Preisler (1999) found that 80 percent of his 856 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked whether the presence of English in daily life represented a threat to Danish culture. Some 73 percent expressed disagreement when asked whether English represented a threat to the Danish language, while 92 percent expressed strong or very strong agreement when asked whether they thought the presence of English in daily life was "a practical consequence of increased interaction with the rest of the world" (Preisler 1999, 68). Danes may be more relaxed than inhabitants in the other Nordic countries when it comes to the role of English (though similar attitudes have been reported for example in Finland, cf. Leppänen et al. 2011, 159), but these figures are nevertheless quite striking. English is quite clearly not seen as "a threat" by most of the respondents.

Fast-forwarding to the present day, in a recent opinion piece in the Danish broadsheet *Berlingske*, the CEO of a Danish public relations company states that "Copenhagen has become bilingual" and proceeds to make the following argument about English in Denmark (here presented in a truncated version):

> *Langt de fleste internationalt orienterede virksomheder har i dag engelsk som koncernsprog. […] Det samme gælder på universiteterne […]. For slet ikke at tale om servicebranchen, restaurationerne og nattelivet. […] Traditionelt vil man begræde den udvikling som et domænetab for det danske sprog og et uopretteligt tab af dansk identitet. Men mit synspunkt er et andet: At vi i Danmark viser vejen til, hvordan man i veluddannede lande kan besvare både globaliseringens krav om effektivitet med et kulturelt mål om at dyrke modersmålet som ramme for nationens fællesskab. […] Engelsk er ikke et bedre sprog end dansk, i Danmark. Men det er verdenshandlens sprog. Jeg er stolt af et land og [hovedstad], der på år er blevet tosproget fuldstændigt uden at tabe sig selv.*
>
> Today, most internationally oriented companies have English as a corporate language. […] The same goes for the universities […]. Not to mention the service industry, the restaurants, and the night life. […] Traditionally, such developments would be lamented as domain loss and seen as an irrevocable loss of Danish identity. My point of view is different: In Denmark we show how well-educated countries may respond to globalization and the need for effectiveness while pursuing a cultural aim of nurturing the mother tongue as a framework for national unity. […] English is not a better language than Danish, in Denmark. But it is the language of world trade. I am proud of a country and a capital that have become bilingual within years without losing themselves.
>
> *(Jørgensen 2022)*

The view expressed here is a good example of the pragmatic approach to English that some inhabitants in the Nordic countries (some countries more than others) seem to adopt. English is seen as a "natural" language that coexists alongside the national language, providing distinct opportunities for participation in a global world. Some public commentators are still critical toward the role and influence of English (see e.g. Cordua 2023), but their position is not shared universally.

If we return to the survey mentioned in the introduction, involving 2,092 respondents aged 16–25 in the Nordic region (Frøshaug and Stende 2021), the ubiquity of English in the Nordic countries is easily confirmed, at least among young people. As many as 95 percent of the respondents say that it is easy to understand English, and 65 percent say, as mentioned in the introduction, that it is sometimes easier to express oneself in English than in one's "native" language. The survey also shows that 96 percent of the respondents indicate that they have encountered English "in films, TV programmes, streaming services featuring moving images, computer games, theatre productions, literature, magazines, or newspapers in the past two months" (2021, 38), while 63 percent say that they use English "when writing on social media" (2021, 39). In a historical perspective, these numbers indicate massive sociolinguistic change. In less than 100 years, English has become an extremely widespread language in the Nordic region (for the case of Denmark, see Mortensen fc). The survey by Frøshaug and Stende was targeted at young respondents, and the findings may not apply to the population of the Nordic countries in general. Yet, a survey from 2022 with a representative sample of 854 respondents conducted as part of the Enida project at the University of Copenhagen shows that in Denmark, English plays a bigger role in the everyday lives of respondents across *all* age groups included in the survey (from 16 to 70+), compared to a similar study conducted in the mid-1990s (Preisler 1999).[2] So, the process of sociolinguistic change at work is not only or simply a matter of age, although age certainly matters.

In many contexts, English is used as an entirely mundane part of everyday interaction: English has become an integral part of the linguistic repertoire for many speakers in the Nordic countries, and although it is no doubt an important resource for the construction of identity and social meaning more generally (Jelby 2022), it is a surprisingly inconspicuous resource that many people do not hold strong attitudes toward, certainly not in terms of "domain loss," "threat," or "opportunity." As Thøgersen has argued in relation to the Danish context, it would be useful to get away from "posing the question as one of being pro- or anti-English, or from posing the question as if English were universally in opposition to Danish" (Thøgersen 2010, 321). In the Swedish context, Norrby (2014) argues that whether English is seen as "a monster" or "a mate" "depends on whom you ask. There are tensions between different perspectives, on the one

hand, of accepting and promoting English, and on the other, of controlling its use through language policy and legislation" (2014, 30). This is undoubtedly true, also today, but for many people in the Nordic countries, English is not – and has not necessarily been – conceptualized in opposing terms of this sort, as an opportunity or a threat. English is undoubtedly a factor to be reckoned with, but not necessarily in these terms.

## Concluding remarks

As we have seen in this chapter, the Nordic countries have undoubtedly experienced changes in the sociolinguistic environment since the middle of the 20th century as a result of the increased use of English (see also Chapter 3). In this sense, domain loss is not "a red herring" (Hultgren 2016, 158); the processes associated with domain loss are clearly more than mere figments of illusion. Still, there is reason to suggest that the concern expressed by key players in the language-political debate, even though it was clearly linked to then-current societal developments, may have been exaggerated and not necessarily mirrored by the perception of the general population. Maybe now it is time to reconsider whether the discussion of "threat or opportunity" is really the right way of posing the question if we want to understand the role played by English in the Nordic countries today.

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## Notes

1 Including [Sweden] *Mål i mun: förslag till handlingsprogram för svenska språket* (SOU (2002); [Denmark] *Sprog på Spil – et udkast til en dansk sprogpolitk* (Kulturministeriet 2003); *Sprog til tiden: Rapport fra sprogudvalget* (Kulturministeriet 2008) and [Norway] *Norsk i hundre! Norsk som nasjonalspråk i globaliseringens tidsalder* (Språkrådet 2005); *Mål og meining – Ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk* (Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet 2008).

2 For a brief preliminary report on the findings from this project, see Thøgersen (2023).

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# PART II

# English in different settings

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# 7

# PARALLELINGUALISM, TRANSLANGUAGING, AND ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION IN NORDIC HIGHER EDUCATION

*BethAnne Paulsrud and Una Cunningham*

## Introduction

English today is used as a medium of instruction globally, from primary school through tertiary level. English-medium instruction, henceforth EMI,[1] can be defined as the "use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro 2018, 1). The focus in EMI is primarily on the disciplinary content in courses rather than on the English language as a subject. Still, according to the "four characteristics of EMI settings" (Pecorari and Malmström 2018, 499), the role of the English language is central:

1. English is the language used for instructional purposes
2. English is not itself the subject being taught
3. Language development is not a primary intended outcome
4. For most participants in the setting, English is a second language (L2)

Despite the prominent role of English, there is usually an absence of language goals in most EMI courses and programs in higher education (HE) (Lasagabaster and Doiz 2021, 1–2) as the "overarching teacher focus is on content" (Macaro 2018, 8). So why is EMI provided if not mainly for English language proficiency?[2] Three types of motives that universities may have for introducing EMI include strategic motives, pedagogical motives, and substantial motives (Dalton-Puffer 2012, 101–102).

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*Strategically*, universities may use EMI as a means to attract top students and staff, especially internationally. This academic marketing is aimed at increasing the prestige of an institution, promoting the competitiveness of universities, and utilizing the marketable commodity leading to revenues for universities (Richards and Pun 2022).[3] The "exponential increase in the number of universities worldwide offering English-medium instruction" has been argued to be a result of both the neoliberalisation of HE and the global spread of English by Block (2022, 82), who further argues that "the marketisation of all academic activity" (83) means that "internationalization" is more about universities competing (often domestically) for the financing that incoming students and research grants entail. Block states that "internationalisation usually means Englishisation"[4] (86), resulting in what he calls the "internationalisation-Englishisation-EMI chain" (87). That is, the focus on internationalization leads to the greater use of English which in turn leads to the development of EMI programs. EMI programs afford a means of attracting students in a competitive global education market, which in turn can affect university ratings positively (Gabriëls and Wilkinson 2021), granting them an "elite" status (Dalton-Puffer 2012, 101). *Pedagogically*, the provision of EMI may afford students the "global literacy skills" needed in a competitive future workplace where English proficiency is highly valued (Richards and Pun 2022, 22). By studying EMI programs at undergraduate level, students may also feel they are well prepared to continue their studies on the master or doctoral level (Högskoleverket 2008, 27). With increased opportunities for an "international academic life," students may both benefit from wider "lingua-cultural horizons" (Dalton-Puffer 2012, 101) and boost their linguistic capital. *Substantially*, referring to what is essential or necessary, EMI may provide L2 students with the opportunity to develop adequate proficiency in English as an academic lingua franca (Richards and Pun 2022, 22), allowing them access to scientific literature in their fields of study (Dalton-Puffer 2012, 102).

The use of English as a medium of instruction at Nordic universities is increasingly common (Airey et al. 2017), with the reasoning behind the choice to offer EMI in line with the motives described above. One ambition is to attract more students from abroad. In part, this is to get fees from non-EU students, but also for "internationalisation at home" (Nilsson 2003): that is, to offer students contact with the world beyond (Dimova, Hultgren, and Kling 2021). Thus, EMI is attractive both for incoming international students, as well as for local students who may believe that EMI will help them to use and improve their English (see also Morell and Volchenkova 2021) and who may benefit from the opportunity to study at an EMI university without ever leaving their home context (Richards and Pun 2022, 22). As such, beyond the "perceived socio-economic value associated with the improved proficiency in English that stakeholders may attribute to the increased exposure to

English" (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth 2021b, xix), offering EMI also responds to "linguistic aspirations for proficiency in English and to imagined futures that require knowing English in a globalised world" (Paulsrud and Cunningham forthcoming).

Further, EMI has been identified as both due to internationalization *and* the cause of internationalization (Malmström and Pecorari 2022, 12). The Bologna Declaration (Bologna Process Committee 1999) is frequently assumed to have promoted EMI with the focus on internationalization (Richards and Pun 2022, 24; Salö 2010). Its goal, however, was rather to promote student mobility through a standardized system of education across European countries, including comparable degrees and similar systems of degree cycles and credits. The word *English* is not even mentioned in the declaration. Nonetheless, with the Bologna Declaration, the goal of internationalization across HE in Europe resulted in more universities offering EMI as a means of facilitating student mobility (Saarinen and Ennser-Kananen 2020). This was true of the Nordic countries as well, although both Norway and Sweden had already started their own processes of internationalization and EMI before the Bologna Declaration, while there has been more resistance to similar processes in the Finnish context (Airey et al. 2017). This chapter considers EMI in the Nordics, highlighting the case of Sweden.

## Main concepts

Despite the label,[5] EMI is rarely conducted completely monolingually, with the reality "a plethora of de facto policies and classroom materials and methods" in more than one language (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth 2021b, xix). There are two concepts key to understanding the juxtaposition of a monolingual habitus of "English only" in EMI classrooms contra a specified explicit or de facto policy of multiple languages in use: parallelingualism and translanguaging.

Parallelingualism is central to all aspects of language policy and use in the Nordic HE context (Holmen 2012). It is often deemed the best option in Nordic EMI contexts (Salö 2010), although Hultgren (2014, 69) maintains that it "does not need to entail an exact reduplication of all activities." In the Nordic context, the Nordic Council of Ministers (2018, 14) open up for parallel use of more than two languages:

> Parallel language use […] means that two or more languages are used for the same purpose in a particular context or within a particular sector of society, in this case at universities in the Nordic Region. For most people, the use of English plus another language will probably spring to mind, but the concept is equally applicable to the use of Swedish and Finnish in Finland, or Danish and Greenlandic/Inuit in Greenland. As such, when English is added into the

mix as part of the process of internationalisation of the universities, there are not two languages in play, but three.

As the Nordic Council of Ministers (2007, 93) specify, with parallelingualism, "none of the languages abolishes or replaces the other; they are used in parallel." It may be difficult, though, to promote EMI while at the same time maintaining the local language as one of equal academic status (Holmen 2012). As such, parallel language use has been critiqued as a policy as it is more politically driven than practically oriented (see e.g., Kuteeva 2020). More pointedly, Airey et al. (2017, 568) maintain that the development of parallel language use as a policy was "mainly a pragmatic solution constructed in order to deal with the rapid expansion of English in Nordic higher education."

Translanguaging[6] is both a theoretical and a pedagogical concept (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth 2021a). Translanguaging theory "counters ideologies that position particular languages as superior to others" (Vogel and García 2017, 6). Applying the theory to pedagogy affords legitimatization of all languages for learning. Pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz and Gorter 2022) actively taps into students' linguistic competences to build on previous knowledge and let them together synthesize their co-constructed learning using various strategies. Functions of pedagogical translanguaging in the HE classroom may include using linguistic resources for "appealing for assistance; ensuring comprehension; verbalising content knowledge; task management; signalling cultural identity; and strengthening cooperation," according to interviews, questionnaires, and observations conducted by Dalziel and Guarda (2021, 132; see also Yoxsimer Paulsrud 2014 for similar functions identified in upper secondary EMI classrooms in Sweden).

Regardless of the language of instruction, non-mandated or covert student-student interaction during instruction (e.g., whispering in class) is often in students' language(s) of choice, which Antia (2016) terms *translanguaged siding*. He describes this as "student-to-student communication occurring in parallel to teacher talk, but using language and other semiotic resources that differ from the teacher's in order to shape understanding of the teacher's meanings or to make other meanings" (184). Lecture sidings facilitate epistemological access to linguistic and content support available to students. Translanguaged siding occurs regularly, for both academic (e.g., clarification) and non-academic (i.e., social interaction) purposes, as also described above.

## An overview of selected EMI research

In recent years, many overviews of EMI in HE have been published (e.g., Henriksen, Holmen, and Kling 2018; Hultgren, Gregersen, and Thøgersen 2014;

Kuteeva, Kaufhold and Hynninen 2020; Lasagabaster and Doiz 2021; Richards and Pun 2022; Wilkinson and Gabriëls 2021) in addition to an anthology on EMI in relation to translanguaging in diverse contexts (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth 2021a). In this section, we will briefly focus on several themes present in international as well as Nordic research: policy and ideology in EMI, stakeholders and language use in EMI, and multilingualism and EMI. Each focus is interrelated.

### *Policy and ideology in EMI*

The Nordic Council of Ministers (2018, 14) state, "English is unquestionably the largest and most widely used international language in the Nordic Region." The special status of English is reflected in both national and local policy. On a micro level, there is an "assumed relationship between the [implicit or explicit] policy of English-medium education and language practices in local classroom settings" (Söderlundh 2014, 112), with research often focusing on practices in relation to local policies. However, macro-level structures are "political discourse as action in a particular context" as well as intertwined with micro-level actors (Halonen, Ihalainen and Saarinen 2015, 15). Ignoring the interaction between the two levels may mean that one sees only how the local actors enact official or de facto language policies; ideologies expressed in national and university policies may or may not align with the individual actor in the classroom. Thus, it is key to understand how the interaction between levels takes place, as "ideologies are at the root of what educators do in school" (García and Kleyn 2016, 20). Ideologies – beliefs about language that often position the individual's feelings and attitudes about the language – are expressed through implicit and explicit policies in the classroom.

Focusing on ideology as key to educational contexts, Söderlundh (2014) presents a minor metastudy of five works on language practices in Swedish HE, differentiating between studies of the normative approach and the dynamic approach of how stakeholders choose languages in the classroom context. In the "normative" approach, the "declared medium of instruction" is assumed to be reflected in practice (Söderlundh 2014, 115), while the "dynamic" approach "embodies a less normative view of the relationship between policy and practice, in that the policy-prescribed medium of instruction does not necessarily correspond to the medium of classroom interaction" (116), which may include multiple languages. Söderlundh argues that policies can be negotiated in micro spaces, a move away from a static approach in which English is assumed as the norm as the "the policy-prescribed medium of instruction" – and the intrusion of other languages is seen as deviant. Indeed, Creese and Blackledge (2010, 113) describe "the burden of guilt associated with translanguaging in educational contexts" as students and teachers may

feel they are breaking a contract of planned medium of instruction when they use languages other than English.

### *Stakeholders and language use in EMI*

As Pecorari and Malmström state, "EMI presupposes and is enabled by the ability of all participants (e.g., teachers, students, administrative staff) to use English as a lingua franca" (2018, 497). This reflects an assumption that the use of English for teaching and learning in EMI is unproblematic in the Nordic countries. However, Airey et al. (2017) argue that the Nordic countries have tended to jump on the EMI bandwagon with little "reflection about how English should be introduced or where it may (or may not) be appropriate – the simple premise seems to be 'more English is better'" (567). Thus, while EMI may allow for an influx of international students, the form of teaching may also present Nordic students with both the opportunity and the challenge of studying higher level education through English, usually as a second or third language.

Björkman (2008, 36) considers the users of English in the EMI classroom as "speakers" – students who "simply need a tool [the English language] to get the work done," rather than English language learners. Undergraduate students in a study based in Catalonia (Machin, Ament and Pérez-Vidal 2023, 87), however, viewed their choice for EMI according to the following themes: "(1) The right fit for me; (2) To practise my English; and (3) English comes with benefits." The "aligners" who felt EMI was a good fit were "confident shoppers in the international university market, able to shape their own educational destinies" (89). While those wishing to practice their English, identified as "learners," chose EMI for L2 improvement, they still did not explicitly consider their lecturers to be English-language teachers (91). The "valuers" who viewed English as beneficial focused more on linguistic capital and global literacy skills, reflecting motives concerning imagined futures presented above.

Notwithstanding these fairly positive student intentions with EMI, EMI students are "expected to have a high level of English language proficiency and, given the increase in international mobility, tend to find themselves in linguistically and culturally heterogeneous groups" (Smit and Dafouz 2012, 3). The dominance of English in these HE contexts places a demand on the students' (and teachers') abilities to effectively communicate. Some students may even feel "guilty" about speaking other languages in an EMI context (see Creese and Blackledge 2010 above), as seen in Dalziel's (2021) small-scale study of multilingual students in an Italian EMI program. Local students using Italian feared excluding the international students, but some international students actually saw the use of Italian as a means to expand their linguistic repertoires.

Addressing the issue of potential cognitive overload when students study disciplinary content through a foreign or additional language, some have called

for language teachers to actively participate in EMI (Rauto 2008), although this is not the expressed intention nor observed practice of EMI in Swedish universities. Concerns have arisen about how well EMI programs may be able to meet the needs of learners when there is little (if any) focus on language goals. Potential learning issues emerge when courses are taught through a language that is not the students' strongest, such as questions of equity in learning conditions, assessment bias when English is a second language, and the uneasy juxtaposition of content-learning goals versus language-development goals (e.g., Brock-Utne 2022). Furthermore, in EMI, content teachers do not see themselves as language teachers (Airey 2012). For example, in the Finnish HE context, many university lecturers consider English simply as their daily working and teaching language; they see a "limited need to consider it in teaching" (Tuomainen 2022, 103). Airey et al. (2017), however, call for university language policies to more directly address the choice of language across different disciplines, with discussions about the choices to be held at the course level, in line with Airey's argument that "all teachers are language teachers" (2012, 64). Brocke-Utne (2022) and Tuomainen (2022) have found, though, that university lecturers in Norway and Finland, respectively, vary in how confident they feel about their English as a language for teaching in EMI. Still, Björkman (2008, 40) has previously noted that while exchanges between L2 English speakers in a high-context academic setting in Sweden revealed many instances of non-standard usage, few of the interlocutors experienced disturbances in communication. Furthermore, in the 2008 report on EMI in Swedish universities, teachers were rated highly by incoming foreign students for their English language competence (Högskoleverket 2008). This can be compared to Block's (2022) case study of an EMI lecturer questioning their own competence and status as instructor with an L2, as well as Tuomainen's (2022) study of participants who did not question their competence, even after a professional development course which problematized EMI, thus indicating variation in lecturers' experiences with teaching disciplinary content in English.

### *Multilingualism and EMI*

The research looking into actual language use in university teaching or stakeholder perceptions of desired or de facto language policies in seminars and lectures tends to focus only on the parallel use of the local majority language and English. What is often lacking in the research is an opening for how international (or local multilingual) students and lecturers may use or be encouraged to use other parts of their linguistic repertoires for their studies in EMI courses or programs. The linguistic hierarchy does not generally admit other languages to EMI. Kuteeva (2020), asking "If not English, then what?" points out that Sweden is one of the most multilingual countries in the EU, and this is reflected

in the variety of first languages spoken by students and lecturers. Languages other than English – both local majority and minority languages (Salö 2010; Söderlundh 2014) as well as the languages of international students – may be more present in the EMI classroom than the desired policies provide explicit space for (see more below on *space*).

The Nordic Council of Ministers (2018) call for more parallel language use, but Kuteeva (2020, 30) argues that parallelingualism "promotes two parallel monolingual systems based on standard language use" with "relatively little consideration for the multilingual resources of students and international staff" (51). However, local staff are probably at least as likely to control multilingual resources as "international" staff from the anglophone world, as they may master Swedish and English as well as other possible learned or acquired languages. In her study of open response survey data from staff and students at Stockholm University collected in 2012, Kuteeva (2020) identifies three dominant discourses in Swedish HE. Firstly, what she calls "epistemic monolingualism," where staff and students express concern about missing knowledge produced in languages other than English (and Swedish) (see also Brock-Utne 2022). Students do not, however, want more course literature in other languages, rather that more literature should be translated into Swedish. Secondly, she describes what she calls "(wishful) academic multilingualism," where respondents focus particularly on German and French as desirable languages of scholarship in specific disciplines, while not actually having access to those languages. Thirdly, she reports expressions of "deficient multilingualism," a perceived lack of linguistic resources in Swedish and/or English among specific groups of L2 users. This refers particularly to students who do not have Swedish as their first language (L1), questioning the value of EMI with local students who do not have Swedish as L1 and raising the question if Swedish or English would better serve the needs of these students.

## Theoretical framework

HE settings offer possibilities for the navigation and implementation of both explicit and implicit language policies and ideologies, which may be contested. Hornberger (2002) originally coined the concept of "ideological and implementational spaces" in response to one nation–one language ideologies present in language ecologies. She noted that, on the one hand, English was rapidly becoming a global language, thus disrupting the single national language ideology and, on the other hand, language revitalization efforts of minority and indigenous languages were increasing, also upsetting the hegemony of the majority language. Ideological spaces in policy (e.g., curriculum) allow for

implementational spaces in practice (e.g., classroom level). In the EMI context, ideological and implementational spaces may be related to the possibilities to promote linguistic diversity in the nominally monolingual classroom – policies (e.g., government, university, or local) that promote and value the use of multiple languages for learning open ideological spaces. With a lack of clear directives in policy, inconsistent interpretation and implementation of policies in the EMI classroom may be likely.

In Sweden, English closely follows the top-positioned national language Swedish, highly valued and visible in all levels of education as well as throughout society (Hult 2017) – "higher" in status than other minority languages in the country (Källkvist and Hult 2020). Despite Swedish remaining key in policies such as the Swedish Language Act (SFS 2009), hierarchization is evident. As Risager (2012, 115) argues: "When one chooses a language in practice, one simultaneously excludes all other languages, specifically the language(s) that compete with it in the context in question. When one explicitly includes, or just mentions, a language or a category of languages in representation, one simultaneously excludes all other languages." For example, Swedish is often used in undergraduate programs, while English is often used in graduate programs, where mobility is more inherent (Malmström and Pecorari 2022). This may suggest a linguistic hierarchy of legitimate languages for advanced learning where English is considered more appropriate than Swedish. When a language is chosen for writing, speaking, and interaction in a certain context, hierarchization is clear (Risager 2012, 114).

## EMI in Swedish higher education

We now consider Sweden as a case study, beginning with a brief overview of Swedish language policy in relation to English and then providing a targeted snapshot of the current situation in EMI course offerings and policy in two higher education institutions (HEIs) in Autumn 2022. We consider various layers of policy, exploring how EMI is related to Swedish national language policy, how EMI is presented in two local HEIs, and which ideological and implementational spaces may exist for multilingual translanguaging and/or parallelingualism in the Swedish HE context.

In the Swedish context, national policies elevate the status of English in Sweden, as noted previously. For example, English is the only obligatory language other than Swedish in the national curriculum for compulsory school. Advanced proficiency in English is common in Sweden, and English is seen as a valuable commodity (Kuteeva 2020), widespread, for example, in media, advertising, and business (Bolton and Meierkord 2013) as well as the

linguistic landscape (Cocq et al. 2022). Sweden's first legislation regarding a principal language, the Swedish Language Act[7] (SFS 2009:600), safeguards the status of Swedish while also promoting multilingualism, stipulating that all residents of Sweden must have opportunities to acquire the Swedish language, develop their mother tongue and obtain an adequate knowledge of English and other foreign languages. The action plan leading to the act focused on the role as well as perceived threat of English (SOU 2002, 1): "What can we do to ensure that Swedish continues to develop as an all-round language, while not hindering the employment of English in all the connections in which its use is required, and making sure that everyone acquires the knowledge of English they need?"

Still, the Swedish Language Act "makes no attempts to regulate EMI," leaving this to "local language policies of individual universities" (Airey et al. 2017, 567).[8] Even so, in an analysis of eleven university language policies, Gustafsson and Valcke (2021, 223) found that all refer to the Swedish Language Act (SFS 2009), especially in these two regards: "(i) that Swedish is the language of agencies and authorities; and (ii) that agencies and authorities have a responsibility to promote the development of Swedish as a language also of science with a focus on building disciplinary terminology," either explicitly or generally. Parallelingualism was also present in all the studied policies. However, Malmström and Pecorari (2022) suggest that the Language Act is not truly followed in the current situation of English and EMI in Swedish universities today, as English continues to threaten certain domains and Swedish is not always developed in HE contexts (see Chapter 6).

We can compare the policy situation to other Nordic countries.[9] For example, in Finland, English was only recently seen as a threat to Finnish, especially in HE, turning the debate to English vs Finnish rather than the historically contested role of Swedish in Finland (Saarinen and Ennser-Kananen 2020). In the Norwegian context, Brock-Utne (2022) identified several threats to Norwegian as an academic language, including researchers receiving higher monetary bonuses for publications in English, and debates and petitions from academics wishing to preserve Norwegian as the primary language of HE. Brock-Utne (2022) comments that a consequence of the removal of a paragraph in the 2005 version of the language policy which stipulated that "The language of instruction in Norwegian universities and colleges is normally Norwegian" (218) is that non-Norwegian speaking staff can no longer be required to learn Norwegian and that internal staff meetings may therefore need to be conducted in English. Still, as with Sweden, English holds a central place in language policy issues in all the Nordic countries (Halonen, Ihalainen, and Saarinen 2015, 10), not least in the trajectory of EMI in HE.

### *EMI in Swedish HE*

The action plan for the Swedish language (SOU 2002, 89, translation from the English summary) included the following goals:

- Universities and other institutes of higher education should augment elements in their students' programs that promote better oral and written skills in both Swedish and English, and should also, in certain cases, require a more advanced previous knowledge of Swedish
- Measures shall be taken to promote parallel employment of English and Swedish in research and scholarship

When English is chosen over Swedish as the language of HE, there may be a lack of development of Swedish as an academic language (Salö 2010, 10). Gustafsson and Valcke (2021, 224) note that "universities seem to consider Swedish their first and main language for administration purposes," but this is not necessarily the case for academics (researchers and teachers). Already in 2008, the Swedish Higher Education Authority reported on an increase in English-medium one-year and two-year master's programs (Högskoleverket 2008). Then – as now – the focus was on internationalization, due both to incoming students from abroad and to Swedish students creating international contacts and networks. The possibility to study in English was identified by foreign students as the main reason to study in Sweden (Högskoleverket 2008, 21). Karlsson (2017, 41) summarized her overview of language policy documentation in Swedish HE with these words: "Swedish is the language of higher education, but English symbolizes internationalization" (our translation).

In the Autumn semester of 2022 (www.antagning.se), 5,511 courses and programs were planned in English in HEIs in Sweden. This can be compared to 10,230 courses and programs offered in Swedish as well as 361 courses and programs in languages other than Swedish and English. The latter comprise mainly foreign language courses, including proficiency courses for beginners as well as advanced courses in linguistics and literature taught in other languages (e.g., French, Italian, German) and for mother tongue teachers (e.g., Finnish and Arabic). A closer look at the planned EMI courses and programs reveals the following:

- 1,665 undergraduate courses
- 102 undergraduate programs
  (e.g., bachelor programs in Forest and Landscape, International Relations, Game Design, and Peace and Conflict Studies)
- 2,508 graduate courses
- 1,239 graduate programs

(e.g., master's programs in Agroecology, Criminology, Landscape Architecture, and Mechanical Engineering)

These can be compared to just 530 EMI programs available in 2008. This is in line with Salö's 2010 report that some universities explicitly stated then that they intended to increase their course and program offerings in English.

### *A closer look at EMI at two universities*

We have chosen to present our own quite different institutions: Stockholm University (SU) and Dalarna University (DU), with figures from Autumn 2022. SU (www.su.se) is a capital city university, one of the 200 highest-ranked universities in the world with over 30,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, 1,400 doctoral students, and 5,700 members of staff. DU (www.du.se) is based across two campuses in the small cities of Falun and Borlänge. DU has almost 6,500 FTE students, 89 doctoral students and 847 employees. DU is a *högskola* "university college" rather than a *universitet* "university," the distinction being that only universities have a general authority to offer doctoral education, although DU does have this right in a limited number of specific disciplines. Despite the differences, the two institutions report similar numbers of international students: 1,136 in SU and 1,147 in DU (although it is unclear how these are defined in each case).

Until recently, DU had its own language policy, but now defers to the Language Act, in line with Gustafsson and Valcke (2021). The Language Policy at SU (Stockholms universitet 2021) has statements about expectations of multilingualism and parallel language use as well as the role of Swedish. The policy specifies that while "Academic staff and students at the university should have the English skills needed to participate in an international research setting" (p. 2), "Swedish-speaking academic staff and students also have a responsibility to use and develop Swedish as a scientific language" (p. 2), in line with the Swedish Language Act. This is further interpreted as a need for parallel language use by academics and the university administration and for all staff to be given the opportunity to master Swedish, "for collegial work." This means that the SU policy not only affirms Swedish as the principal language at SU, but also charges staff and students with the task of developing Swedish terminology (both consistent with the Language Act). The SU language policy stipulates that while important documents like syllabi and regulations should be available in English where needed, the Swedish-language documents take precedence over their English translations. Regarding EMI, the SU language policy permits the choice of language for education and research (including the working language) to vary depending on factors such as research traditions and target audiences. The use of languages other than Swedish and English is encouraged where

relevant, "for instance in certain third-stream activities, recruitments, and for the dissemination of research" (p. 2), in contrast to Salö's (2010) observation that language policies in Swedish universities – if they exist at all – tend only to address the parallel language use of Swedish and English, while multilingualism is seldom given explicit space. Kuteeva (2020) reports that 68 percent of the staff at SU had Swedish as L1 but does not mention the possibility of multiple L1s.

Salö's (2010) report that EMI is more common on the postgraduate (PG) than the undergraduate (UG) level is still generally true. The use of English has increased in the last decade or so in five large and five small Swedish HEIs examined by Malmström and Pecorari (2022). However, SU and DU were also different from the other institutions they reviewed, as the percentage of English-taught programs decreased from 2010 to 2020 from 73 percent to 67 percent (SU) and from 71 percent to 60 percent (DU). They report further that EMI is more common in courses than in programs, with an average of 66 percent EMI in master's programs across Sweden. SU exceeds this figure while DU has fewer than 60 percent EMI master's programs (Autumn 2022). This is in line with Malmström and Pecorari's (2022) observation that, except in the case of undergraduate courses, EMI is more common at larger research-intensive universities that award doctorates in many disciplines, such as SU.

Of the five large and five small institutions included in the study (Malmström and Pecorari 2022), SU had the largest share of course literature in English (66 percent) while DU had the smallest share (33 percent). In earlier research, Swedish students were more negative than "multilingual" students to textbooks in English, although they believed that they could increase proficiency by reading in English (Pecorari et al. 2012). Worth noting is that across all universities in Sweden, languages other than Swedish or English (mostly Norwegian or Danish) represented less than 0.5 percent of required reading (Malmström and Pecorari 2022, 31) despite an earlier policy recommendation to include course literature in "neighboring" Nordic languages (SOU 2002, 183; see also Nordic Council of Ministers 2018).

### *EMI: spaces and hierarchies*

While EMI may have originally been intended as one of several means to meet the goals of internationalization, offering courses in English has increasingly been discussed as "an effective tool for the transformation of institutions of higher education into *multilingual* contexts" (Morell and Volchenkova 2021, 7, our emphasis; see also the recent anthologies listed previously in this chapter). HEIs in European (Dalziel and Guard 2021) and African contexts (Reilly 2021) have opened ideological and implementational spaces for translanguaging. Dafouz and Smit (2020) have even coined the term *EMEMUS* for "English-medium

education in multilingual university settings." In the Swedish context, however, English itself still maintains the highest rung on the ladder of linguistic hierarchy (Hult 2005). Thus, while supposedly opening up for international students or for "internationalization at home," multilingualism is not explicitly the goal nor the outcome, despite language policies (e.g., the Language Act and the SU language policy). Consequently, while EMI in theory allows students to engage in new common spaces, melding their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the academic lingua franca remains English, reflecting a stable linguistic hierarchy. This is despite the fact that, as Risager (2012, 112) articulates, "English is the most widespread academic language, but it is clearly not the only one."

According to Salö (2010, 54), "To work in Sweden, language proficiency in both Swedish and English is needed. Parallelingualism is thus the goal for instruction" (see also Hellekjær 2016). In their recent report for the Language Council of Sweden, Malmström and Pecorari (2022, 45) argue that parallelingualism in all arenas of the academic sphere, from administration to classroom teaching, is the only choice if HE is to allow space for Swedish. However, the term *parallelingualism* is contested as falsely indicating a kind of multilingualism, when it only refers to two languages, with the other "foreign" language always English (Brock-Utne 2007) – which reflects the current state of EMI in Sweden that has not allowed space for other languages (Malmström and Pecorari 2022). It is worth considering how this fits with the policy goal of the common language of Swedish to ensure that all may "embrace and benefit from the riches that a multilingual, multicultural society has to offer" (SOU 2002, 25–26, translation from the English summary).

In 2008, the National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket 2008) stated that English was necessary to attract foreign students. However, it may be naïve to ignore the implications of EMI. The National Agency for Higher Education also stated in 2008 (27), "*Vi vet i ärlighetens namn inte särskilt mycket om hur och i vilken utsträckning kvalitén på utbildningarna påverkas av att de ges på engelska*." [We honestly do not know all that much about how and to what extent the quality of the programs is affected by the fact that they are given in English.] Do we know more today? We do know that internationalization in HE as well as academic marketing influenced by neoliberal trends, together with the ever-increasing status of English in the linguistic hierarchy across the globe, have all resulted in EMI retaining both ideological and implementational spaces in Swedish universities. Thus, the question instead becomes one of a choice between internationalization with a promotion of EMI, on the one hand, and an adherence to language policy that protects Swedish as a legitimate language of teaching and scientific production, on the other hand (Malmström and Pecorari 2022, 45). While internationalization should also be about other skills and values, such as certain knowledge and attitudes, the linguistic space is limited to English as the dominant language.

It is increasingly difficult in many disciplines to find advanced level courses with Nordic languages as the language of instruction, resulting in students unable to choose to study through what may be their strongest (or preferred) languages (Brock-Utne 2022). One way to create implementational and ideological spaces for languages other than English is to consider how translanguaging as the medium of instruction may allow for Swedish, English, and other languages to take space in the HE classroom as legitimate languages for learning. The legitimatizing stance inherent to translanguaging, however, may sit uneasily in some HE institutions with EMI. Some may feel that the presence of pedagogical translanguaging practices indicates that teachers and students are not able to manage the EMI lesson, but it may instead reveal (or resist) institutional and de facto hierarchies (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth 2021b; Pecorari and Malmström 2018). A translanguaging pedagogy can contrast a parallel language use policy that in practice often means only English as a "policy-prescribed medium of instruction" (Söderlundh 2014, 116). In the Swedish context, this would entail a move beyond the current linguistic hierarchy roles to an affordance of more status to Swedish and other languages in the EMI classroom. This is, after all, in line with the translanguaged siding often occurring in EMI courses (Antia 2016).

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered EMI in the Nordic countries, illustrated with the specific case of Sweden, questioning the ever-ubiquitous role of EMI in HE (Block 2022). Nordic countries are "often mischaracterized internationally as stereotypically monolingual and monocultural while being far from either," Hult argues (2021, 247), when really, they have long been "touched by the many guises of bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching and translanguaging." Indeed, Nordic universities are "more multilingual than ever" (Nordic Council of Ministers 2018, 28). Still, as Saarinen and Ennser-Kananen put it, English is a "terrific magnet" (2020, 118).

The supposed goals of EMI are to attract more students from abroad and to easily increase local students' exposure to English (Richards and Pun 2022), the latter reflecting a larger trend toward EMI at all levels of education (see, e.g., Paulsrud and Cunningham forthcoming). Nonetheless, in her review of the research concerns and professional implications of EMI in European HE ten years ago, Dalton-Puffer (2012, 102) stated that "subject-matter teaching in English transgresses well-established disciplinary and system-inherent borders creating considerable insecurities along the way." While she was referring mainly to the content-language teaching dichotomy, we would like to extend her argument to include the danger of insecurities for the students (see also, e.g., Brocke-Utne 2022; Pecorari et al. 2012; Rauto 2008). Leaving language learning to an expected absorption through disciplinary content lessons may have many students struggling. Both the rapid development of EMI programs, with many

teachers unprepared, and the persistent beliefs that language can be learned merely through immersion, have hindered the inclusion of clear language goals in EMI (Lasagabaster and Doiz 2021, 1–2). The belief that exposure to English in EMI offers the best, or at least an efficient, way to develop desirable advanced English skills leads many to prefer courses taught in English. English is often expected to be learned simply through exposure during non-language content lessons, thus more incidental than intentional learning, although research (e.g., Brocke-Utne 2022; Pecorari et al. 2012) has suggested that hopes of learning English through the supposed EMI osmosis are likely not achievable. Thus, we ask: How do we move from *why* EMI is offered to *how* EMI is offered?

According to the Nordic Council of Ministers, all Nordic residents should know other Nordic languages well enough to communicate with one another in them (2007). In "other Nordic languages" they include majority languages, minority languages, and "migrant languages" ("*den lokale flersprogethed*" [local multilingualism]; Holmen 2012, 166). As well as this, residents should be able to manage parallel use of English in domains such as science, HE, and business. However, the use of parallel languages needs to be applied to the languages of the Nordic countries as well as to English (Nordic Council of Ministers 2007, 94). Holmen (2012) raises the issue of the binaries implicated by parallelingualism, meaning that the competence that international students bring to EMI settings may be ignored despite the value they bring to a global labor market. In a more recent document, the Nordic Council of Ministers (2018) call for international students to be required to know or learn more of the local languages. In turn, they recommend that all local students be academically proficient in both their local language(s) and English – as well as any other languages that may be required by their program of study. As a means to this, staff training in how to work with multiple languages of instruction and more specifically how to bring in languages other than only English and the majority language into the classroom is suggested (Nordic Council of Ministers 2018). We would like to emphasize that internationalization does not have to mean English-medium only, as, in the words of Wilkinson (2017, 41): "Internationalization does not mean that education has to be offered in a single language." Using the twin lenses of parallelingualism and translanguaging, we have considered possible challenges to hierarchies and ideologies underlying EMI in HE, highlighting the case of Sweden. Giving implementational and ideological space to languages that are currently not visible – including multiple local languages – may be a move beyond the binaries implied by a call for parallelingualism in the Nordic EMI context.

## Notes

1 In this chapter, "EMI" will be used as a modifier for courses, programs, teachers, and students for quick identification.

2 One exception to this EMI trend includes the language-in-education policy implemented by the Malawian government in 2014, with an explicit goal to improve students' English proficiency (Reilly 2021).
3 See Yoxsimer Paulsrud (2014) for a consideration of Swedish school markets and EMI at the upper secondary level.
4 For a recent European overview of Englishization and language policy, see Wilkinson and Gabriëls (2021)
5 For an overview of terms related to EMI, see Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth (2021a) and Yoxsimer Paulsrud (2014).
6 For a critical overview of translanguaging theory, see Cummins (2021).
7 For a review of the policy proposal *Mål i mun* [*Speech*] (SOU 2002) that preceded the Language Act, see Hult (2005).
8 For overviews of the official documents regulating language policy in HE in Sweden, see Gustafsson and Valcke (2021) and Karlsson (2017).
9 For a detailed review of HE language policies in the Nordics, see Saarinen and Taalas (2017).

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# 8

# ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC WORKPLACE

## Practices, policies, and ideologies

*Dorte Lønsmann*

### Introduction

In the last couple of decades, many workplaces in the Nordic countries have become increasingly international. The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the free movement of labor between EU countries, global migration due to wars and crises, and new technologically mediated ways of working across borders have all contributed to the internationalization process. This process entails increased international recruitment, especially in large companies, an increased number of international employees working in the Nordic countries (Foged et al. 2019), increased outsourcing and offshoring to facilities in other parts of the world, and increased collaboration across borders, often facilitated by new technology such as video meetings. The changes brought about by internationalization and new technology have also led to increased linguistic diversity in many workplaces. Linguistic diversity may be seen as a problem for collaboration and cohesion in the workplace, and the preferred solution often is to choose a common language. While the local Nordic languages are sometimes used (see e.g., Kraft 2017), English is frequently seen as the obvious lingua franca, especially in corporate workplaces (Lønsmann and Mortensen 2018).

While it can be difficult to track the development of the use of English in workplaces, there are some data available from the Danish context. A series of questionnaire studies from the Confederation of Danish Industry suggest the trend to be an increasing use of English. In 2007, 25 percent of the member organizations replied that English was the corporate language (the study is referred to in Ostrynski 2007). In 2016, another study showed that 60 percent of the "internationally oriented" member organizations had English as a corporate

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language (Vrang 2016), and 90 percent responded that they would need English within the next five years. In a similar survey in 2021 (Amir and Mortensen 2021), 83 percent of 565 "internationally oriented companies" responded that they would need English within the next five years. Two large surveys on the role of English in Denmark and Finland further attest to the presence of English in Nordic workplaces. In both cases, roughly half of employed respondents indicated that they use English at work at least once a week (Leppänen 2011; Preisler 1999). Preisler's (1999) survey showed that English was present in many Danish workplaces, but with vast differences between different fields. While 100 percent of respondents employed within IT and 88 percent of respondents employed within education answered that they were in frequent contact with English, only 25 percent of respondents working in childcare and 15 percent of workers in agriculture said the same (Preisler 1999, 40). Looking at the respondents by occupation, experts and managers used English the most (65–66 percent said they use English at work), and healthcare and manual workers the least (23 percent said they use English at work). In a study from 2022 (Lønsmann et al. 2022), 86 percent of respondents say that they encounter English at work at least occasionally.

However, the question is not only how much English is used at work, but also why, how, and with what consequences. Exploring the role of English in the Nordic workplace with a special focus on Denmark, this chapter argues for a more holistic view on the use of English. In the literature review in the following section, I give an overview of previous work on the role of English in workplaces in the Nordic countries. The section on the theoretical framework explores the concepts (and relation between) language practices, policies, and ideologies. Finally, I present a case study of the Danish company Consult.[1] Drawing on previously published studies, I discuss how English in this workplace can be studied from the perspectives of language practices, policy, and ideology, and end by reflecting on the advantages of combining these three perspectives.

## The role of English in Nordic workplaces

The research interest in English in Nordic workplaces began in earnest in the 1990s. With non-Nordic employees entering Nordic workplaces, and with collaboration and trade across borders as a result of mergers, acquisitions, and expansions, many workplaces experienced changes toward a more multicultural and multilingual environment. In many of these multilingual workplaces, English came to play a key role as a lingua franca.

Some Nordic workplaces, in particular large, internationally oriented, corporate workplaces, began designating English as the corporate language. Often it is not very clear what this concept covers. While it is sometimes taken to mean that everyone in the workplace speaks English all the time, in practice,

having English as the designated corporate language can also mean that the local language is the default language used in the company, and that English is the chosen lingua franca if and when one is needed (Lønsmann 2011). Nevertheless, there is a strong symbolic value in saying that a company has English as the corporate language (Lønsmann and Mortensen 2018), and the concept of English as a corporate language has contributed to the discussion of English in the Nordic countries, including the debate about English as a threat to the local Nordic languages. From the beginning of the 2000s, the debate about domain loss to English ran through the Nordic countries, particularly among linguists and to some extent politicians (see Chapter 6 for an extended discussion about domain loss). The use of English in the corporate sector was frequently cited as one area where the Nordic languages were in danger of losing domains to English (e.g. Höglin 2002; Jarvad 2001), and the practice of naming English as the corporate language was seen as a measure of the extent to which English threatened the Nordic languages.

Perhaps because of the increasing use of English in the Nordic societies in general at this point, at the beginning of the 2000s the interest in most studies of English in the workplace was in evaluating to what extent the national Nordic languages were in danger of domain loss to English. Jarvad (2001) investigated potential domain loss through ten phone interviews with employees in Danish companies with English as a corporate language. She found that Danish had a strong presence across genres, and that English was only used if foreigners were present. Similarly, Berg et al. (2001) investigated how English affects Swedish in a workplace context. Their questionnaire study showed that Swedish was the main language in all the workplaces, but also that 67 percent of their 33 respondents used English every day. From these questionnaire and interview studies, it is clear then that English played a role in Nordic workplaces at the beginning of the new millennium, but also that the local languages dominated in most fields.

In the first major ethnographic study of English as a corporate language in a Nordic context, Lønsmann's (2011) investigation of language practices found that Danish was the default spoken language in the pharmaceutical case company, with English primarily used with addressees who did not know Danish. English, however, was used more frequently in writing because genres such as emails and PowerPoint presentations often take future addressees into account (see also Day and Wagner 2007 on this point). Lønsmann (2011) showed that English competences vary, with some Danish employees fluent in English, while others exhibited very limited English proficiency. Other languages, such as German and Spanish, were also used if all speakers in an encounter were proficient in those languages. In a Swedish context, Nelson (2014) similarly found that while English was the corporate language in the company she studied, Swedish was the language used for internal purposes and in daily spoken interactions. English

was mainly used as a lingua franca for written correspondence across borders and in meetings with external partners. Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) investigated the use of English as a lingua franca after a merger of a Finnish and a Swedish company and found that while the percentage of English use increased after the merger, the local languages were still used around 80 percent of the time. The same pattern emerged in ethnographic studies of academic workplaces in Norway and Sweden with English as the nominal language. In practice, these are multilingual workplaces for students and staff with the local national language playing an important role (Ljosland 2011; Söderlundh 2013).

If we look beyond corporate and academic contexts, ethnographic studies of blue-collar workplaces show that English is not the only lingua franca used. While English does play a role for the cleaners in the Finnish tourism industry in Strömmer's (2020) study, Finnish, Bulgarian, and Russian were also used. Holm et al.'s (2020) study of blue-collar workplaces in the Faroe Islands found that Faroese was the main language, and while English was used as a lingua franca, it was not always sufficient, and language brokering into, for example, Russian was also frequent. Kraft's (2017) study of language practices in a multilingual Norwegian construction site with a majority of Polish workers revealed that Norwegian was the dominant language and main lingua franca. Similarly, Tranekjær's (2020) study of an industrial laundry facility in Denmark where the large majority of workers were migrants who spoke only a little Danish showed no evidence of the use of English as a lingua franca. Instead, Danish was the main working language.

From a practice perspective then, it seems that while English is present in many Nordic workplaces, the local national languages are the main languages used. The use of English is often triggered by the presence of speakers who do not speak any of the local languages, or by consideration of future addressees. Ethnographic studies from the past decade thus find no evidence of domain loss to English within Nordic workplaces. What they do reveal is diversity in language use in different types of workplaces, with English used more in certain types of workplaces (white-collar, academic, corporate) than in others (blue-collar), but in all cases, as part of multilingual practices (see also Bellak 2014 and Nielsen 2020 on this point).

Turning to language policy, the interest in most studies has been in investigating the consequences of introducing English as a corporate language. One strand of studies focuses on the interactional consequences of introducing English as a corporate language. These consequences range from language clustering (Tange and Lauring 2009), that is, when speakers of the same language stick together to the exclusion of other colleagues, to communication avoidance. In the latter case, employees may refrain from non-essential and informal interactions due to the use of English (Tange and Lauring 2009) or avoid communication with higher-status interlocutors (Lauring and Klitmøller 2015).

Another strand of studies focuses on how language policy impacts status and power in workplaces. A series of Finnish studies within the field of business communication concluded that power resides with those employees who are proficient in the corporate language, English (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari 2002), and that employees who do not acquire competence in English are excluded from participating in company-wide activities and are confined to local operations (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999). Conversely, choosing the national language as corporate language may disadvantage international employees who lack full competence in that language, both in terms of access to information and career paths (Bjørge and Whittaker 2015). From a sociolinguistic perspective, language-based exclusion of international employees has also been found in workplaces where English does have an official role because the local language nevertheless fulfills important functions (Kirilova and Lønsmann 2020; Lønsmann 2011). Furthermore, language policies of English in the workplace have been found to reflect the repertoires and practices of high-status employees, while the multilingual repertoires and practices of lower-status employees are either overlooked or devalued (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018). Together, these studies show how a language policy perspective on English in the workplace highlights issues of exclusion, status, and power, and how categories and boundaries created by language policies may either reinforce or challenge existing hierarchies.

Finally, English in Nordic workplaces has been investigated from the perspective of language ideologies. English is first and foremost constructed as the one and only international language and as connected with power and prestige (Lønsmann 2011). In the context of international business, English is constructed as the natural language choice, while the idea of other languages as international lingua francas is ridiculed, despite the fact that other languages *are* used to communicate across borders (Lønsmann 2015). In a study of language ideologies and legitimation strategies in a Danish-Spanish post-merger situation, Vulchanov (2022) found that English was positioned as the natural language to the point where the employees simply assumed that it was the corporate language, without having been told so. Furthermore, English is often constructed as the great equalizer in contexts of linguistic diversity, as a neutral and beneficial language to which everyone has access (Haberland 2009). This ideology is not unique to the Nordic setting (see e.g., Pennycook 2017), but is perhaps particularly prevalent in this context, where the population is very confident in their own English competence (see Chapters 1, 2, and 6 and further evidence in this chapter). In a study of language ideologies among managers in Danish international companies, Kraft and Lønsmann (2018) found that English is constructed as the language everybody understands, as unproblematic, and as the easiest solution for everybody. English is also frequently constructed as a language of opportunity. In some cases, English is linked with career mobility

for the individual (Lønsmann 2014), while in other cases English is linked with future opportunities for the organization (Vulchanov 2022).

A further language ideology about English focuses explicitly on English in the Nordic countries, placing Nordic speakers toward the top of a language hierarchy of English speakers. Not surprisingly, native speakers are placed at the top of this hierarchy, with speakers of British English (the variety traditionally taught in the Nordic educational systems) at the very top. Studies from workplace and university contexts reveal that Nordic speakers of English place themselves just below native speakers in the hierarchy, and above all other non-native speakers (Lønsmann 2011, Peterson and Hall 2023; see also Chapter 1). This ideology that inhabitants in the Nordic countries are particularly competent in English has been framed as a part of the idea of Nordic exceptionalism (which also encompasses the Nordic welfare state) (Peterson 2022). This ideology also posits that "everyone" in the Nordic countries speaks English (Lønsmann 2011, 251; see also Chapter 1) and speaks it well. And while self-report studies (European Commission 2012; Preisler 1999) do show a large number of Nordic citizens to be confident in their English skills, the same studies also show that a substantial minority do not have enough English skills to carry out a conversation. From a critical perspective, the construction of the ideology of Nordic people as exceptional English users means that the group of "English have-nots" (Preisler 2003) is erased and their exclusion from the large number of interactions that take place in English is ignored.

This review of previous studies of English in Nordic workplaces has highlighted some of the key issues around language practices, policies, and ideologies. It has also highlighted the wide range of methodologies used to investigate English in the workplace, from surveys over interview studies to ethnographic studies of workplace interaction. The next section further discusses the three perspectives of language practices, policies and ideologies.

## Theoretical framework: Language practices, policies, and ideologies

The theory that I draw on for the case study in this chapter comes from critical sociolinguistics, a field that is interested in how language use positions language users in society and in workplaces. I draw here on language and political economy (Del Percio et al. 2018), a subfield within critical sociolinguistics that focuses on how societal structures and discourses impact the opportunities of language users. Much research within language and political economy focuses on the intersection between language, work, and migration (e.g., Allan and McElhinny 2017; Flubacher and Yeung 2016), including research that pays special attention to the role of English in contexts of mobility, migration, and work (e.g.,

Strömmer 2020). In this section, I discuss three concepts that I find particularly useful in trying to understand language in the workplace: practices, policies, and ideologies. The key point of introducing these three perspectives is that together they allow for a holistic exploration of language use at work. Combining the three perspectives lets us see how language ideologies shape language policies as well as daily language practices. Comparing language policy with language practice may reveal discrepancies between the management outlook and the employee reality (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018). And viewing language practice, policy, and ideology as intertwined enables us to see how language is linked with social inequality, power, and inclusion in workplaces.

Critical sociolinguistics views language as social action, a perspective that entails a focus on language practices. Language practices can be understood simply as what people do, which languages they use, with whom, and for what purposes. But practice can also be seen as more than just language use. Language practices are at the same time embedded in social and linguistic structures and contribute to shaping these structures (Ahearn 2017, 25). As Pennycook (2010, 2) writes, "What we do with language in a particular place is a result of our interpretation of that place; and the language practices we engage in reinforce that reading of place." A language practice perspective embedded in ethnographic fieldwork provides a participant perspective that provides data on what people do with language, but also on how these practices are embedded in larger structures.

Another, complementary, perspective comes from critical language policy studies, a field that examines the link between language policy and social, political, and economic inequality (Tollefson 2009). While much of this work has been focused on the national level (e.g., Tollefson 1993), for example on the role of minority languages within nation-states or linguistic requirements for citizenship, my interest here is in how language policy in workplaces may result in social and economic inequality.

While mainstream sociolinguistic theory has defined language policy as consisting of three components: language practices, beliefs about language, and language management (Spolsky 2004), language policy in the workplace is often conceptualized as a top-down process that is part of strategic efforts – and when it comes to English language policies, part of strategic internationalization efforts (Lønsmann 2017a, 2017b). In other cases, English language policies are introduced to regulate language choice or to designate one language as the working or corporate language to reduce the perceived problems caused by linguistic diversity. In contrast to this top-down view of language policy, empirical studies from the university context have shown that language policies may also be practice-based and "from below," that is, introduced by students and not policy makers (Mortensen 2014; see also Chapter 4), and that such policies may allow for mixing English and the local language. A language

policy perspective can help us see how language users are positioned in the organizational context by such attempts at managing language choice.

The third perspective is that of language ideologies. Language ideologies can be defined as beliefs about languages and language users, nested in the interests of particular social groups, or as Irvine (1989, 255) puts it: language ideologies are "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests." Because they are tied to interests, language ideologies are both determined by power relations and instrumental in creating them (Seargeant 2009). Language ideologies are useful constructs for analysts interested in how language use positions language users, since language ideologies ascribe value to certain linguistic practices, certain languages, and their speakers. While language ideologies are shared by large groups of people, they are not necessarily shared by all members of a given society. This means that we may find contradictory language ideologies in a society or community. For instance, we find the two seemingly conflicting beliefs that English is the appropriate language for international communication taking place in workplaces in Denmark, while Danish generally is the appropriate language to use in the country (Kraft and Lønsmann 2018). From a theoretical angle, the language ideology perspective focuses on how language users are positioned not just in the workplace, but also in society at large.

I would also like to introduce here the concept of language-based exclusion, an issue that is intimately connected to the use of English in the workplace. While the concept of exclusion has not been given much attention neither in public debates nor in sociolinguistic theorization, it is central to discussions of English in Nordic workplaces where English is used side by side with other languages, and by users of varying proficiency. I define language-based exclusion as a lack of opportunities for participation related to language practices, language policies, and language ideologies. Language-based exclusion can take different forms. Many people in the Nordic countries have high English proficiency, but not everyone is able to use or is comfortable using English in high-stakes interactions, for example, in the workplace. While the use of English in the workplace may straightforwardly exclude some employees simply because they do not have the linguistic competence to participate in interactions in English (Lønsmann 2014), exclusion may also happen in more subtle ways. Even when employees seem to have the language competence they need in English, they may not feel confident in their abilities, and this subjective language competence impacts how they act, causing them, for example, to avoid attending meetings in English (Neeley 2013). Language-based exclusion may also take the form of language ideology-based stereotyping, such as downgrading non-native varieties of English (Lønsmann 2011) or other foreign languages than English (Lønsmann 2015) – and by extension speakers of these varieties.

In the next section, I present a case study of the role of English in a Danish workplace. I draw on the three complementary perspectives of practices, policies, and ideologies in order to understand how the introduction of English in the organization is related to language-based exclusion.

## Case study: Introducing English to internationalize the organization

"A new and important part of the strategy is that we want to be an international company," said Paul, the human resource manager who was the first person I interviewed at Consult. "We have to grow, and since we already dominate the Danish market, we have to grow internationally."[2] When I turned the conversation to language, he told me that while the employees were happy to work with people from other cultures, having to use English was a barrier. Older employees and those employees who worked mainly with local projects and local customers tended to be wary of English. The Danish employees were shy about speaking English in front of other Danes, he said. Sometimes they asked to have separate meetings for Danes in Danish and for international employees in English, but that did not encourage an international mindset. The employees typically argued about English from the perspective of their own competences, good or bad. Paul wanted instead to introduce a more strategic perspective on what he called "corporate English."

Already in this first interview, Paul introduced the key issues at Consult in relation to the strategic introduction of English as a corporate language and employees' responses to the increased use of English in the company. I contacted Consult in 2013 as part of the LINGCORP research project.[3] In the project, my colleagues and I were interested in investigating the challenges many companies experience as a consequence of increased linguistic and cultural diversity. Consult is a Danish consulting and engineering company established in 1945. Since the early 2000s, Consult has expanded internationally, and at the time of the fieldwork the company had 10,000 employees in 57 countries. My study focuses on the Danish branch of the organization, Consult DK. In 2012, Consult DK embarked upon an "internationalization journey," as they called it in their internal communication. This journey included a number of strategic internationalization targets, including increased offshoring to the Indian branch of the company. It also included the implementation of an English language policy.

English had already been the de facto corporate language in Consult DK for a number of years, but in 2012 a language strategy project was initiated with the aim of implementing English as the corporate language "for real," as one informant put it. As a first step, a number of employees were interviewed about the prospect of making a shift to English in the Danish part of the organization

(which was the initial aim of the language strategy project). However, the project group encountered a lot of resistance to the idea and convinced management to change the plan to a "soft transition" with a period of parallel Danish-English use until the final implementation, after which all top-down communication would be in English only. This is the point where I entered the company and started fieldwork. Over the following two years, I did ethnographic interviews with employees, carried out one month of participant observation in a global IT department in the company headquarters, and conducted three focus group interviews with a total of fifteen employees in departments around the country. I wrote extensive field notes during this period and collected a range of written material. This data set allows for investigating the role of English at Consult from three perspectives: language practices, language policies, and language ideologies. We will start with language ideologies.

From a language ideologies perspective, it was interesting to investigate *why* Consult DK chose to implement English as the corporate language, or as my co-author and I ask in Lønsmann and Mortensen (2018, 437): "How is the introduction of the language policy in our case company related to hegemonic (language) ideologies?"[4] The analysis of language policy documents and interviews with employees involved in the language policy process revealed that English to a large degree was positioned as the "natural" language and as the only valuable language in the company context. This is not surprising, given how prevalent this ideology is across the western world, and particularly in the business sector. However, at Consult DK the introduction of (more) English was also tied to increasing revenue and expansion into the international market. One example of this came from a set of PowerPoint slides used to introduce the language strategy to employees. Under the heading "Why do we need a language strategy?", the following reasons were given:

> English is key to creating a Global Mindset. We aim to work even stronger together internationally, and to employ more non-Danish speaking colleagues.
>
> International revenue should increase from XX% in 2013 to XX% in 2016.
>
> Cooperation with India should increase from XX% in 2013 to XX% in 2016.
>
> English as a common language is a prerequisite for sharing knowledge, setting the right team, employee mobility, and working internationally.[5]

In this extract, English is explicitly linked with economic growth, which can be described as a neoliberal ideology that positions growth as the natural goal (see also Chapter 7). English is also linked with a "global mindset." While it is not entirely clear what this entails, it is linked with employing "non-Danish speaking colleagues." English is not only positioned as the natural language of

international cooperation, but also as the key to *becoming* more international (compare with the role of English in academic internationalization as discussed in Chapter 7). This linking of English with the strategic goal of growth and internationalization explains why Paul, the human resource manager, saw reservations about English as a barrier for internationalization. And it explains why Consult DK management initiated the language strategy project despite no immediate need for using English in the Danish branch of the organization: from the strategic perspective of top management, English was both the natural language for international communication and a tool for increasing revenue. But as Paul's comments suggest, this was not necessarily how employees viewed English.

"How is it for you when you receive communication from management in English?" I asked in the first focus group interview, and Finn, an experienced engineer and project manager, promptly responded: "I can't be bothered with it. I delete it."[6] I include this example here to highlight two issues: first, that creating a language policy does not mean that it is carried out in practice, and second, that the employee perspective may be very different from the management perspective. Finn's response may at first glance seem like a rather extreme way of resisting the language policy. However, it became clear from the focus groups that dealing with communication in English was time-consuming for many of the Danish employees, and that the company culture of logging how every minute was spent did not take this into consideration. There was no extra time set aside for reading and writing in English, and no separate category in which to log this extra work.

Most employees, however, took a pragmatic stance toward English. According to Erik, another engineer:

> English is fine, but I think you should only use it where it adds value, right. It is kind of that thing where then everything has to be in English and things like that. It doesn't always make sense, you know. And I think people forget that.

With this stance, Erik and his colleagues aligned with management but insisted that the use of English had to make sense. "Making sense" turned out to be a key point in employees' reception of the language policy. While employees' own evaluation of their English competence influenced their stance toward English (the more proficient, the more positive), the local linguistic context was an equally important factor. All of the study participants were Danish-speaking and worked with Danish customers and collaborators on projects in Denmark. This meant that their core work tasks were all conducted in Danish.[7] In this context, English was simply not relevant, and receiving emails from top management in English seemed out of touch. Finally, management's long-term strategic goals of increasing internationalization and revenue through the use of English were

very far from the engineers' everyday work. While most of them agreed that English made sense in the long-term perspective if the company wanted to be international, from a short-term perspective, that is, that of finishing this week's work tasks on time or that of older employees nearing retirement, English was simply not relevant.

Nevertheless, English did play a role in the employees' everyday lives to a smaller or larger extent. In this section I look at how employees handled this from a practice perspective. As Finn's comment about deleting emails suggests, employees used their discretionary power (Lipsky 2010) when it came to carrying out top-down language policies in practice. In the focus groups, the employees outlined some of their strategies when it came to the use of English in the workplace.[8] For some employees, including in the global IT department where I did my participant observation, the use of English was perceived as (and observed to be) straightforward and unproblematic. English was used both in work talk in meetings and for small talk among employees from a range of national and linguistic backgrounds. For other employees, especially those who worked with Danish-speaking colleagues and customers, English presented a barrier. Olav, a head of department, said:

> We can see it in the management meetings. We also sit there saying nothing so there isn't a lot of dialogue. Yes, those who are good at English, they control the conversation, but the rest of us, we hold back a bit. It is only when it is really important [that we participate].

And while no other participants talked about deleting emails, there were other ways to work around the demands placed by written communication in English. Leo, an engineer and project manager, described it in the following way:

> And so what often happens is that when we get such a couple of pages of dense, written English text, we don't have time to read it just then. You just don't get around to reading it.

Withdrawing from interactions and knowledge-sharing, as described in these extracts, has been termed "communication avoidance" (Sanden and Lønsmann 2018), but can also be seen as examples of language-based exclusion. Contrasting the practice perspective with language ideologies highlights the complexities of English in Danish workplaces. On the one hand, English is positioned as the natural language of international collaboration and Danes as very proficient English speakers. These ideologies may lead management to assume that it is unproblematic to ask employees in Denmark to use English at work. On the other hand, while English may be natural and easy for some employees, it is not the case for everyone, not even highly educated and highly placed employees.

These employees then have to resort to a range of strategies to get by at work, some of which may result in language-based exclusion.

"Danish workplaces" comprise many different types of work in different fields with different types of employees. This means that generalizing about English in Danish workplaces should be done with care. Nevertheless, the Consult case highlights some trends that occur across many Danish workplaces. The presence of English is intimately linked with widespread language ideologies about the natural position of English as the global lingua franca, and with a perhaps specifically Nordic ideology about English exceptionalism. Together, these lead to a belief that English is a neutral medium to which everyone in the Nordic countries has access. English language policies in the workplace establish an official position for English which contributes to constructing English as a highly valued linguistic resource, intimately linked with the company's financial success. This positioning of English has two types of consequences for the Danish employees. The introduction of more English in employees' working lives is a change that requires extra time and effort for some employees. In some cases, the extra burden placed on employees by English causes them to withdraw from key interactions and knowledge-sharing. And while English-proficient employees may be able to use their English competence to their advantage in the workplace, for those less competent in English the presence of English in the workplace leads to status loss and exclusion.

## Conclusion

As of 2023, English is firmly established as a key language in many Nordic workplaces, to the extent that we can discuss whether English is now perceived as a second language in a country like Denmark (Lønsmann, Mortensen, and Thøgersen 2022). In many cases, English in the workplace is not only linked with international cooperation, but also with migration. Using English as a working language allows companies to recruit internationally, and it allows newcomers to start working in Denmark without or while learning Danish. In this way, English opens up doors for workplaces and workers alike, and may function as a language of inclusion in contexts where the local languages exclude certain employees. On the other hand, as we have seen in the Consult case, despite language ideological beliefs about the strong position of English in Denmark, and its "natural" role in international collaboration, English in the workplace may also function as a language of exclusion. In all likelihood, English will continue to play important roles in Nordic workplaces in the foreseeable future. From a critical sociolinguistic perspective, investigating language practices, policies, and ideologies together allows us to see how top-down English language policies, on the one hand, are embedded in larger ideological structures. On the other hand, we can see how the positioning of English as a corporate language

impacts employees by creating a barrier in their daily working lives, while also impacting their status and position in the workplace. If we want to understand the role of English in Nordic workplaces, however, it is important that we take a holistic perspective and focus not just on English but on all the languages used in multilingual workplaces, and on the consequences of language ideologies, policies, and practices in terms of power and status, inclusion, and exclusion.

## Notes

1 Consult is a pseudonym.
2 Interview excerpts have been translated from the original Danish by the author.
3 The LINGCORP project (Language and Interaction in the Globalized Corporation) ran 2012–2015 and was headed by Professor Hartmut Haberland, Roskilde University. See more at lingcorp.ruc.dk.
4 The discussion of language ideologies at Consult draws on Lønsmann and Mortensen (2018).
5 Figures in the extract have been replaced with XX in order to ensure confidentiality for Consult.
6 The discussion of the implementation of language policy at Consult draws on Lønsmann (2017b).
7 It also means that I would likely have obtained very different results if I had interviewed non-Danish employees.
8 The discussion of strategies for using English at work draws on Sanden and Lønsmann (2018).

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# 9

# ENGLISH IN NORWAY'S MULTILINGUAL NORTH

## A rhizomatic view on encounters with historical and transnational diversity

*Florian Hiss*

### Introduction

Second to Norwegian, English is considered the most used language in Norway. Though it is not ascribed any official status in national language policies, the use of English plays an influential role, with respect to language practices and sociolinguistic relations and as part of a much broader linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity has a central role in the history of Norway's northern periphery. The region is part of Sápmi, the homeland of the indigenous Sámi people. It has also been the home of the Kven people for many centuries, who are acknowledged as a national minority today. Despite official acknowledgment, the Sámi languages and Kven, which is closely related to Finnish, are minoritized and endangered in contemporary North Norwegian society. Multilingual encounters have been part of the everyday lives of many generations, as well as sociolinguistic struggles and assimilation pressure (e.g., Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010; Truth and Reconciliation Committee 2033). The current sociolinguistic situation is shaped by large-scale historical processes which include a century of national linguistic and cultural assimilation politics against the Sámi and Kven population from the mid-19th century onward, later, an era of linguistic and cultural reclamation, and, more recently, increased international mobility. In recent decades, people from other parts of Norway, Europe, and the rest of the world have come to the region for study and work, as refugees, tourists, and for many other reasons. The extended use of English goes hand in hand with this recent development. As everywhere in the Nordic countries, English is also central in education, and many encounter English regularly through various media. As a result of the processes sketched above,

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contemporary Northern Norway witnesses a multiplicity of sociolinguistic relations between languages and people with very different histories, different language political status, and contexts of language use.

Against this highly diverse background, the aim of this chapter is to explore the multifaceted role of English in the complex and dynamic multilingual surrounding of Northern Norway. Instead of comparing sociolinguistic categories or domains, I will scrutinize three cases of multilingual encounters and try to sketch a multiplicity of dynamic connections within and across these. This includes drawing connections among wildly diverse settings which are typically treated as belonging to rather distinct parts of the sociolinguistic system (e.g., the reclamation of minoritized languages and the impact of international English on a national language such as Norwegian). My approach is inspired by nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004) and rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 2013 (1980)). A "rhizome" is, in biology, a root network. It has multiple connections and extends in all directions. One of the most important features of a rhizome is that, unlike a tree, its roots do not come together in one central trunk, which dominates the whole system. Any part of a rhizome can be in the middle and connected to any other part. This choice of approach arises also from my own engagement as a researcher with sociolinguistic relations and practices in different social contexts in Northern Norway. One experience I have made is that, though English has never been the main focus of my research, it appears constantly in empirical data. Each of the three cases I analyze in this chapter involves English and other languages. I view these as parts of a vast, rhizomatic network. Each can be viewed as a central point of such a network, or a nexus of practice, in Scollon and Scollon's (2004) terms. Nexus analysis is a discourse analytic approach that focuses on social action and investigates how various wider and closer contexts come together to shape that particular action.

This chapter is structured as follows: to map the sociolinguistic background, I begin with a brief sketch of linguistic diversity and the position of English in Norway, followed by an overview of the sociolinguistic setting in Northern Norway. Then, I explain the rhizomatic approach and present analyses of the three cases: tourists and locals as addressees of the linguistic landscape in the city of Tromsø; linguistic diversity in the workplace; and the encounter of Sámi, English, and Norwegian in research and higher education at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (*Sámi allaskuvla*). I conclude the chapter by exploring connections across the separate cases.

## Linguistic diversity and English in Norway

Recent publications on linguistic diversity in Norway draw a multifaceted picture with a multitude of languages and varieties, speakers and groups of speakers, contexts of use, policies, and developments on a societal macro level

with an impact on linguistic relations and practices (Bull and Lindgren 2009; Mæhlum 2020; Svendsen 2021). Globalization, transnational migration, and mobility within Norway are among these developments, but also national and regional history, ethnic revival, and the reclamation of minoritized languages.

Norway's new Language Act (*Lov om Språk*, in force since January 2022) provides an overview of all languages with some kind of official status (Ministry of Culture and Equality 2021, §§4–8):

- Norwegian is defined as the primary national language. The two written varieties, Bokmål and Nynorsk, are provided equal standing as written languages.
- Sámi languages are indigenous languages of Norway and of equal value to Norwegian. Sámi and Norwegian have equal standing within the Sámi administrative area according to the Sámi Act (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 1989).
- Kven, Romani, and Romanes are national minority languages and are granted protection according to part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992).
- Norwegian sign language is acknowledged as the national sign language.
- Swedish and Danish are mutually intelligible with Norwegian. Everybody is provided the right to use these languages in contact with public authorities. These may respond in Norwegian.

In addition, Norwegian has a multitude of dialects, which are used actively in everyday life. Also, numerous transnational languages are in everyday use. As Norwegian authorities do not register languages in population statistics, there are no exact numbers of languages and speakers. Just like all transnational languages, English is not mentioned in the Language Act. English has a strong position in Norway's education system, which supports bilingual competence in Norwegian and English (e.g., Bull and Swan 2009; Svendsen 2021; see also Chapter 7). It has also been argued that English is becoming less "foreign" in countries like Norway because it is not only learned for purposes of international mobility or reading English texts but has multiple internal functions in the country (Phillipson 2007). Important arenas for the use of English are media, work and economy, and academia (Bull and Swan 2009; Mæhlum 2020; Simonsen 2004; Språkrådet and TNS Gallup 2015). Typical approaches to the role of English in Norwegian society and Norwegian language focus on English loanwords in Norwegian and the increasing use of English in certain domains (e.g., Bull and Swan 2009; Mæhlum 2006, 2020; Simonsen 2004). Such approaches highlight connections between English and relations of power, status, and prestige within certain domains of language use (Bull and Swan 2009, 236–237).

## The sociolinguistic setting in Northern Norway

When considering the position of English in the wider sociolinguistic landscape of Northern Norway, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the region's historical diversity and its shifting and developing sociolinguistic relations. Northern Scandinavia (the North Calotte region) and many of its inhabitants have been multilingual for centuries (Bull and Lindgren 2009; Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010). The region is part of Sápmi, the land of the Sámi (also spelled Saami or Sami in English), which covers central and northern parts of Sweden, Norway, and Finland as well as the Russian Cola-Peninsula. Most Sámi-speakers in Norway speak North Sámi, but Lule and South Sámi are also used in public contexts. While the Sámi are officially acknowledged as indigenous people of Norway, the Kven have the status of a national minority. Centuries ago, the ancestors of today's Kven people migrated from areas which today belong to Northern Finland and Sweden and settled along the North Norwegian coast. The Kven language is still relatively close to Finnish, especially northern Finnish dialects. However, both Kven and Finnish have developed independently over time. Since both Sámi and Kven are Finno-Ugric languages, when it comes to grammar and vocabulary, they are quite different from the Norwegian majority language as well as English.

Some communities are historically trilingual. Both Sámi and Kven were subject to national assimilation policies, which lasted from the 1860s until about 1960. One outcome of such policies was that using Sámi or Kven became socially stigmatized (Eidheim 1969). As a result, many Sámi and Kven parents ceased to speak their heritage languages with their children (Lane 2010), which led to language shift in favor of Norwegian in many communities (for an overview, see Huss and Lindgren 2010; Pietikäinen et al. 2010). Activism and political developments in the 1970s and 1980s led to the acknowledgment of the Sámi as indigenous people, the Sámi Act (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 1989), the foundation of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in 1989 and of the Sámi parliament in 1992, and the acknowledgment of Kven as a national minority language in 2005. There are also strong, ongoing efforts to revitalize and strengthen the Sámi languages and some efforts to revitalize Kven. However, due to historical assimilation policies, many people with Sámi or Kven background do not speak Sámi or Kven.

The situation of the region's historical minority languages (i.e., Sámi languages and Kven in Northern Norway) has first and foremost been studied and described in their relation to the respective majority groups and majority languages (i.e., Norwegian in Norway). However, linguistic diversity in the region is undergoing major changes due to migration and transnational mobility. While historically people used to migrate from the northern periphery, the region has become increasingly attractive for work migrants, students, refugees,

tourists, and others from other parts of Norway, Europe and the world. Production industries in rural communities are, in particular, increasingly dependent on migrant labor. As a consequence, Northern Norway's population is linguistically more diverse than it was just a few decades ago, and speakers of the region's historical minority languages will not only encounter speakers of the national majority language but also of various transnational minority languages. There is no doubt that the presence of English (as a medium of communication or other type of semiotic resource) also plays a central role in this development. Several recent studies show that English is present in multiple arenas of everyday public and private life and in various ways part of multilingual practices, in the linguistic landscape (Johansen and Bull 2012; Pietikäinen et al. 2011), education (Sollid 2019), work and economy (Hiss 2018; Hiss and Loppacher 2021), research and higher education (Johansen and Bull 2012; Thingnes 2020b) and family life (Johnsen 2022). These arenas involve agents in multiple different roles such as tourists, locals, migrant workers, teachers, pupils, parents, children, and researchers. Stressing the complexity of such changing language practices, Pietikäinen (2015, 206) describes the North Calotte as a "dynamic space for multilingual contestation and creativity" and a crucial space for understanding multilingual complexities. With a view to the Sámi indigenous languages, she stresses that discourses of language endangerment, commodification (turning language, culture, nature or other things into commodities with economic value), local history and globalization intertwine in a rhizomatic way.

## A rhizomatic approach

Against this background, I will now discuss three example cases from contemporary Northern Norway: language choices in the semiotic landscape of the city center of Tromsø; the social evaluation of linguistic diversity in regional workplaces; and language choices in a Sámi academic environment. All involve different genres of how linguistic and other semiotic resources are used to accomplish communicative and social actions, different agents, audiences, and sociolinguistic relations. Following Scollon and Scollon (2004), each of these can be viewed as a nexus of practice, a "point at which historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas and objects come together to enable some action which in itself alters the historical trajectories in some way" (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 159). Inspired by Pietikäinen (2015), I also explore rhizomatic connections across the separate cases.

Any nexus of practice can be viewed as part of a wider rhizomatic network, as such "trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas and objects" may come together at other points and intersect with others in a wider, multifaceted, changing, and dynamic sociolinguistic landscape. As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari (2013 [1980]) borrowed the term *rhizome*

from biology, where it describes a root network, typical of plants such as grass, potatoes, or ginger. For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomatic thinking is essentially different from using trees as models of explanation (widely used in linguistics), where systems are governed by one central point and hierarchical relations. A rhizome, instead, has multiple connections and extends in all directions. There is no central point that dominates the rest. Any part of a rhizome can be in the middle and connected to any other part. In turn, any part of the rhizome is shaped by the multiplicity of its connections. This also means that any of the three cases can be viewed as the middle of such a wider network and, at the same time, as small instances of a much larger, highly complex, and continuously developing landscape of sociolinguistic relations, agents, places, actions, and practices. With the three cases as focal points of this study, the task is to map multiple connections across the wider landscape. A rhizomatic approach includes, in Honan's (2007, 536) words, the " 'teasing' apart of various discursive threads" within the example cases and, at the same time, treating all cases as "particular assemblages of meaning that inform others and each other, that do not stand alone (do not stand in the immovable sense at all), and only make sense when read within and against each other." One must also expect to find linkages that bring quite contradictory discourses together (Honan 2007, 536–537).

The three cases were selected because they represent contexts which have been identified earlier as important arenas for using English: tourism, working life, and academia. All three cases also involve historical and transnational diversity, and they exhibit contrasts in how the use of English is contextualized and contributes to the construction of sociolinguistic relations.

## Case 1: Tourists, locals, and the linguistic landscape

The first case is based on observations of the semiotic landscape in public spaces in the city center of Tromsø, the region's largest city. Northern lights, the midnight sun, the spectacular landscape, nature experiences, the experience of the Arctic, and encounters with Sámi culture attract thousands of visitors from all over the world. Tourists arrive on cruise ships, by plane, or travel individually by car or camping car. The city of Tromsø with its harbor, airport, hotels, and attractions such as the Arctic Cathedral is an important hub for all kinds of tourists visiting the region. However, the streets, shops, and restaurants are not only used by tourists but also by the local population. Tromsø has inhabitants from more than a hundred different countries as well as many inhabitants with Sámi background. The city center is a highly multilingual space with various multilingual encounters, in spoken interaction and in the semiotic landscape.

As part of an ongoing research project, my colleagues and I have conducted research walks through the city of Tromsø at different points of time to document and discuss the representation of linguistic diversity in the dynamically changing

linguistic landscape. Briefly summarized, our observations reveal that both Norwegian and English are very visible. Sámi text is visible on some official signs and on numerous stickers, posters, and notices, which were likely put up by language activists or other groups or individuals. Other non-linguistic, often stereotypical, symbols of Sámi culture, such as traditional costumes, reindeer, and pieces of Sámi handicraft are also found in the exhibition windows of tourist shops. Pieces of text in other languages are found randomly.

Here, I focus on observations of the semiotic landscape in the surroundings of two shops and one restaurant, situated less than 50 meters from each other. Figure 9.1 shows the exhibition window of a tourist shop. Besides outdoor jackets, the window contains a mounted brown bear. The next window (not shown in picture) presents shoes and blankets and a mounted wolf. The notice on top of the rack states "Women's softshell jacket, before: 799.-, now: 649.-", in English only.

Figure 9.2 shows the entrance door of the same shop and part of the outer wall. Two small notices are taped to the door: one informing about opening hours, in English only, and one advertising for excursions which can be booked in the shop. The heading is "Your adventure starts here." Below this heading is a list of different excursions: "northern lights, whale watching, dog sledding,

**FIGURE 9.1** Exhibition window of the tourist shop.

**FIGURE 9.2** Entrance door of the tourist shop.

reindeer sledding, snowmobile adventure, whale watching [sic].” The text at the bottom of the sign contains contact information, and there is a stylized reindeer head with large antlers in the lower left corner. The background picture shows a tourist group under the Northern Lights, and, below, two diving orca whales. This notice, as well, is written in English only.

The mounted animals in the exhibition windows as well as the outdoor clothing on sale express connections between the products and activities offered by the shop. This selection of objects in the exhibition window also constructs the region as an exotic and adventurous place.

The representation of Sámi culture is also included in this practice. Reindeer herding is part of the traditional livelihood of (parts of) the Sámi population and one of the most stereotypical symbols of Sámi culture. Reindeer sledding is a typical way of providing experiences of stereotypical Sámi culture to tourists. The stylized reindeer head refers to Sámi culture in a similar way. Inside the shop, one can also find Sámi souvenirs besides depictions of trolls and Vikings. Here, and at most other sites in the city center, Sámi languages are not used in tourism contexts. Thus, we see, on the one hand, instances of the commodification of Sámi culture as a product advertised to tourists. On the other hand, the absence of Sámi language (while other Sámi symbols are present)

**FIGURE 9.3** Advertisement outside the supermarket.

can be seen as a consequence of historical assimilation policies. In the wider linguistic landscape, we observe that this status quo is contested by language activists through placing signs and stickers in Sámi in public spaces.

The sense of place constructed here clearly addresses tourists and differs considerably from how Northern Norway as a place is experienced by its inhabitants. For example, wolves and brown bears are, in fact, a rare sight, even though they can be spotted in remote wilderness areas. The use of English and Norwegian reinforces the contrast between tourists and locals as addressees. The large sign on the outer wall (Figure 9.2) states, in Norwegian only, *parkering forbudt* 'parking prohibited.' The text in smaller letters below states (in Norwegian) that owners will be held economically responsible for the towing away of cars. The supermarket on the opposite side of the street, shown in Figure 9.3, has *berlinerboller* 'doughnuts' and *knekkebrød* 'crispbread' on special offer, but the offer is only advertised in Norwegian. This distribution of text in English and in Norwegian suggests that these signs address two different audiences: tourists as customers of the tourist shop and locals as car owners and customers buying food in the supermarket. English and Norwegian, thus, seem to have very different functions and symbolically keep apart different groups of people. The linguistic practice we observe here can thus be described as diglossic: English

**FIGURE 9.4** Bulletin board in the restaurant window.

and Norwegian, though used side by side, serve to address and construct two different groups of language users.

The clear differentiation between tourists addressed in English and locals addressed in Norwegian gets blurred, however, in the exhibition window of the restaurant on the same side of the street as the supermarket. Featured in Figure 9.4, the restaurant emphasizes its focus on high-quality regional products, and both locals and visitors come to eat here. The text, written with movable letters on a black bulletin board, is (mainly) in English. It does not provide information about prices or offers, but the language usage is playful and creative and centered around one of the products used in the restaurant, fish. The heading contains the name of the restaurant, *Mathallen* 'food hall' and what it offers, *delikatesser* 'gourmet food,' in Norwegian. The text below consists of four separate phrases in different font sizes. The first, "fish stories told here … some true!!!" plays with the English metaphor *fish-story*, which refers to an extravagant or incredible story. This metaphor does not exist in Norwegian. Understanding the double meaning expressed here requires a certain knowledge of English. "Fifty shades of skrei" is an analogy to the book/film title *Fifty Shades of Grey*, based on the phonological similarity of *grey* and *skrei*. The Norwegian word *skrei* denotes cod denotes cod from the Barents Sea which is caught during the winter season in the spawning grounds along the North Norwegian coast. Skrei has played a very

important role for North Norwegian economy, livelihood, and coastal culture for centuries, and it is known as a very delicious fish. This cultural and economic importance is also implied in "In cod we trust." Here, knowledge of Norwegian language and regional culture is required to fully understand the puns. Though still in English, a sense of localness is constructed in a rather different way than in the tourist shop.

While part of the linguistic landscape can be described as diglossic practices, addressing one group in Norwegian and another group in English, only a few meters away, there is a playful and creative practice, which blurs linguistic and group boundaries. Thus, there is a non-univocal impression of the function of English in the linguistic landscape. Diglossic practices seem to exist side by side with practices that construct languages and language users in a both/and rather than either/or manner. The use of English in this case also connects with different constructions of local belonging, the commodification of indigenous culture, assimilation history, and language reclamation.

## Case 2: Linguistic diversity at work

The second case is based on a study on workplace multilingualism in a Northern context.[1] Many workplaces are multilingual arenas because of work migration and international business relations (see, for example, Chapter 8). In addition, the historical minority languages, Sámi and Kven, play a role in regional work and economy. The data for this case are drawn from a telephone survey where we conducted short telephone interviews with representatives from 140 companies in the region. The survey provided quantifiable responses and interview recordings for qualitative analysis. As we called them on the phone, most of the respondents were staff working in the companies' offices, that is, leaders and administrators. One aim of the study was to map the use of and sociolinguistic relations between Norwegian, historical, and transnational minority languages and English in regional working life. Most respondents (89 percent) reported knowledge of English. According to their reports, Norwegian was used most often at work, followed by English, which was used considerably more often than any other language. Of the informants in the study, 4 percent described English as their main working language; 41 percent reported that they used English in some work situations, while Norwegian and, in a few cases, Sámi were the main working languages. Internal communication with migrant employees and communication with customers, contractors, delivery men, and tourists and, in some cases, reading documents in English, were reported as relevant contexts for using English.

Though Norwegian appears to be the preferred choice for most respondents (most of whom were Norwegians with local or regional roots), it is clear from the quantitative data that English has a peculiar status in North Norwegian

workplaces, compared to all other languages. However, quantity alone does not say much about sociolinguistic functions and status, or how the use of English is viewed in relation to other language practices. Here, the recorded interviews reveal a multifaceted picture.

All interviews were carried out in Norwegian. For practical reasons, I present English translations of the extracts. Extract 1 is from an interview with an administrator (here called Ingunn, a pseudonym) working in a research and development company. More than half of the staff in Ingunn's company (highly educated scientists and engineers) had an international background. Ingunn reported that English was used as a common working language in most work processes. As most of the company's customers were Norwegian, external communication mainly took place in this language. During the interview, Ingunn stressed the importance of speaking English to ensure equal integration of all employees.

Extract 1

*Interviewer:* Which different languages are used internally in the workplace? I mean, among the individual employees?

*Ingunn:* In principle, that's English. So that everybody can understand. So, all meetings, all information for everybody is in English. And they have as a requirement that one must be proficient in English. But if we have, for example, two from Nigeria. Or, we now have two from South Africa. So, they can likely also, both job-related and privately, speak Afrikaans or their language. Spanish if they are from Latin America, or Portuguese. But eh work-related in general, it's supposed to be English.

[…]

*Ingunn:* And at lunch, too. I mean, if there are only Norwegians sitting around the table and speaking Norwegian. But as soon as there comes a eh foreigner, (correcting herself) someone we know doesn't speak Norwegian, then also the lunch talk shifts over to English so that everybody will feel included. To be able to take part in the conversation.

The picture Ingunn draws of the multilingual practices in her workplace is unproblematic and positive. Inclusion and mutual understanding are the main motives in her account. English as the main working language seems to ensure equal participation. It does not only provide a shared medium of communication; other languages such as Afrikaans, Spanish, and Portuguese are also given space in the informant's account (by explicitly mentioning languages and speakers rather than for example, "other languages" and "the others") and are put on the same level as Norwegian. Moreover, in less formal settings, Ingunn stresses

the importance of speaking English for including colleagues who do not speak Norwegian. By talking about shifting between Norwegian and English during lunch, she shows that she is aware of the impact of language choices on the interaction order. Thus, choosing English as a means of inclusion is ascribed more than just a symbolic value.

The dataset, however, also contains examples where speaking English at work is presented as a common and necessary, though undesired, practice. Norwegian is considered the norm whereas English is used with those employees who do not speak Norwegian, typically with employees at the lower end of organizational hierarchies in production workplaces. As Angouri and Miglbauer (2014) have pointed out, such practices may mark the otherness of migrant employees; Dorte Lønsmann in Chapter 8 of this volume presents additional problems with the use of English in the Nordic workplace.

Kristian (also a pseudonym; Extract 2) is the local manager of a salmon processing facility, which employed workers from Norway, Poland, Lithuania, Afghanistan, and Somalia. In comparison to Ingunn, he also stressed the importance of English to enable a mutual flow of information. In his case, however, English language practices and requirements involve clearly hierarchical relations. In Extract 2, Kristian speaks about basic requirements of competence in English as a minimal solution.

Extract 2

*Interviewer:* How is it when you hire new employees? What kind of language competence do you expect from them?

*Kristian:* Before, we did not pose any requirements other than that they should understand us in at least English. But there is a little difference between the two things. [...] Before, it was like that, that if I said something in English they were supposed to understand what I said. Now we want them to be able to respond in understandable English. That's an essential difference. Because many understand English. But they cannot express themselves back on the same level. We must begin to take that into account.

Now we want them to be able to respond in understandable English. That's an essential difference. Because many understand English. But they cannot express themselves back on the same level. We must begin to take that into account.

Kristian differentiates between understanding English and expressing oneself in English. What he describes is the minimum requirement for enabling a somewhat effective flow of communication. For such minimal solutions, English, though very rudimentary, seems to be the key. Other alternatives such as Norwegian or the workers' own languages are not mentioned. The relationship between the informant and the employees in this case is a clear

top-down hierarchy, where the manager can decide about language requirements and evaluate employees according to these (which is expressed in the example). In comparison to Ingunn's account, inclusion is not mentioned as a primary goal.

In Extract 3, Ove (a pseudonym) is concerned with the integration of migrant workers. When asked about workplace language policies, he responds:

Extract 3

*Ove:* No, not more than that we, um, try to make our employees who don't speak Norwegian understand the value of, um, if you want to get, um, well integrated in Norwegian society, you have to learn Norwegian. Because speaking Norwegian is part of the Norwegian culture. They would find Norwegian friends and get integrated in a good way.

Ove stresses the importance of Norwegian as key to integration in Norwegian society. His concern is making his employees speak Norwegian rather than English at work. In comparison to both Kristian's and Ingunn's accounts, Ove foregrounds Norwegian society outside the workplace rather than the effective flow of communication at work or social relations in the workplace as the main reason for his argument. This account builds on an ideology of Norwegian society as linguistically homogeneous. Such an ideology contrasts with the linguistic reality of a society which has been linguistically diverse throughout its history (see Chapter 3), but it is shared by many of its members. Ideologies of contemporary Norwegian society as homogenous reproduce the same mindset which historically led to assimilation policies against the Sámi and Kven people.

The survey also shows that Sámi and, to a more limited extent, Kven are in use in some workplaces. However, in many cases the use of historical minority languages depends on individual speakers and often takes place at the intersection between professional and private relations (see Hiss 2019; Hiss and Loppacher 2021).

Extract 4

*Interviewer:* Does eh Sámi or Kven or Finnish language play any role for your work?

*Kåre:* No, well, eh it doesn't do anything for our work. It doesn't. But of course, they need to know Norwegian or English. I mean we don't manage to communicate in Kven or Sámi. Whatever that would be. So, it doesn't matter if they have that as a mother tongue but can speak another language. That's fine.

In Extract 3, Kåre (a pseudonym) is, like most informants, a speaker of the Norwegian majority language and does not speak Sámi or Kven. In his account, he expresses the view that the historical minority languages have little relevance for workplace communication. The two languages he considers relevant are Norwegian and English. Kåre constructs a clear contrast between the functions of Sámi and Kven on the one hand, and Norwegian and English on the other. As shown in Hiss (2019), Kåre is one of many respondents who report that neither Sámi nor Kven are used in their companies. Like many others, he also expresses a sense of respect for those who do speak these languages. A close analysis of respondents' reactions to the survey question about the use of Sámi or Kven (displayed in Extract 4) suggests that respondents feel responsible, wish to evade responsibility, or perceive a need for accounting for their responses because the topic is ideologically loaded and involves more general questions of responsibility for loss and preservation of historical minority languages in the region. This intertwines with interactional and professional responsibilities surfacing in the interview setting (Hiss 2019). While Norwegian and English are used much more than Sámi or Kven at work, this points to a relatively widespread underlying awareness of historical diversity. This way of explicitly or implicitly expressing responsibility with respect to historical minority languages differs from the ways in which informants such as Ove and Kristian contextualize the use of English. English appears as a necessary tool, but there is no need to express respect or responsibility for it.

To sum up, the survey data and the interview extracts discussed here reveal a multifaceted picture of English at work. The ideas and discourses which come together here partly compete with each other. English is framed as key to successful inclusion of all employees and equal participation. At the same time, it occurs as a necessary but undesired solution for ensuring a basic flow of communication. While informants highlight the importance of English for workplace communication (in contrast to Sámi and Kven in most cases), it is also subject to language ideologies of national homogeneity that prefer Norwegian.

## Case 3: English, national, and indigenous languages in research and higher education

Case 3 describes language choices in the academic environment at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (*Sámi allaskuvla*), which aims to use Sámi as the main working language. This case is based on a study by Thingnes (2020a, b). Educational institutions, including kindergartens, schools, and higher education institutions, are allotted key functions in current language political strategies for safeguarding and strengthening the use and sociolinguistic status of Sámi (Sámediggi 2018).

Henriksen (2005) discusses the use of Sámi, Norwegian, and English in research publications from a philosophy of science point of view. In the face of experiences of Norwegian losing ground in the domain of academic publication (in favor of English), and Sámi being under pressure in most domains of everyday life, Henriksen stresses that different languages (Sámi, national languages, and English) fulfill different purposes to reach different audiences in academic communication. Henriksen builds her argument on researchers' responsibilities to communicate results to different audiences and, in particular, to share knowledge with their own communities. She concludes that "these challenges can only be met by differentiating the use of academic language(s), and by recognizing the importance of using indigenous/minority languages for academic purposes" (Henriksen 2005, 133).

In her PhD project, Thingnes (2020a) studied the use of Nynorsk and Sámi and surrounding language policies in Norwegian institutions of higher education. In her analysis of the language policies and practices at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Govdageaidnu/Kautokeino, she describes an institutional language policy that aims at making Sámi the main language for all activities and a vision that views the institution as deeply rooted in the Sámi indigenous community and indigenous knowledge, values, and mindset and, at the same time, on par with other institutions in international academia (Thingnes 2020b, 153–154). For her analysis, Thingnes studied policy documents, conducted interviews with staff and students, and carried out a quantitative review of the staff's academic publications. Her findings show that the linguistic practices among the staff are largely in line with Henriksen's (2005) call for differentiating the use of academic languages: "[…] different languages are used for different purposes. This is especially true for Norwegian and English, languages used almost exclusively for external communication. Internal communication, on the other hand, is in Sámi" (Thingnes 2020b, 168). Thingnes (2020b, 166) stresses that English is the most frequently used language for academic publishing, also in the case of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. At the same time, she shows that rather than constituting a threat to Sámi, English has a multifaceted role. On the one hand, she shows that staff "experience the same pressure to use English as other researchers in Norway do" (Thingnes 2020b, 167), for example, in international journals and research proposals. On the other hand, English is highlighted as a pivotal tool for indigenous collaboration, "connected to a common Indigenous discourse where English is used to communicate" (Thingnes 2020b, 168). As such, her informants experience English as less threatening to the use of Sámi compared to Norwegian. What Thingnes describes here nuances the picture of English as "bulldozer language" or "Public Enemy No. 1" with respect to global linguistic diversity (e.g., Heller and Duchêne 2007, 5) and underpins its importance for Sámi and other indigenous communities in a globalized world. In summary, the use and choice of English in this case is

formed by trajectories of discourses such as assimilation history and language reclamation, international academic communication, local community relations, and global relations with other indigenous communities.

## Comparing the case studies

Until this point, I have discussed each single case separately and shown how a variety of discourses, relations, practices, people, and ideas come together in each of them. As such, each case can be understood as a nexus of practice. As a final step in this chapter, I now examine and discuss connections between and across the different cases as parts of a greater sociolinguistic landscape. Taking a rhizomatic perspective, I presume that each case as a particular assemblage of meaning informs – and is informed by – others and thereby does not stand alone, that is, that these "only make sense when read within and against each other" (Honan 2007, 536).

Comparing the three cases to each other, one can see commonalities as well as discourses that surface in particular ways in each of the cases. Despite all differences, the three cases display commonalities with respect to the position of English, which cannot be described in terms of simple linear relations or hierarchies.

In the case of the linguistic landscape in the city of Tromsø, we see a seemingly clear diglossic distribution of Norwegian and English in some of the signs in the surroundings of the two shops, which, again, gets blurred when we look at the way English and Norwegian are intertwined in the exhibition window of the restaurant. In the case of the workplaces (case 2), English appears, on the one hand, as key to collaboration and inclusion and, on the other hand, as a minimal and rather undesired solution, while Norwegian is considered key to social integration. In the case of Sámi academia, discourses of English being a threat to linguistic diversity encounter a reality in which English appears as less threatening than Norwegian (Thingnes 2020b) and plays a crucial role in academic exchanges between indigenous communities. In each of the cases, we recognize a multiplicity of connections surrounding the use of English, and, as we have seen, some seem quite contradictory. Taking the three cases together, the relations between English and other languages in Northern Norway appear as rather disorderly and dynamic – which supports the view that orderly multilingualism is a myth (Wee 2022). Hierarchies – placing English toward either the top or the bottom – seem to exist, but they are limited to particular contexts. This fits with the observation by Pietikäinen et al. (2011, 295) of nested linguistic hierarchies in the linguistic landscape of the North Calotte. Such a non-univocal picture of the position of English in different sociolinguistic contexts is also revealed in other Nordic studies. For example, Hult (2012, 251) analyzes the localization of English as a global language in Swedish education policy and

describes a discursive space where the negotiation of different views about the status of English plays out. Lønsmann (2015) shows how language ideologies of English as providing access to international business and Danish as a national language compete in a Danish company. Beiler (2023) identifies a gap between anglo-normative policies and a language regime that prioritizes Norwegian in language education, which shapes challenges for immigrant students.

Across the three cases discussed in this chapter and beyond, we see a widely diverse range of people, places, discourses, ideas, and objects, which come together at various points and affect the choice, use, and metalinguistic contextualization and evaluation of English and other languages. As noted, some of these may be in conflict with each other, which opens spaces for negotiation and dynamic developments. It is this multitude of circulating discourses – not only increased linguistic diversity – which makes sociolinguistic relations more complex. It is clear from the cases that English has a role in the complex sociolinguistic landscape of Northern Norway. This role needs to be described in terms of complexity and dynamic developments rather than orderly relations and linear hierarchies.

## Note

1 Additional findings are published in Hiss (2019) and Hiss and Loppacher (2021).

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# 10

# METAPRAGMATICS OF "BAD" ENGLISH IN FINNISH SOCIAL MEDIA

*Samu Kytölä*

## Introduction

As in the other Nordic countries, the growing importance of English and its spread to several domains of life in the past few decades have characterized the sociolinguistic situation of Finland. As the chapters in the first part of this volume outline, the Nordic countries have relatively similar histories with respect to the growth and development of English. Although studies over time may show slight differences in the knowledge and use of English in favor of the other four Nordic countries (see Chapter 1), it appears a relatively safe prediction that, by most standards and measures, Finland at large will have caught up completely in one or two generations.

Moreover, we know that most Finnish people born in the mid-1950s or later have studied English at school (Leppänen et al. 2011), whereas by far most Finnish people born in the 1980s or later have grown up saturated by various English-language media. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was less choice of media to "consume," and the generational experiences may have been relatively uniform and homogeneous. However, in the 21st century, with the growth of the internet and the emergence of mobile data connections and smartphones, along with their native applications and platforms, mediascapes have become fragmented, with more specific communicative and discoursal niches available to users.

It is relatively likely that English will continue to play a major role in the sociolinguistic mediascapes of Nordic populations for the foreseeable future, but also counterproductive forces may be at play, particularly with the growing role of machine translation that can make material originally

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produced in several languages more readily available to one's preferred language(s). Such target languages of automated translation (currently, if not permanently, dominated by tech-giant Google) may not be English; instead, material in various languages *including English* may be transmitted into personal, individually tailored user experiences in their preferred first or second languages. Our world will soon have several billion digital device users (i.e., digital discourse consumers and producers) for whom English is not the language of preference.

This overview forms a general backdrop to the present chapter. In line with the other Nordic countries, English in Finland has permeated domains such as business, education, popular culture, or leisure-time activities. However, English has also mixed and alternated with Finnish in such a way as to increase the collective competence in English and create spaces for ways of using English as a source of collective humor and mockery. To illustrate an example of this development, the present chapter conceptualizes and analyzes ways in which particular usages of English appear as sources of humor and jokes in digital social media. In considering two Finland-based football discussion forums, Futisforum and Futisforum2,[1] this chapter has as its main foci: 1) uses of English in digital discourse contexts; 2) metapragmatic (metalinguistic) discussions and commentaries about such uses of English; 3) deliberate adaptations and appropriations of non-standard (or, "bad") English for purposes of humor and mockery; and 4) the position of such English(es) in a broader multilingual and multimodal constellation of semiotic communicative resources in digital media. I suggest that this phenomenon of "deliberately bad" English – as produced by Finland-based participants in the online context – takes place in the intersection of three standpoints:

1. The established society-level (national) collective knowledge of English (Leppänen et al. 2011; Leppänen and Nikula 2007) and the grammaticality and nuances of English
2. Metapragmatics (overt and covert discourse about types or instances of language use)
3. Online diversity and digital cultural flows, particularly memes and their connections to humor and – often – mockery

In the sections that follow, I first explain several relevant concepts in the larger frame of multilingualism, followed by a discussion of a transnational, Nordic overview of relevant studies in linguistic diversity and English. After that, I introduce the concepts *metapragmatic reflexivity* and *metalinguistic commentary*, moving on to an analysis of a selection of Finland-based case studies, focusing on communities and contexts where football (US "soccer") is the main topic or purpose of the interactions.

## Multilingualism (with English): From lexical Anglicisms to polylingual languaging

A traditional long-standing approach and research paradigm on English in Finland has been the "anglicism" paradigm (Leppänen and Nikula 2007; cf. Androutsopoulos 2013; Kytölä 2013, 117–118). Its main empirical focus has been the introduction of lexical resources, mostly single words of English origin in Finnish language use and, over time, potentially established in the Finnish language system. An applied extension of this descriptively oriented line has been the normative, prescriptive discussions – often outside of academia – on the acceptability of such developments (see Chapter 6). The descriptive part of the anglicism approach is relatively compatible with the sophisticated code-switching and loanword frameworks dominant in the 1990s and early 2000s, a prime example being Auer's (1999) dynamic typology of code-switching, language mixing, and fused lects, which suggests a continuum of various types of multilingual language use rather than categorization into fixed types.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, several overlapping, convergent lines of research emerged that suggested a critique, or radical rejection, of the long-established code-switching paradigm and its more sophisticated subsequent offshoots in sociolinguistics. Blommaert (2010) and Jørgensen (2008) among other contemporaries, argued for a reoriented focus on the use of linguistic resources rather than full linguistic varieties. Based in Copenhagen, Jørgensen (2008) and his colleagues (see e.g., Jørgensen et al. 2011) adopted *languaging* as a verb (most often used in the *-ing* participle form), demonstrating ways in which Copenhagen youth, in particular, draw on various linguistic resources as forms of social action. Based on their interactional data, supported by ethnographic studies among Copenhagen metropolitan youth, they suggest "polylingual languaging" as an alternative model to the code-switching paradigm (see Androutsopoulos 2014; Kytölä 2013, 85–91). The examples presented in this chapter illustrate sociolinguistic phenomena where polylingual languaging in a more all-encompassing way can indeed be more appropriate than an anglicisms approach, which would be mainly restricted to the level of lexical borrowings. Further, they raise the issue of a transition in ownership: speakers of Nordic languages have by now adopted and appropriated English in their various ways (see Chapter 5 for examples), rather than just English permeating or intruding on the space of smaller national languages.

Finally, in the larger frame of redefining multilingualism in the 21st century, the concept of *linguistic repertoire* is useful. Originally coined by Gumperz as "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction" and "all the accepted ways of formulating messages" (1964, 137–138), scholars like Busch (2012) have revisited and redefined the concept in the 2010s. Busch (2012) suggests that, in addition to being

based in interaction and tight-knit speaker communities, repertoires can be a larger productive concept encompassing the cognitive and emotional levels, biographies, and potentialities, including traces of hegemonic discourses as well as collective and individual memories (see also Blommaert and Backus 2011).

## Digital linguistic diversity

Online sociolinguistic diversity has increased in the last two decades, as 1) there is more long-term as well as temporary mobility of people between geographical locations; 2) languages and varieties other than English have rapidly gained ground in online settings; 3) the internet has transformed from its Web 1.0 beginnings of mainly edited website content with few means for interaction to a more hybrid space with platforms and affordances for anyone to produce textual and multimodal content; 4) availability and usefulness of machine translation has increased. These are but a few key developments. A multilingual digital environment or discourse event by no means presupposes any major role for English, or any English at all. In other words, even when the actual discourse events and digital discussions occur on any platform that originated typically in the IT industry in Silicon Valley and was first introduced in the USA, such a platform can be used in a fully localized version, without any English at all (see, e.g., Mc Laughlin 2014).

One approach to this increased online diversity has been *digital superdiversity*, an extension of the broader sociolinguistics of superdiversity. While the study of multilingualism (e.g., code-switching and languaging) online had established itself as a blossoming field of research before (see, e.g., Androutsopoulos 2013, 2014; Kytölä 2016; Kytölä and Androutsopoulos 2012; Lee and Barton 2013; Leppänen et al. 2013), the addition of superdiversity to the constellation highlights contemporary migration patterns and their co-occurrence with the emergence of new digital communication cultures and practices. The increase in sociolinguistic diversity online can potentially lead to more misunderstanding or conflict (e.g., Kytölä 2012, 2013, 163, 2017, 2018); simultaneously, there is more use of non-standard varieties and linguistic features online than most people were used to seeing in any written form before. From the point of view of English, this can manifest in various new combinations and mixes, including dialectal uses, variants, and choices typical of informal typed (rather than spoken) language; non-native usages; non-proficient usages; wholly or partly machine translations; possibly flawed or mistyped excerpts in English, and so on. With this in mind, the analyses in this chapter focus on deliberately non-standard English framed as "bad" or "funny" and mocked or ridiculed by (allegedly) Finnish users.

## Conceptualizing "bad" and "deliberately bad" English

The conceptualization of "bad" English in Nordic sociolinguistics has most recently and thoroughly been discussed in Peterson (2020 [2019]). Self-evidently,

any sociolinguistic discussion of "bad" English is careful to distance itself from the adjective in question by framing it in single or double quotation marks or engaging in lengthy discussions that "bad" is an emic, "lay" term for certain varieties or single variants, not a descriptive, social scientific term for any real-world linguistic phenomenon. Yet, as Peterson (2020 [2019]) illustrates, such a phenomenon as "bad" English clearly exists in the real world, in people's cognition and mindsets, speech, writings, and multimodal semantic meaning making instances and practices – and as I will add here, in *metapragmatic discourse about it*.

Moreover, "bad" English is a relevant target of research both theoretically and empirically. As Peterson (2020 [2019], xix–xx) notes, using the term in academic publications "might at first glance seem to confirm the prejudices people have about English rather than to address them." In the scope of her monograph, Peterson locates the notions of "bad English" on several axes, such as the historical concentric model of World Englishes, the history of the standardization of English, class and varieties of English in the UK and the USA, matters of ethnicity and race, and finally, issues of identity and socialization as well as covert prestige attached to different non-standard varieties. "Bad" English can be perceived in naturally occurring discourse data by the metapragmatic cues produced by its users or reactions toward it. Most often these cues or reactions do not explicitly use the adjective *bad*; the problematic category is thus simultaneously an etic one (for the researcher) and implicitly an emic one (for the speaker community).

## Transnational Nordic overview

In the context of Sweden, Beers Fägersten (2017) has demonstrated how English can function as a marker of humor in comic strips whose main language is Swedish. Specifically, she argues that Swedish-to-English code-switches can function as a framing device or contextualization cue to guide readers toward a humor-centered reading. Similar to my arguments on the use of "deliberately bad" English in this chapter and earlier (Kytölä 2012, 2013; Kytölä and Westinen 2015), Beers Fägersten asserts the importance of shared background knowledge required for such multilingual discourses and reading events to be successfully recognized – and appreciated.

However, as Beers Fägersten (2017, 2020) notes, the comic strip as a specific genre familiar and relatable to its readers often has the humor function readily available as a plausible and predictable expectation at the receiving end, which may not be the case by default with online forums such as the Futisforums. Moreover, the comic strip traditionally represents a "one-to-many" model of production and reception, while digital social media are by default multi-authored, "many-to-many." In them, there is potential for more ambiguous and hybrid forms of humor and mockery stemming from contextual and

technological factors such as multiple authorship, lack of aesthetic ambition, or lack of accountability for commercial actors in business. The connections between language choice, language uses, humor, and mockery in the Swedish context are also explored in works such as Lantz-Andersson (2018); Jonsson (2012); and Jonsson, Gradin Franzén, and Milani (2020); however, English plays a smaller role in those analyses.

In other Nordic contexts, the largest bodies of work in the field of digital, multilingual (including English) communicative practices in the age and context of (super)diversity have emerged from two distinctive research communities: one in Copenhagen, Denmark and the other in Jyväskylä, Finland. In the Danish context, a generation of Copenhagen-based researchers, in particular, has focused on multilingual language use in digital settings, with youth language and linguistic creativity featuring as some of the main foci. In line with the Copenhagen tradition, the research target in that work is often framed as "polylingual languaging" (see Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011). Although humor and mockery by means of language are discussed in this research (see e.g., Madsen and Svendsen 2015; Stæhr 2015, 78–91; Stæhr and Madsen 2017), and while their data and analyses usually involve at least some English and normativity on language usage, the connections of English with humor or mockery are not explicitly explored.

There is a wealth of research on English and its use in Norway and Iceland (see e.g., Chapters 8 and 11); however, to my knowledge, there is no sociolinguistic research on the use of English for purposes of humor or mockery in Norway or Iceland, especially not in digital or mediatized settings. In the context of Finland, Leppänen et al. (2013), with the lenses of entextualization and resemiotization, have demonstrated ways in which English (and humor and mockery) can occur in multisemiotic constellations and become mediated across contexts and different online platforms, acquiring new social and cultural meanings along their trajectories. Similarly, Halonen and Pietikäinen (2017) argue that English with a Finnish accent (often labeled *Tankero*, which is also the analytical label they deploy) can become a tool for a 21st-century television sketch show in Finland due to that accent being "an easily recognizable resource" for all Finns – becoming entextualized as an integral part of the mediatized comedy genre in Finland. Halonen and Pietikäinen draw on a sociophonetic analysis of particular phonemes in Tankero-English for purposes of stereotype and humor. The term "Tankero" itself refers back to the perceived flaws in the former Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Ahti Karjalainen's pronunciation and knowledge of English.[2] It can be noted that English is by no means the only language from a multilingual repertoire that becomes a joking matter: another part of Halonen and Pietikäinen's analysis deals with the mockery of Sámi Finnish by comedians belonging to the Sámi minority of Finland.

The case studies presented below come from Finnish contexts familiar to the author in two main ways: first, Finland as my society and long-term place

of residence; secondly, the loose community of practice I have systematically researched the most, that is, the followers of the football forums.[3] While these case studies are in digital, written (visual) mode, nowadays, it is very typical of digital discourse to also include the audio mode. In a more holistic analysis of historical discourse trajectories of memes, jokes, phrases, and so on, it is obvious that sources of written jokes deploying English in various ways can have their origins in discourse events and instances where an earlier mode was spoken language. Such discourse trajectories allow phonological phenomena, such as pronunciation of sounds or entire words, intonation, or correspondence of Finnish spellings with English pronunciations, to become topics of written-mode jokes and memes (see, e.g., Halonen and Pietikäinen 2017).

Importantly, as Beers Fägersten (2017) also emphasizes, the humor and fun of the jokes and memes based on features of English can only be shared when there is enough common ground in the community vis-à-vis the nuances and affordances of the English language. Without a more engaged ethnographic, interview, or survey study, we cannot know in detail how the community members interpret or enjoy the jokes (see the later section on the researcher's position). Instead, in a discourse-analytic, interactional-sociolinguistic study, we can base our interpretations on the discourse data along the following lines:

1. The sheer existence of a **considerable number** of jokes and memes on deliberately "bad" English in Finnish/Finland-based contexts (and in other Nordic countries)
2. The types of (metapragmatic) **uptake and responses** to jokes and memes utilizing bad English, including their inclination to **circulation and variation** in the subsequent discourse cycles
3. The **longevity** of such jokes and memes, going all the way from the perceived "bad" English of Finnish politicians in the analog media of the 1960s/1970s, when the knowledge and competence in English did not yet permeate Finnish society, via interviews with rally and Formula 1 drivers, to the era of the internet (World Wide Web) in the 1990s, more participatory internet in the 2000s, and finally the current diversity of digital social media since the 2010s, increasingly produced and consumed via mobile phones and their burgeoning applications. This longevity has also seen the transformation from mainly **spoken-mode** circulation to **written-mode** and – as the audio mode is back with mobile devices stronger than ever – **multimodal** circulation of such jokes and memes.

## Metapragmatic reflexivity and metalinguistic commentary

A key concept for understanding phenomena documented and analyzed in this chapter is metapragmatics, or more precisely, metapragmatic reflexivity – "the phenomenon whereby language users engage in meta-level discussions about the language used in the particular context" (Kytölä 2013, 101). While rooted in

linguistic anthropological work several decades older (see e.g., Silverstein 1993; for a brief review, see Kytölä 2013, 101–103), my adoption of the concept owes most to Blommaert and Rampton (2011, 8–10) as well as Verschueren (2012, 27, 52, 183), who argues that "metapragmatic reflexivity is an essential ingredient of language use" (ibid. 2012, 183). Blommaert and Rampton (2011, 10) further suggest that:

> messages, texts, genres, styles and languages vary conspicuously in their potential for circulation – itself a major source of stratification – and sometimes this can itself become the focus of attention and dispute, as people differ in their normative sense of what should carry where […].

As I have argued earlier (Kytölä 2013, 100–103), this expansion of metapragmatic reflexivity from the context of a single-discourse event (such as a conversation, or in my analyses, a forum discussion thread, or a cluster or "skein" of interrelated, concurrent threads) to more macro-level contexts (e.g. Finnish society) is relevant, if we consider the trajectories and mobility of all types of "language" in the memes and jokes that utilize various types of English, focusing in particular on the ways in which people from a (largely) shared sociolinguistic background explicitly comment on others' language usages.

When features of non-standard English enter the Futisforums, they may become framed as "non-native," "Other," stigmatized resources – a topic of overt and covert metapragmatic reflexivity. The most popular memes and jokes deploying "bad English" become integrated in the ever-evolving group style and repertoire. This variation operates on multiple levels: orthography, variation in reproduction of phonemes, lexical choice, syntax, and pragmatics. It is "writing accent" (or "writing pronunciation"; see also "eye-dialect" in Beers Fägersten 2020) with the linguistic and semiotic affordances (and limitations) of the web forum. This kind of mobility of discourses and values is an important focus in contemporary sociolinguistics more generally; therefore, metapragmatic reflexivity should be among its foci (Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Kytölä 2013).

In sum, reflexivity can thus be seen as an interface between awareness and commentary/commenting; my focus here is on concrete, observable metapragmatic discourse. For me, reflexivity involves concrete stretches of discourse (talk or text) that show the participants' metapragmatic awareness, and potentially their attitudes (Kytölä 2013, 102). Metapragmatic reflexivity can occur on any distinguishable level of language use; for instance, on the level of language or variety choice (Finnish vs English, standard English vs non-standard English features), the level of pragmatics (whether an expression is perceived as "suitable" in the situation), syntax (whether an expression is perceived as grammatically "correct"), lexis (word choice), or morphology (difference between morphemes).

Based on the discourse stretches and discourse events in my dataset, Finland-based discussants on football matters – *Futisforumists* – are arguably dexterous language users: they feel entitled to assess and meta-comment on various uses of English, and in doing so, they claim ownership of English. Metapragmatic reflexivity is, therefore, one key concept through which to understand the language-about-language that is used in the interactions.

As an implicit metapragmatic practice, *stylization* can be part of any individual or collective repertoire. In brief, it denotes language use that projects "personas, identities and genres other than those that are presumedly current in the speech event [bringing] into play stereotyped semiotic and ideological values associated with other groups, situations or times [dislocating] a speaker and utterances from the immediate speaking context" (Coupland 2007, 154). The "bad" English invoked in the Futisforum data examples, indeed, illustrate an inclination to stylization and detachment of the writer from the "face-value" style, register, or entire variety perceived in the turns or pieces of writing.

## Previous case studies on the two Futisforums

In a key discourse event on the original (now derelict) Futisforum (Kytölä 2013, 163–166), an allegedly Turkish screen profile, "altan," (a pseudonym for the original username) introduces himself and aspires to be an acceptable social actor in the Finnish Futisforum. My analysis of the discussion sequences suggests that altan, an alleged non-Finn (Other/Them) protrudes an online space framed for Finns (Us). Even if a non-Finnish new member could alternatively have been welcomed in the community by way of maintaining benevolent discussion threads or topics in English, too, altan's observed deficiency in written English triggered a discourse of mockery and, subsequently, seems to have caused altan to leave the community. In this case, the markedly non-native (framed as "bad") English was accompanied by the new member's insufficient meta-knowledge of the Futisforum's established practices and knowledge of the topics of discussion at hand. However, altan's phrases in "bad" English continued a life of their own for several years on Futisforum and on its successor, Futisforum2. Ultimately, whether altan was really a non-Finn (which, to my best knowledge, he was) or just a troll or joke (as some participants seemed to insist), it did not matter to the Futisforum community members participating in the humor and mockery, as the target of fun and ridicule – indeed bullying – was the deficits in the non-standard English usages by "altan" and all the subsequent variations that the forum members created out of these.

However, another case, "anfield_mate," (a pseudonym for the original username) illustrated a discourse where the target of mockery and imitation was native features and variants – if not a full variety – of English. Particularly, Scouse, the Liverpool working-class dialect/sociolect, or more precisely, its online representations, were targeted. The chain of discourse events was very similar to that of altan in that the mockery and shared fun had non-standard,

"bad" English features and variants as its fuel. However, the origin here was the Finnish member's earnest (face-value) uses of the Liverpool dialect, which was judged by some forum members as "inauthentic" and thus inappropriate and suitable for mockery and bullying. In those discourse events, a native variety of British English, the Scouse dialect, was ascribed and associated with extralinguistic features such as ugly faces, protruding ears, trashy tattoos, lack of education, general ignorance, drunkenness, or loutish behavior.

A third case (see Kytölä and Westinen 2015; Kytölä 2016) illustrated Finnish football professionals, notably the striker Mikael Forssell[4] and his performance of overdone, exaggerated African American Vernacular English, more precisely "gangsta English" associated with hip-hop and rap artists (see also Beers Fägersten 2017, 180–183). The jocular performance of "gangsta" by Forssell and his colleagues was taken up as a special topic on discussion areas of Futisforum2, where the main topic was Forssell's actual football career. However, the "bad" English and the humor discourses emerging around it acquired center stage for a long while – a phenomenon that was accelerated by the lack of playing time and responsibility Forssell was assuming for his team at the time.

In the case of Forssell and his Finnish-born football colleagues, it could quite clearly be judged from the beginning that the performance of "gangsta" was deliberate and tongue in cheek. As recent discussions in and out of academia (see e.g., Aslan and Vásquez 2018) have noted, however, it is not an unproblematic practice for white speakers to adopt and appropriate Black English (or AAVE) features in their speech (or writing) – not even when the purpose of the appropriation was homage or appreciation of Black cultural practices such as hip-hop.

The constellation of appropriation of Black ("gangsta") English in mediated online contexts such as the Futisforum is much more complex than models of overt prestige vs stigma (standard English vs AAVE) or covert prestige (AAVE or hip-hop English for solidarity, cultural appreciation, or identification). While a closer study of Forssell's own online persona (mainly Twitter at the time of research) suggests a clear affiliation and sincere appreciation for hip-hop culture as well as self-deprecating, tongue-in-cheek humor, the further adaptations and appropriations of the same, or similar, features and phrases on Futisforum2 lend themselves to a complex analysis of appropriation, stigma, mockery, and debates of authenticity or legitimacy (Kytölä 2016; Kytölä and Westinen 2015.

## Futisforum2 and "register here shockingly good English Experts"[5]

This analysis presented here features a long-term general discussion thread from Futisforum2, titled "register here shockingly good English Experts." Located in the members-only area of the forum, "General Discussion," the "register here shockingly good English Experts" is a hybrid discussion that has continued for

eleven years (2011–2022) with long periods of hiatus, but always reinvigorated at some point, thus never fully abandoned in the forum archives. Typical of a new and attractive discussion thread, the first days of revival are the most active, after which the interest decreases rapidly. Indeed, July and August 2011 saw 291 replies to the opening message, while a few bursts of activity in 2012 and 2013 accumulated up to 397 replies in total. Year 2014 was inactive, while years 2015 and 2016 saw a few further bursts of some dozens of responses (up to 512 in total).

A similar pace continues from 2017 to 2022, with the consequence that the discussion thread is never completely forgotten; there is always some Futisforum member who revives ("bumps") the thread for yet another burst or chain of humorous activity in English. By August 2022, the number of replies is 654, which corresponds to 59 replies per year on average over its eleven years of existence. Such longevity is tentative evidence for the argument that a discussion thread dedicated to joking about intentionally "bad" English is a popular and worthy topic. Meanwhile, in these years, similar discussions are happening in other Futisforum2 threads, usually more "off-topic" than guided by the thread heading.

### *The topic titled "register here shockingly good English Experts"*[6]

The opening message of the thread is as follows:

(1) Absurdity of the English language. To understand English as well as Finnish, some in normal use. Now can surf the internet at the same time and still understand the narration enkuks Canal. Whenever Fox Soccer matches from the best report. Enkku win the Finnish language, 100–0.

Note: *enkuks* is colloquial Finnish for *englanniksi* 'in English.' *Enkku* is the colloquial word for 'English' in nominative form.

This opening message of this thread is a parody of an earlier message, in Finnish with the same content, in another discussion thread. The person who had posted in the pre-existing thread had boasted – apparently in earnest – about their English skills in this manner, which had become a frequent target of ridicule in the earlier thread and several other Futisforum2 threads. The entire new discussion is thus framed from the start as a humor and mockery meme thread for "funny" instances of the use of English by Finns – or in this case, also Finns' attitudes toward English. To my best judgment, the opening post is machine translated from Finnish to English.

During its first day of existence, the new thread quickly featured many of the existing "classics of Finns' bad English," both from inside and outside the

Futisforums. According to the metadata framing the posts – an example of useful, free analysis tools available for scholars of digital discourse – it takes only 24 minutes and a few other replies from the beginning until the following post appears:

(2) What do you think the next happen now?

This, in turn, is a meme from the European Championship qualification match between Finland and Turkey in Helsinki 1999. Kurdish demonstrators invaded the pitch during the first half, and in the middle of the incident, the Finnish television sports reporter Jari Porttila entered the pitch (Kytölä 2012, 2013, 42). Porttila uttered the words in (2), and, along with the unusual and memorable match itself, these words became a solid part of the Finnish football followers' folklore over the years. Whenever the "bad" English frame is evoked, the classic Porttila quote is likely to appear at some point.

Merely 33 minutes from the opening post, another "classic" is posted:

(3) *MikaVayrynen10@MikaelForssell wtf bro?harvoin kuullu et jäbä tyytyväinen jos et oo maalannu tai pelannu… still keep ya head up n c ya next week*

*MikaelForssell@MikaVayrynen10 no enhän mä ookkaan mut gotta be happy for the lads…ne ansaitsee…mun aika tulee kun tulee….u know bro! C u this week!!*

MikaVayrynen10@MikaelForssell wtf bro?seldom seen you happy dude if you haven't scored or played…still keep ya head up n c ya next week

MikaelForssell@MikaVayrynen10 well I'm not but gotta be happy for the lads…they deserve..my time comes when it comes….u know bro! C u this week!!

This post, also now a classic, quotes directly from the two Finnish footballers' Twitter accounts shown in (3). (The discourse skein involving their tweeting activity around 2010–2011 and the Futisforumists' responses to them, and later, circulation of them, are analyzed in more detail in Kytölä 2016 and Kytölä and Westinen 2015.) One target of mockery and humor in this discourse skein was the discrepancy between the "gangsta" style used and the "real lives" of the two Finnish-born professional footballers.

Another response twenty minutes later draws from sources of "bad" English predating the time of the internet:

(4) *Tuu tii tu törtituu, ai lav juu, vii kou ruum.*
Two teas to [room] 32, I love you, we go (to my) room.

This combination of memes draws, first, from the reported phrase "Two teas to [room] 32" mispronounced by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahti Karjalainen, quoted around the early 1970s (see previous discussion of "Tankero" English; see also Beers Fägersten 2020, 175). The last part of (4) leaps approximately two decades later in time, drawing on the reported (perhaps unsolicited) invitation to a female colleague by the Member of European Parliament Timo Järvilahti in the mid-1990s. The phrase "I love you, we go room" subsequently became known in several retrospective media sources in the form "Your man go, we go my room." The middle part, *ai lav juu*, is a rather standard Finnishized spelling of "I love you." For its inclusion in the posting, I am unable to find any deeper memetic or subcultural meaning.

Example (5) illustrates the source of "bad" English originating from the "altan" and "anfield_mate" aliases, analyzed in more detail in previous work (Kytölä 2012, 2013), further testifying to the longevity and popularity of the in-group resource originating in them:

(5) I think this topic rigging, in your opinion? Ta mate and lock.

The first sentence in (5) is directly from altan, illustrating a popular and long-lasting meme in the Futisforum communities. The second, shorter sentence draws from the already-often-mocked Scouse dialect with *Ta mate*, then bluntly suggests the topic should be locked (by moderators). However, this locking has not happened to the present day. Meme and joke threads are usually allowed to stay on Futisforum2 – to age, thrive, or wither in their "natural" way, without interference from moderators.

Several more general Finnish memes and jokes, with origins possibly outside the Futisforums or even outside football, become translated into English in the same topic, and many of these show non-standard, "bad" English features:

(6) Man was in a barbershop and the barber was asking should i wash this hair, man said no thank you, im going to sauna later. It was like churning butter, and this aint not joke.

(7) What did kimmo kinnunen see in sauna? His father Jorma.

(8) kimmo kinnunen looks like his father Dick Kinnunen
joke was own invention

Example (6) circulates a joke that is popular over the Finnish-language internet and has become part of contemporary oral tradition, too. I have not

been able to trace its certain origin. In contrast, Examples (7) and (8) refer to a joke dating from the early 1990s when the Olympic javelin thrower Kimmo Kinnunen, the son of another Olympic javelin thrower Jorma Kinnunen, rose to fame. The common noun *jorma* is a Finnish slang word for "penis"; hence (7) can alternatively be translated as *What did kimmo kinnunen see in sauna? His father('s) dick*. As example (8) shows, the joke has several variations, and here it serendipitously happens that the English common noun *dick* has a partly equivalent double meaning, allowing for a nuanced variation of the old joke (cf. Beers Fägersten 2017 on English-language swearing as punchlines in Swedish comic strips). However, unlike "dick," *jorma* does not have the additional meaning of "a moron, a mean person." The "dick version" of the joke is most likely much older in Finland than 2011, which was the year the examples in (7) and (8) occurred on Futisforum2.

These more general memes and jokes are intertwined in quick succession with Futisforum-specific memes, mostly direct, literal translations of inside jokes, idioms, and phrases originally in Finnish, such as:

(9) In the end we got cornerkick
Standard English: "In the end, we got a corner kick"
(The original Finnish phrase had acquired the status of a meme: *Lopussa saatiin kulma.*)

(10) forward has been gone
Standard English: "(But) we have gone forward."
(The original Finnish phrase had acquired the status of a meme*: Eteenpäin on menty.*)

These two short clauses are direct quotes from Antti Muurinen, the head coach of Finland men's national football team from 2000 to 2005. Muurinen had the habit of offering explanations, often interpreted as bad excuses, when Finland lost or drew with an opponent against which a victory was either needed or expected. Memes such as those in (9) and (10) can, depending on the exact linguistic formulation, become almost standard English in translation instead of being markedly "bad" English – regardless of whether the participants create them with machine translation or with their own English competence. However, as example (10) illustrates, many of them readily lend themselves to *verbatim* or literal translations, which fulfill the function of "deliberately bad" English for humor, often also mockery.

The thread "register here shockingly good English Experts" was very active on the first afternoon of its existence, resembling fast-paced synchronous computer-mediated communication in its discourse structure while technically

in an asynchronous format. Between the replies selected for closer analysis in examples (1) through (10), there were several others. The thread goes on through the afternoon, the evening, the following day, and so on, alternating between the following types of replies:

1) The Futisforums' inside jokes and memes literally translated into "funny" English (cf. examples 9 and 10)
2) More general or traditional Finnish jokes, memes, and juicy anecdotes translated into English (examples 6–8)
3) Metapragmatic comments in English (or much less frequently in Finnish) on e.g., the "funniness" of the jokes posted or "badness" of the English used
4) Mere emojis as responses to an earlier post. These posts would often be included in the new response with the aid of the forum's quoting function

The English usages in the 654 replies in the thread range include instances from several registers and varieties of English, but typically the posts contain non-standard, ungrammatical English derived from earlier Finnish phrases, jokes, or memes. Features from English dialects and African American Vernacular English are deployed at times, yet most of the humor is based on uniquely Finland-based phenomena that can only be understood with an accompanying meta-knowledge of historical or current events in Finnish society. Moreover, a collectively and individually sufficient knowledge of English is needed for such a humor discourse to emerge and thrive. Standard English is not enough at this point: such a requirement includes a knowledge of varieties, nuances, or values of English(es).

## Discussion and conclusions

While the historical layers of (im)migration so far have resulted in different demographics in Finland than in the other Nordic countries, the diversity and patterns of multilingualism in digitally mediated settings can level the differences or change the game. Studies carried out previously on digital (super)diversity in the Nordic countries have either explicitly featured immigrant-background communities or individuals as targets of study or aptly considered immigration as a background factor for sociolinguistic diversity in digital settings in general.

However, in contexts such as those analyzed in this chapter, demographic changes caused by migration patterns are arguably smaller factors. Instead, the uniqueness of the sociolinguistic situation arises from the interface and blurring of language styles and variants traditionally associated with spoken versus written language, among other factors. The metapragmatic layer of the discourse events depicted in the chapter illustrates ways in which the participants in digital settings can appropriate and own the English language, how they

blur the boundaries and ridicule or exclude other participants or real persons based on their output or performance in English. Moreover, as I have argued, a collectively and individually sufficient knowledge of English is needed for such a humor discourse to emerge and thrive; this requirement also involves a knowledge of several varieties and nuances of English in relation to standard English, including perceived or alleged grammaticality or correctness of the linguistic variation and diversity in question.

When multilingual language use and the role of English in digitally mediated contexts are concerned, considerable variation between cases and contexts is to be expected, even between singular discourse events, or within one individual. Both large-scale, overarching studies on bigger data and diverse, fine-grained case studies on singular communities and discourse events are needed to fully understand the complex phenomena outlined in this chapter and their interrelations. The interfaces and connections between contemporary migration patterns and digital discourse consumption and production need to be researched in ways that go beyond the perceived discourse that is created and found in online settings. Metapragmatic and metalinguistic discussions on the role or the use of English and other languages or varieties in different digital contexts continue to be a promising research area.

## Notes

1 In this chapter, I collectively refer to these as "the Futisforums" based on their name in Finnish.
2 Allegedly, when in New York, Karjalainen particularly enjoyed the zoo. As a reporter in New York asked him what he liked the most, he pointed to the tigers and the "Dangerous" sign, saying "I really like these "Tankeros," an L1-influenced pronunciation of *dangerous*.
3 The researcher's position in relation to the discourse community and data at hand can be described as "semi-insider." I have been part of the local and national football (sub)communities for decades in different roles, yet most of the Futisforum discourse I have approached over the years as an outside observer. I did not take part actively in the discussions that comprise the dataset for this study; however, I have been sporadically active in other Futisforum and Futisforum2 discussions over the years, at times disclosing my researcher identity, too (see Kytölä 2013, 74–76).
4 Neither Forssell nor his peers were anonymized here as their Twitter accounts were fully public; however, I took a further step to obtain written consent via the Finnish national team's manager for the publication of our analyses.
5 Primary source of online research data: Futisforum2 – register here shockingly good English Experts
http://futisforum2.org/index.php?topic=123842.0 (only for registered users).
6 All English translations of the examples are my own.

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# 11

# ENGLISH IN NORDIC MULTILINGUAL FAMILIES

## Couple and family language practices

*Kaisa S. Pietikäinen[1] and Louisa Gühr*

### Introduction

In addition to education, workplaces, tourism, and social media, English has found its way into the homes of many Nordic families. Not only does it seep through school, hobbies, and international connections, English is often the chosen shared language of communication for many Nordic citizens who have found a partner from abroad. Even in families where partners have gradually learned each other's first languages, English often remains in some form a part of their intimate language practice.

This chapter investigates English use in multilingual families, focusing particularly on Finnish- and Norwegian-international families living in Finland and Norway, where neither of the spouses speak English as their first language. The number of such families is gradually increasing in the Nordic countries due to increased globalization, internet dating, and study/work abroad. In 2020, there were 65,700 Finnish-born citizens in Finland who were married to or cohabiting with a foreign-born partner. Of these, Finnish women most often chose a partner from the UK or from one of the former Soviet Union nations, followed by German, American, Swedish, or Turkish partners. Finnish men most typically chose a partner from the former Soviet Union or Thailand, followed by Estonian, Chinese, or Filipino partners (Tilastokeskus 2020).

The proportion of Norwegian-international marriages has also grown steadily over the last ten years, even though the total number of marriages is in decline. In 2002, 20.3 percent of Norwegian men's and 14.3 percent of Norwegian women's marriages were to a partner whose parents were both born in another country. In 2020, these percentages were 26.7 and 17.4, respectively (SSB 2022). We

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could only find more detailed information on international marriages in Norway from 2002. At that time, a total of 56,400 Norwegians were married to a foreign national; that is, in 7 percent of marriages, the partner was of a foreign background (Lie 2004). This number does not include cohabiting partners, whose share has risen by approximately 10 percent in recent decades and represents approximately 30 percent of spouses who live together (Tømmerås 2021). This indicates that the actual number of marriage-like relationships with foreign nationals is larger than what marriage statistics show. Norwegians' foreign-born spouses most often come from neighboring Denmark or Sweden, and it is justified to expect that these spouses mostly use Scandinavian languages due to the close linguistic relation between the languages (see Chapter 2). The second most popular foreign partners among Norwegian women were British or American-born spouses followed by German spouses, while Norwegian men would look to the East and choose a partner from the Philippines or Thailand, and only thereafter the UK, USA, and Germany (Lie 2004). We find it interesting that statistically, it is more often Norwegian men and Finnish women who marry a foreign spouse than Norwegian women and Finnish men.

Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the languages that spouses use between themselves or with their children. However, as the education level of Nordic citizens is generally high, and the vast majority learn to speak fluent English at school, it may be expected that English often becomes the chosen lingua franca when Nordic citizens meet foreign nationals, fall in love, and establish families. The Finnish language in particular has a reputation as a difficult language to learn, and it is possible to function in urban Finnish societies using English only (see "Language practices as a couple: The role of English in learning the local language" later in this chapter), which is why foreign spouses are often discouraged to learn Finnish to the extent that they would be comfortable to change the main language of the relationship to Finnish. The same may be expected to apply to Norway, even though Norwegian is considered one of the easiest languages for English speakers to learn (Foreign Service Institute 2021). Research on interlinguistic couples shows, however, that reasons why partners may use English as their couple language even after learning each other's languages may be tied to shared couple culture, language identity, and bonding to the partner through English (Pietikäinen 2018a). We next review existing research on English use in multilingual families focusing on the Nordic countries before outlining the scope of the current study.

## English in intimate spaces in the Nordic countries

Although sociolinguistic inquiry on family language policies, practices, and language identity in Nordic countries exists, most of the current research focuses on bilingual families where English is not one of the main languages of the

families researched (e.g., Fernandes 2019; Johnsen 2021; Lomeu Gomes 2020; Obojska and Purkarthofer 2018; Palviainen and Bergroth 2018) or where it is a native language (henceforth L1) of one of the parents (e.g., Lanza 1997; Roberts 2021).[2] In this line of research, the focus is often on family language policies (henceforth FLPs): implicit and explicit language planning among family members and the conscious efforts to achieve language and literary development (most often) in children, underpinned by ideological beliefs of those who manage the development (usually the parents; Curdt-Christiansen 2018; King et al. 2008). Although FLP research has in recent years extended to transnational multilingual populations (Lanza and Lomeu Gomes 2020), its focus has traditionally been on bilingual immigrant families maneuvering their lives in the crosswinds of the heritage language and the majority language, or families where one parent represents a minority language – hence with a clearer division between heritage/minority vs majority language. FLP research is, however, scarce concerning multilingual families where the parents use non-native English as their lingua franca (henceforth ELF), but where both parents have a different L1 in addition (however, see e.g., Rottschäfer fc; Soler and Zabrodskaja 2017).

Bilingualism studies have demonstrated that parents' language use has a pivotal influence on the languages in which their children become fluent, although the environment is also an important factor (see De Houwer 2007; Grosjean 2010). As English has an unprecedented status in the Nordic countries (see Chapter 1), will the children of ELF-using parents have English as their L1, as proposed by Mauranen (2018, 20)? It has also been suggested that if children hear their parents mix languages, which ELF-using couples evidently do, they will be more prone to mix languages themselves (Genesee 1989; Lanza 1997). Will the children of ELF-using couples then learn to speak mixed English at home?

Rottschäfer (fc) studied 25 families from around Europe (with six couples living in Nordic countries or having a Nordic language background) and observed five different parent-child language policies among the ELF-using couples. The most common approach by far (with thirteen families) was "OPOL1,"[3] or One Parent–One Language, where children were addressed by the parents in their respective L1s. The second most common strategy (six families) was "MIX," where the parents addressed the children in more than one language, including English. English was also used in strategy "OPOL-E" (three families), where one parent addressed the children in their L1, which was also the majority language of the surrounding society, whereas the other parent whose L1 could be described as having less prestige in the society (Armenian in Germany, Thai in France, and Spanish in Lichtenstein) chose to address the children in English, due to its international importance. Two families addressed their children mainly in one parent's (the mother's) L1 ("FamL1"), and one family had decided to use English as the family language ("Fam-E"). Rottschäfer concludes that

English may well become one of the children's L1s in these families, but the popularity of the OPOL1 approach indicates a stronger emotional attachment to the parental L1s over English; however, there were substantial differences between the families in this aspect.

Further support for the OPOL strategy in ELF couples' families can be found in Braun (2006) and Soler and Zabrodskaja (2017). Braun (2006) interviewed trilingual families' parents in England and Germany and found that those couples who used either English or German as their lingua franca due to limited proficiency in the partner's L1 nevertheless commonly used their respective L1s with their children. Soler and Zabrodskaja (2017) interviewed parents of three transnational multilingual families living in Estonia who had either Estonian or Spanish as their L1 and had consequently at least begun their relationship in English. These parents relied on an "idealized OPOL policy" (2017, 561), where they insisted on OPOL for the sake of maintaining a language order while at the same time also reporting significant translanguaging[4] practices. OPOL made sense to them as a coping mechanism based on each parent's "linguistic authority and legitimacy only in their L1, the language that they speak most 'correctly' and the language through which they can be their true selves" (2017, 562), which reflects their essentialized ideas of language proficiency. However, the OPOL strategy could also lead to an inner conflict for the parents, as indicated through examples of children asking the parents to read bedtime stories in the "wrong" language.

In contrast to the family perspective, linguistic practices of couples who use English as their main lingua franca have previously been investigated mainly in the Central European context (e.g., Gundacker 2010; Klötzl 2015). However, Pietikäinen (2014, 2017, 2018a, 2021) uses interviews and conversation analysis in examining the multilingual practices of ELF-using couples residing in Finland, Norway, the UK, and Canada. She finds that the couples often choose English as their shared language due to necessity: it is the only or the most fluent language both partners spoke when they first met each other. Over the years, it becomes a language of identification tied to the performance of their couple identity; it is developed into a private language meshed with the partners' L1s and the language(s) of the environment. The partners find it odd to try and change away from it, even if some of them express desires to shift to using one partner's L1 as the couple lingua franca (Pietikäinen 2018a).

Notably, the English these couples use is not "English alone." It is their private language, developed to work best in their multilingual lived reality. Pietikäinen (2017) finds that the partners mix languages for specific interactional purposes, but also without a particular purpose. Although mixing other languages within English conversation is used by these partners for the purpose of learning another language,[5] exhibiting existing language skills, covering for lexical gaps in English, addressing other participants such as children or visitors,

changing the footing of the interaction, and for cultural signaling, at times the couples translanguage "automatically," without any interactional marking of the switch (see Pietikäinen 2014). Over the years, ELF-using couples develop their own couple tongue, "the language with which the relationship is built and sustained" (Pietikäinen 2014, 2), which contains the multilingual lexicon the partners frequently use in the family sphere, their idiosyncrasies such as characteristically L1-influenced interjections, assessments, question words, and courtesies, but also content words often uttered in the language of the environment, and multilingual word play created over the years in their private domain (Pietikäinen 2021; see also Beers Fägersten 2012). Hence, although the couples investigated by Pietikäinen could be described as "English-speaking," English is rather the matrix language which has over the years in their translanguaging space been socialized into a translanguaging practice (see Wei 2018), whereby the full shared multilingual repertoire is utilized when the couples find it useful, appropriate, or best fitting.

Despite the cocktail of languages incorporated into ELF-using couples' English, Pietikäinen (2020) finds that ELF couples' interactions show little overall focus on language, and where linguistic issues arise, these most commonly concern languages other than English. Expert-novice identities concerning English fluctuate, and neither partner portrays themselves as the more knowledgeable party. Non-standard English features are commonly not repaired unless they involve a risk for understanding (Pietikäinen 2018b), in which case they are swiftly corrected. The couples also use a wide array of practices that preempt problems of understanding, ranging from more commonly identified clarification requests, paraphrases, echoing, and self-repair to code-switches and extralinguistic means such as onomatopoeia, showing, drawing, and acting (2018b), which have more seldom been identified in other types of ELF communication (cf. e.g., Mauranen 2006; Seidlhofer 2009).

## The current study: Scope, data, and methods

In order to explore English use in the private domain in Nordic countries, specifically Finland and Norway, we decided to focus on two main areas of interest due to the general lack of previous research on these topics. The first topic is ELF-using couples' language practices – the couple tongue. Here we focus specifically on two aspects: changes to the couple tongue over time and effects of the use of English on learning the local language. The longitudinal aspect of this study is especially advantageous, as language practices naturally change over time, while few studies manage to record this change. In this regard, the data we have gathered is exceptional: while we focus on the interview data gathered in 2018, the first author has explored the language practices of the same couples already in 2012/2013, and Couple 4 who participated in this interview had also been interviewed in 2012.

The second topic revolves around language use in ELF-using couples' families. Here, we find Van Mansel's concept "multilingual familylect" a useful concept. Van Mensel (2018) builds on Søndergaard's notion of "familylect" – any family's ways of speaking that distinguish them from other speakers (Søndergaard 1991) – and coins the term "multilingual familylect" to describe multilingual families' shared language practices. He defines it as "characterized by specific shared linguistic features, such as lexical features or pronunciation, but also […] by certain code-switching practices or language choice patterns" that occur repeatedly (Van Mensel 2018, 236). The multilingual familylect is "an ongoing process, in which the interactional negotiation is just as much part of the picture as the family-specific language forms that may occur" (Van Mensel 2018, 236). In describing ELF-using families' multilingual familylects, we focus on two perspectives: language practices in parent-child interaction and family language policies. We see the concept of FLP from a broad standpoint, relating it to the family's ever-changing practices, motivations, and aspirations for language proficiencies and identities, and strategies harnessed to achieve these aspirations (Curdt-Christiansen 2018). Possible underlying language ideologies of parents can have an immediate effect on the FLPs that are reflected in both their parent-child and family interactions (King et al. 2008). We look at how the participants describe their language ideologies, how these become enacted in their practices, and what means are used to manage the multilingual familylect.

The interview data explored in this study was collected by the first author in 2018 for a research project investigating the linguistic constellations of multilingual families, where the parents had been using English as their main lingua franca for several years. For this chapter, we decided to focus on families living in either Finland or Norway and who have children, and where neither parent had been brought up in English. This limited the data to four couples, three of whom lived in Finland, as shown in Table 11.1. The questions of the semi-structured interviews were designed to probe into the parents' individual linguistic backgrounds and identities, language practices as a couple and as a family, and views, opinions of, and identification with different languages in their repertoire. In addition, the respondents filled in a questionnaire regarding their background as a couple, language skills of all family members, and the estimated percentages of how much exposure their children have to different languages. The interviews were conducted in the couples' homes by the first author, using ELF. For more information about the recruitment of the participants, see Pietikäinen (2017).

The video-recorded interview data was transcribed using simplified conversation-analytic transcription conventions (see Appendix for transcription key) and analyzed using a triangulation approach combining qualitative content analysis and phenomenography. A phenomenographical approach aims to describe and compare people's conceptions of a certain phenomenon in the world

**TABLE 11.1** Backgrounds of the families

| | *Couple* | *Residing in* | *Parents' respective L1s* | *Children* | *Children's exposure to languages in the home* | *Children's spoken proficiency (0 = no command, 1 = basic, 2 = intermediate, 3 = advanced)*[9] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Laura and Thomas | Finland | Finnish; Flemish (Belgian Dutch) | Pekka (13) | 65% Finnish, 20% English, 15% Flemish | Finnish 3, English 2, Flemish 2 |
| | | | | Julia (12) | 75% Finnish, 15% Flemish, 10% English | Finnish 3, Flemish 2, English 1 |
| | | | | Roope (10) | 75% Finnish, 15% Flemish, 10% English | Finnish 3, English 1, Flemish 1 |
| 2 | Chun and Nils | Norway | Chinese (Mandarin); Norwegian | John (10) | 45% Norwegian,[2] 27.5% Chinese, 27.5% English | Norwegian 3, Chinese 2, English 2 |
| | | | | Yngve (8) | 44% Chinese, 44% English, 12% Norwegian | Norwegian 3, Chinese 2, English 2 |
| 3 | Minna and Henrik | Finland | Finnish; Hungarian, German | Elias (1) | 40-45% Finnish, 35-40% German, 20% English (for both children)[3] | 0 |
| | | | | Felix (1) | | 0 |
| 4 | Päivi and Jan | Finland | Finnish; Dutch | Mia (17) | 90% Finnish, 5% Dutch, 5% English | Finnish 3, Dutch 2, English 1, German 1 |
| | | | | Emma (15) | (for both) | Finnish 3, Dutch 2, English 2, French 1 |

1 Children's spoken language proficiency as estimated by the parents at the time of the interview.
2 Marked in the original form as 25% but assumed to mean 45%.
3 Minna and Henrik both filled in the form separately, so the percentages they gave differ slightly.

leaving room for openly interpreting the collected data (Svensson 1997). In this chapter, narratives are understood as the accounts that the research participants construct in the frame of a semi-structured interview. These narratives are perceived as raw material in which the research participants express their stories, thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, drawing on their family relations and the linguistic phenomena that surround them in their everyday lives. To analyze the data, we identified patterns and descriptive themes within the narratives that were relevant to the topics investigated.[6] Once these themes were identified, we compared our observations and proceeded to draw conclusions, basing these on the commonalities and differences (i.e., the content) of the narratives of the four families.

## Analysis

In this section, we present the analysis of the data concerning the two main topics: 1) the couple tongue, how it changes over time, and its effects on learning the local language; and 2) the families' multilingual familylects: language practices in parent-child interaction and the families' language practices and policies.

### *Language practices as a couple: Use and development over time*

Nearly all participants reported notable changes in their language practices over time. All the couples in the four families stated that in the beginning of their relationship, they only spoke English to each other because it was the only common language for them, and that afterward, English was kept, in one way or another, as a part of their language practices as a couple. These findings are in line with Pietikäinen (2018b), where ELF-using couples reported English being more equal than either of the partners' L1s and therefore a natural choice. However, the practice of using English as a couple lingua franca appears to have developed in different directions within the four families.

In Couple 1, Thomas reflects on the time when he and Laura had first moved to Finland from Belgium. He was compelled to learn Finnish in order to work in the social sector. He explained that he was at times too tired to keep practicing his Finnish at home, so he would rather switch back to English when talking to Laura (see Extract 1). Over the years, however, Finnish became more and more dominant in their couple interactions, while Flemish and English were also mixed into it (Extract 2). Laura explained that this language practice was brought about by the fact that they spent a lot of time as a family, and because the children did not want them to speak English as they could not understand it (see Rottschäfer fc: section 4.2). As a couple, however, they still used more English – or Flemish as a secret language at times when they did not want outsiders to understand (see Extract 3).

Extract 1, Couple 1

*T:* .hh actually I remember in the beginning when we moved to Finland and I was (.) like I was working already .hh I didn't (.) I didn't want to speak Finnish anymore in the evening it was so tiring […] that I said in the evening fuck it let's just speak English

Extract 2, Couple 1

*L:* I think it depends a lot on like ( . ) sometimes we have periods we talk really lot of (.) Finnish ( . ) and then suddenly we start using more English ( . ) and then days of more Flemish ( . ) [it (.) it switches]
*T:* [but the last] ( . ) couple of years we have been mainly [speaking Finnish]
*L:* [(xx) it has been] more going to Finnish
*T:* I would say that 90 percent of our conversations are in Finnish ( . ) and then maybe 10 percent are-are-are (.) few sentences are like we use a lot of mix (.) like words in-in one sentence (.) we can ( . ) use like Flemish or English words if (.) if they don't come like a-automatically but .hh
*L:* [maybe]
*T:* [but] maybe Finnish and Dutch yeah

Extract 3, Couple 1

*L:* =if we are just you and me we are more likely to speak (.) Flemish or (.) English ( . ) like if we go to [(a bar)] […] if we speak Flemish then not everybody else [understands]

Couple 2, Chun and Nils, reported having used English with each other for as long as seventeen years, regardless of the situation (see Extract 4).

Extract 4, Couple 2

*N:* so my Chinese is a lot worse than her N-Norwegian that's for sure so therefore we end up speaking English and we have done so for .hhh seventeen years

Couple 3, Minna and Henrik, also reported using English with each other because it was a language in which they could both be on the same level linguistically (see Extract 5). However, their English had developed over the years as a result of influence from Finnish grammar, mixing in Finnish and German words, simplifying sentence structure, and becoming more direct. They seemed to

have adopted a kind of creative translanguaging practice (Wei 2018), where the linguistic codes, grammar and structures of various linguistic resources were merged into one. In Henrik's words, they had become more "sloppy" with their English. However, as Minna outlines in Extract 6, the reason was not just laziness; it also had to do with creating their own private couple tongue.

Extract 5, Couple 3

*H:* well I think because we met, (.) in England, ( . ) it's kind of like the first language that we sta:rted speaking, (.) to each other. […] and it's probably also language, (.) in which we ha:ve the same level of, (.) of::-u:h (skill). ( . ) so, ( . ) nobody is:: kind of like (.) stronger in English (.) than the other,=

*Interviewer:* =mm.=

*H:* =I think, (.) there is the danger that if we would speak Finnish o:r German, ( . ) the one who speaks it as a native tongue ( . ) ((hand gestures, cringe)) so. ( . ) and dominate or ( . ) that one is not able to express everything so:: so well

Extract 6, Couple 3

*M:* a bit like ( . ) pfh: like ( . ) laziness? (.) and maybe sometim- somehow it's kind of nice and cute that we have our kind of our own language thing going o:n?

Couple 4, Päivi and Jan, reported having yet another type of practice. The Nordic partner, Päivi, tried to impose the local language (Finnish) over the minority language-speaking Jan, and only when she realized that he did not understand did she switch back to English. This is a notable change from the couple's former practice approximately six years earlier, when they reported having tried this strategy unsuccessfully, and mostly spoke English together (see Pietikäinen 2018b). Päivi had since attempted to enforce Jan's learning by stopping translating Finnish to him (see Extract 10 in the next section). Interestingly, however, Jan mentioned that he did not always feel addressed when Päivi spoke to him in Finnish (Extract 7).

Extract 7, Couple 4

*P:* ((gaze at J)) you speak u:h ( . ) 80 percent English (.) and I speak maybe: ( . ) 50 percent English. ( . ) to you ( . ) but you answer in English. ( . ) sometimes when we: th- ( . ) sometimes when we: sh- (shape) up then you can try to: speak (.) Finnish

[…]

*P:* I do not speak so much English anymore […] >but when you don't understand then I have to explain in eh< in English

*J:* okay yea:h, ( . ) but uhh the thing is (.) when she starts in Finnish (.) because, ( . ) then I'm not always certain if it's directed to: me

An ideal situation in Päivi's opinion would be to drop English altogether. According to her, the more Finnish Jan learns, the less English they would need to use. This aspiration for the non-Nordic partner to learn (more of) the majority language of the environment was apparent in all of the four interviews, albeit sometimes implicitly. Next, we investigate the role of English in the non-Nordic partners' pursuit to learn the local language.

### *Language practices as a couple: The role of English in learning the local language*

As mentioned in previous literature concerning ELF-using couples' linguistic practices, learning each other's L1s is an important way for couples to bond. The native-speaking partner is an important supporter of the non-native partner's efforts to learn the local language. This is also reflected in the couples' interactional practices, where often language alternation relating to learning the local language, asking for translation, and demonstrating skills in the local language can be observed (see e.g., Pietikäinen 2017, 2021). While not all our participants were actively learning the local language, two couples in our interview expressed the importance of this topic. The two men originating in Benelux countries mentioned spontaneously that they used English as a support when speaking Finnish (Thomas and Jan, from Couples 1 and 4 respectively).

The narratives of Thomas and Jan reveal that the less mastery of the local language they had, the more English words or expressions they used as a support to get the desired message across. They specifically mentioned how they sometimes had to draw on the English language in order to establish shared understanding in Finnish (see Extract 8). In Couple 1, Thomas had shifted from not speaking the local language at all, to gradually speaking it more and more and supporting it with English, and eventually, to using English less and less every time. In Couple 4, the practice of using more and more Finnish had only recently been started with the hopes of developing it toward needing less and less English.

Extract 8, Couple 4

*J:* I start in Finnish (.) yeah, ( . ) and then, (.) when I get stuck I switch to English.

[…]

*J:* in the beginning I may try to: (.) go back to (.) Finnish, but as soon as the story becomes mo:re .hh ( . ) umm complicated, (.) then: I have to switch back to Finnis- E:h to English.

The use of English was, however, not only seen as a supporting factor in the non-Nordic partner's quest to learn the local language. Both Couples 2 and 4 directly addressed English as a hindering factor in this attempt. The Norwegian partner in Couple 2 (Nils) claimed that in retrospect, he should have spoken less English and more Norwegian with his spouse (see Extract 9). With this, he highlights the possibility that his wife might have learned Norwegian more effectively had he spoken less English with her. Couple 4 also reported a similar perspective. The Finnish partner (Päivi) described how her spouse's extensive exposure to English, both at work and at home, served as a hindering factor in the process of learning Finnish (see Extract 10). Both Nils and Päivi seem to strongly believe that their partners have not learned the local language better because they as couples have used English instead. From this perspective, the extensive use of English may be seen as a threat to learning the local language.

Extract 9, Couple 2

*N:* I can say that I should have been better at speaking Norwegian ( . ) (and with- would make that) easier for you […] so I've n-not been a big help in ( . ) making you learn Norwegian

Extract 10, Couple 4

*P:* it's um (.) a huge pity that he um (.) hasn't learned Finnish properly yet (.) cause um he has been working so much in an in an English-speaking environment so (.) that is also why I um (.) decided that I am not translating for him anymore (.) it was maybe um six years ago when I um (.) decided to stop

## The multilingual familylects

In this section, we discuss the findings concerning the families' multilingual familylects: the language practices of these multilingual families in family interactions; both in parent-child interaction and together as a family. Later, we also explore the families' FLPs.

### *Parent–child interaction*

All the parents of the four families reported a similar approach to addressing their children: they mostly made use of their respective L1s, using the OPOL strategy (see Döpke 1992). However, each family had made their own creative modifications to OPOL over time. The most straightforward depiction of their parent-child interactional practices came from Family 3, Minna and Henrik, whose children were too young to speak at the time of the interview. They described a strict OPOL strategy (Extract 11).

Extract 11, Family 3

*M:* when we address each other (.) English ( . ) and (.) then ( . ) yeah when I address the children Finnish
*H:* and I address them in German

In Family 4, the OPOL strategy was used with a twist. Both parents used their L1s in principle, but when the children struggled with Dutch lexis, Finnish was incorporated in the conversation (see Extract 12), the missing word was explained in another way, help was asked from the mother, or as a last resort, English was used.

Extract 12, Family 4

*P:* mm:: of course Finnish but ((gazes at J)) you: speak Dutch.
*J:* well that's a strange dynamic in a way because (.) I speak (.) if u:m if it's the three of us, (.) […] then they will speak Finnish to each other […] it's hard for them to speak Dutch with each other. ( . ) if I'm one on one it's Dutch.
*[…]*
*J:* and uhh if the word can't be: found, (.) then I say let's put it in Finnish, ( . ) and then most of the time we can figure out what it was

The Nordic parent (Päivi) believed that their children unconsciously did not listen to the parents when they spoke English to each other because the children did not feel addressed. This perspective of using language alternation as a device for including or excluding certain participants is well documented in classical bilingualism studies (e.g., Blom and Gumperz 1972; Myers-Scotton 1988), but also in earlier interaction-analytic studies on ELF-using parents' families (Pietikäinen 2017; Rottschäfer fc). In Pietikäinen (2017), the children of this same family reacted to the father's language alternation from English to Dutch as an indication of being included in the interaction. Both Families 3 and 4 brought up the issue that English might not feel part of their children's

language repertoire because the parents never address the children in that language.

In Family 2, in contrast, English had a more active role in parent-child interaction. The parents had planned a strict OPOL strategy before their children were born, where the father would speak Norwegian and the mother Chinese to the children. They report that this strategy worked very well; the children had learned to separate the languages and also picked up English after a while, going to an international kindergarten/school. At the time of the interview, they had, however, put more focus on English as the family was planning to move to an English-speaking country. Their parent-child language practices comprised all three languages: primarily Norwegian and Chinese, but also to a growing degree English (Extract 13).

Extract 13, Family 2

*N:* (we go) back and forth so if I would speak Norwegian to the boys, ( . ) and you ((gestures to C)) would speak Chinese to the boys, ( . ) and we will speak English between of us. ((hand roll between N and C)) ( . ) and now they're g-getting good English, (.) they would chip in in English so: (.) so-so umm (.) I mean there would be three different languages ( . ) uh at the same time

In Family 1, the practice had been developed over the years from a stricter OPOL toward *one parent* doing OPOL – the Finnish mother "practically only" speaking Finnish – while the Belgian father used a translingual practice where he mainly spoke Finnish in which he tried to incorporate at least some Flemish sentences every day. The translinguality of this approach was illustrated by the father's account that he is not always conscious of which language they use. While it was important for him to support the children's Flemish, the parent-child language practice had changed due to the youngest child's discomfort in Flemish (Extract 14) and to accommodate a monolingual Finnish child whom the family occasionally cared for as a support family. The family's children addressed both parents mostly in Finnish, but the two boys had started using more English with each other for fun, and the eldest was most likely to respond in Flemish when the father addressed him in the language.

Extract 14, Family 1

*T:* Roope u- ( . ) he he doesn't always understand (.) the Flemish that well, (.) .hh so I think it's more important that I have a conversation with him (.) that that's the most important thing that the message comes across which language we speak is secondary

## Family language practices and policies

In the four families, the family language practices when the whole family is together can be described as translingual: although the Nordic majority language is commonly the children's most fluent spoken language (see Table 11.1), the non-Nordic parental L1 as well as English coexist in some form in the familylect. In Family 2, the parental L1s and English all coexisted almost constantly (Extract 15).

Extract 15, Family 2

*C:* when it's four of us together ( . ) it's all three language (.) everywhere

Unlike Family 2, however, the other families were not as happy with their current practice. In these three families, English was experienced as (Family 1) or aspired to (Families 3 and 4) take a smaller role, as either or both parents were learning to understand each other's L1s.

Family 1 used Finnish as the main ingredient of their familylect, with Flemish and some English being a part of it. However, they expressed a wish to include more Flemish in their family interactions, including books and movies in Flemish, so that the children's proficiency would improve (Extract 16). Concerning English, the parents also reported that previously, their children did not feel included in the conversation if the parents were speaking English. For this reason, the family introduced the "English jar" to reduce the parents' use of English (Extract 17).

Extract 16, Family 1

*T:* reading in Flemish would be a good way to ( . ) [(get the kids better)]
*L:* [a:nd watching Flemish] [( . ) films and]
*T:* [watching Flemish movies] yeah […]
*L:* because in everyday life (I mean) F<u>i</u>nnish has become the main language

Extract 17, Family 1

*T:* the kids were annoyed with the fact that we were talking English and they couldn't understand it yet .hh
*Interviewer:* [mhm]
*T:* [so they said] that they didn't want us to speak English so we had an English jar and every time we spoke English we had to put money in the jar and then when the jar was filled .hh [then we (decide)]
*L:* [the kids] can decide [what do we do with the money]

In Family 4, the different languages used in, e.g., dinner table conversations, were strongly emblematic of the parents' linguistic identities; of Päivi as a Finnish speaker and Jan as a Dutch/English speaker (Extract 18). This family also explicitly expressed their wish to stop using English within their family interactions (Extract 19) as it was perceived as an isolating factor for their children, too (Extract 20).

Extract 18, Family 4

*J:* ((gaze at P)) at the table time when we're together, (.) then it is very often you speaking s- er Finnish and I do (.) Dutch.
*P:* mm. or then English (.) yeah

Extract 19, Family 4

*J:* I wish we could ditch English=
*P:* =mm.

Extract 20, Family 4

*P:* English (.) to each other is kind of isolating the girls from the discussion

Family 3, who tried to stay faithful to the OPOL strategy, also contemplated shifting toward using less English and introducing one of the paternal L1s (German) as a shared family language, while maintaining the bilingual OPOL approach in parent-child interaction (Extract 21). The motivations for this change would be for the children to learn both parental languages, while – as most of our participants expressed – the children would learn English from other sources anyway.

Extract 21, Family 3

*H:* maybe it could work that Minna speaks just Finnish (.) to the children and me and I speak just German to (.) the children and Minna […] I think English is an obstruction in the family dynamic (.) at the moment I mean ( . ) it's obstructing now because they probably learn ( . ) their first words and the first languages slower because (.) they hear too much English (.) and not enough (.) Finnish or German ( . ) err: and I don't see any benefit of raising them (.) trilingually ( . ) they will learn English in other ways so easily ( . ) mm:: ( . ) so (.) yeah (.) I think the sooner we could drop the English the better it would be (.) for them that everything is clearer
*M:* yeah

This certainty that the children will learn English through school and society without the parents' active involvement reflects the pervasive position of English in the Nordic countries and the parents' trust in the school system as an adequate educator of English. This is in stark contrast to some FLP studies on, for example, Asian heritage language maintenance in Singaporean (Curdt-Christiansen 2016) and American (Seo 2017) contexts, where parents' motivation to choose to speak English to their children was linked to the ideology of language as capital, or English (or another "international" language) being regarded as having a higher prestige than the heritage language.[7] In the ELF families where there is no reason for strategic inclusion of English for improving children's proficiency (Family 2's future move to an English-speaking country as an exception), the role of English is mainly restricted to private communication between the parents and only occasionally for fun or as a remedy for word-search situations in family interactions. Although for the parents, English is a lingua franca through which their couple identity is developed, the parents do not express a similar emotional attachment to the English language when their children are concerned. In the next section, we conclude our findings concerning the couple and family language perspectives and discuss them in light of previous literature.

## Conclusion

Almost every couple reported notable changes to their couple language practices over time. Only Couple 2 (Chun and Nils) argued that they still spoke English "almost 100 percent" and had not changed this practice. Couple 4 (Päivi and Jan) had implemented a previously failed strategy of imposing more Finnish onto the non-native speaker, while this strategy was not always successful as the husband did not necessarily react when his wife approached him in Finnish, it being a language that had previously been reserved for the children only. Couple 3 continued using mostly English but had modified it over the years to become a shared, affective language translanguaged through their shared experiences and shared multilingual repertoires. Only Couple 1 had shifted toward using more Finnish than English, while they also saw periodical and context-specific changes to this practice, for example, using Flemish as a secret language when surrounded by Finns.

The fact that most couples' language practices had seen a change is not surprising since language practices can be considered to be in constant flux as social configurations and their environments develop. Even though the relationship remains stable, its parties and their linguistic repertoires change, and thereby the couple tongue also continues to develop. The emergent couple tongue may in fact be seen through the lens of transience (Lønsmann, Hazel, and Haberland 2017): it is never completely stable nor tangible, but rather something ever developing, changing, and adapting. Researchers usually only

grasp a fraction of an understanding of what the whole shared repertoire entails, which is why longitudinal approaches can produce a richer understanding of the transient phenomenon and how it shifts through time.

What we also find in the data is a sense of pride vis-à-vis the families' unique multilingual character on the one hand, but also an aspiration for the non-Nordic partner to become a fully-fledged member of the society through learning of the local language. This twofold stance reverberates with findings from other multilingual families in the Nordics where English is not a part of the language practice. For example, Obojska and Purkarthofer (2018) retell the aspirations of multilingual families in Norway to learn Norwegian to a satisfying degree while maintaining the L1 for the uniqueness of the family, or for responsibility, duty, and pride for those families where both parents come from the same language background. Interestingly, for our informants, English had an additional role in the learning process: on the one hand, it supplemented Finnish in expressing more complex topics. On the other hand, it was considered a hindrance for learning: if the non-Nordic partner was not spoken to in the local language either in the home or at work, they were perceived as not receiving enough support to learn the new language. Notably, however, the only non-Nordic partner who had learned Finnish to work in Finland (Thomas), had nevertheless continued a multilingual practice with his wife even after learning fluent Finnish. This indicates that in long-term relationships, the shared multilingual language identity tied to the use of ELF may dominate over the local language when it comes to the choice of the couple tongue (see also Pietikäinen 2018b).

In contrast to the fluid, translingual language practices that the couples used with each other, they all reported a more structured approach to language use with their children. Most of the parents reported following the OPOL strategy, each with their own modifications. Referring back to Rottschäfer's (fc) FLP categorizations, we could conclude the following: Family 3 described a strict OPOL1 strategy, but their children did not yet produce speech. The other families who had older children had modified OPOL over time: Family 4 did OPOL in parental L1s but the father resorted to Finnish (the children's strongest language) and sometimes English when the children struggled with Dutch lexis. This strategy could perhaps be best described as OPOL–MIX. Family 2 practiced a three-way OPOL strategy: Chinese between mother and children, Norwegian between father and children, and English between the parents. They had, however, recently increased the presence of English with the children to prepare them for a move to an English-speaking country and described their translingual approach as "three different languages at the same time," which would place them in Rottschäfer's category of MIX. Family 1 had shifted from OPOL toward using Finnish as a family language after the father had learned to speak it fluently, thereby representing Rottschäfer's category FamL1. However, they reported that Flemish, and to a minor degree English, were still a part

of their multilingual familylect, which would perhaps be best described as FamL1-MIX. Overall, we see that although Rottschäfer's categorizations are a welcome step toward diversifying FLP models,[8] even they are not completely representative of the complexity in which translanguaging is present in these families' language practices. What is also evident in our couples' narratives is the pervasive effect of the majority language, which is in line with previous bilingualism research (e.g. De Houwer 2007): with at least one parent speaking the language of the environment to the children, the Nordic language becomes the children's strongest language (see Table 11.1) and this is also the language they prefer to speak to their siblings.

Two of the four couples reported that having English as the parental language had isolated the children, as they were never addressed in this language and did not necessarily understand the parents when they spoke English. Family 1 had even introduced "an English jar" to penalize the parents for using English in front of the children, and two other families explicitly expressed their desire to leave English out of the family equation. In the FLPs, English had clearly lost in importance compared to the parental L1s – the Nordic language and the minority language, the latter of which the families aspired to support by different means, for example, with books and movies (Family 1) or by making it the family language (Family 4). Only when English had a special purpose, such as in Family 2's intent to move to an English-language environment, did the parents see it as an important enough language to support within the family. Otherwise, the school system (see Chapters 4 and 7 of this volume) and the surrounding Nordic environment where English has an exceptionally strong foothold (see Chapter 1) were seen as adequate developers of the children's English skills without parental input. This observation suggests that although the parents may identify as multilingual English speakers as a couple, the emotional connection to the English language and its importance as neutral grounds for intimate interaction does not carry over to parent-child interaction, where parental L1s are seen as more significant to maintain, even though this might render the family language practice more complex.

Nevertheless, the fact that we only chose to focus on families where neither of the parents had English as their L1 or had grown up in an English-speaking environment has likely influenced our findings. From the original dataset, we excluded two ELF-using families where one lived in an English-speaking environment and the other involved a bilingual parent who had English as one of his L1s – in both of these families, English had a much stronger presence in the multilingual familylect. It would also be interesting to explore ELF couples' families where neither of the parents have the language of the environment as their L1. Particularly in the Nordic environment, these kinds of families may not experience the need to involve a Nordic language in their multilingual familylect, at least to the broad extent which our Nordic-international families

have embedded Finnish or Norwegian into their multilingual familylect – and where English is present, but in a confined sense.

## Notes

1 The first author has received support from Alfred Kordelin Foundation and The Finnish Cultural Foundation (grant number 00200087) for this work.
2 For influential research outside of the Nordic context, see Piller (2002) and Gonçalves (2013).
3 Based on the One Parent — One Language (OPOL) approach, see Döpke (1992).
4 On translanguaging, see García and Wei (2014) and Wei (2018); see also Chapter 7, this volume.
5 Typically the national language of the environment.
6 This part of the analysis has been explained in more detail in Gühr (2021).
7 However, see Rottschäfer (fc) for a similar attitude from an Armenian-speaking mother in an ELF family.
8 See also Wright and Higgings (2022).

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## Appendix: Transcription key

| | |
|---|---|
| (.) | short pause |
| (.) | longer pause |
| : | elongation |
| >word< | section spoken faster |
| ? | rising intonation indicating a question |
| . | falling intonation indicating sentence end |
| [] | overlapping |
| […] | section/utterance omitted |
| .hh | inhale |
| h.h.h. | laughter |
| w<u>o</u>rd | word stress |
| CAPS | section spoken louder |
| = | turn starting without a pause |
| (xx) | unintelligible syllables or author's assumption |
| ((sniff)) | author's comment |

# 12

# ENGLISH IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## Conclusions

*Elizabeth Peterson and Kristy Beers Fägersten*

*with additional contributions from Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Hartmut Haberland, Hafdís Ingvarsdóttir, Tore Kristiansen, Sirpa Leppänen, Andrew Linn, Anna Mauranen, Bent Preisler, Helge Sandøy, and Philip Shaw*

The chapters of this volume have, collectively, provided an outline of both historical contact with English in the Nordic countries and contemporary realities of this contact. As promised in the introduction, the volume presents a full range of outcomes of sustained contact with and use of English, inspected under a critical lens, ranging from positive to negative. By way of concluding the volume, we now present some of the overarching sociolinguistic themes that have emerged in the chapters, noting that many of these outcomes may best be characterized as tensions. While there are without doubt other themes which could be highlighted, we begin by presenting a few key issues that relate to the aims of this volume as a sociolinguistic exploration of the English language in the Nordic countries.

Aiming to augment our findings, as well as to highlight and contextualize the volume's main findings within previous work, we have invited commentary from a collection of more relatively senior scholars. Most, not all, of the commentators are Professors Emeriti, representing a range of fields. All have contributed extensively to the study of English in the Nordic context, and their work is represented within the chapters of this volume. These scholars were invited to comment on two questions: 1) What is the future of English-related research in the Nordic countries? 2) What are the most important issues today, compared to 20, 30, or 40 years ago? Their responses to these questions offer valuable insights into how the field of inquiry has been shaped, in addition to highlighting important areas concerning the future of English in the Nordic countries – and, as mentioned by a few of the scholars, extending to other

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regions, as well. Their commentary offers a complementary vantage point to coalesce the volume's main findings and predictions.

The main themes highlighted as a summary to the volume are 1) English in relation to the languages of the Nordic countries; 2) changes in research approaches of language and language use; 3) Nordic exceptionalism; the Nordic countries as a model.

## English in relation to the languages of the Nordic countries

The contemporary language situation described throughout this book establishes a scenario in which a high level of contact with English, coupled with an ever-increasing number of English speakers in different realms, prompts fear in many citizens of the Nordic countries about the viability of their national languages. For example, often even at the national and political level there is open concern expressed about the possibility to maintain Danish, Icelandic, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish as languages of science in the face of increasing use of English in higher education and research (see Chapter 6). There is also concern expressed that language contact with English results in excessive borrowing into the national languages, thereby permanently altering and "anglifying" the national languages (see Chapters 4 and 5). Indeed, a curious outcome to arise from the invitation for eminent scholars to comment on the role of English in the Nordic countries is the fact that many of them are not scholars of English, per se, but rather of Scandinavian and/or languages of the Nordic countries. This commonality underscores an important reality brought up repeatedly in this book: the ubiquitous tensions and perceived competition between the national and indigenous languages of the Nordic countries in relation to English, as if two sides of the same coin.

The experts consulted to comment on these themes addressed tensions from many perspectives, ranging from problems assigning an official status to English, to the challenges within certain domains of use.

For example, **Sirpa Leppänen**, Professor Emerita of English (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), comments:

> English has come to stay in the Nordic countries, and it is very likely that its influx will continue in many areas of the society. There is plenty of empirical evidence (e.g., for an overview of the Finnish context, see Leppänen and Laitinen, fc) that shows English is in many domains not a foreign language anymore but a resource that is actively used along with the national languages and a range of minority/migrant languages. At the same time, it seems there are only a few signs of it becoming a real threat in terms of a language shift.

Like Leppänen, several of the scholars consulted commented on whether or not English is a threat to national languages. **Helge Sandøy**, Professor Emeritus of Nordic Linguistics (University of Bergen, Norway), asserts that fears of language shift or death are overstated:

> My experience from two decades ago is that general conceptions of English usage are exaggerated. However, irrespective of exaggeration or not it is […] of great interest in when we want to understand which factors (e.g., societal factors) represent driving forces in historic changes. Patterns of English usage can of course also be studied in other social groups. Academic life is perhaps of particular interest, where some use of English is necessary. But is English also used where it is not necessary? In terms of language policy, academia, in particular, has emphasized that a parallel language practice should be preferred where there is a basis for it, but at the same time that Norwegian should be the normal language in daily work. This is a language policy that has been adopted at most institutions. But it is nowhere specified what such a practice should entail concretely, and one may suspect that it is a rhetorical wording that only legitimizes an increased use of English. One can get the impression that, as long as there are no specific guidelines for situations in which one should use only Norwegian, only English, or both Norwegian and English, many will switch to using English as often as possible because it can be thought to be a recipient who prefers the text to be in English. Desirable internationalization is often interpreted as a necessary Anglicization. This can be a culture of subservience, and there will be no expressed desire for students, scholarship holders, and teachers from abroad to learn Norwegian; there is no incentive for them to learn Norwegian. It can even be difficult for them to learn Norwegian because the Norwegians prefer to use English when communicating with them. If we are to develop a reasonable parallel language practice, it should be studied how the various actors in the academy experience their role in a language-political light and what instructions of language practice are best.

While Professor Sandøy thus characterizes the demise of overall Norwegian as unlikely, he nonetheless expresses concern about the academic vitality of Norwegian. The particular concern about higher education and formal contexts is echoed by two Professors Emerita (University of Iceland), **Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir** (Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogy) and **Hafdís Ingvarsdóttir** (Language Education). In a jointly written commentary, they

comment on rapid changes in Iceland concerning the use of English, particularly in higher education and the production of formal English.

> Icelanders today experience massive daily exposure to English from kindergarten and onwards. This exposure has created a gap between general receptive language skills of the population and the formal productive language skills expected for academic study and in the workplace. A new concept, *Simultaneous Parallel Code Use* (SPCU), was introduced to describe the tension created when academic input is in one language and output is in another, as is the case in many Nordic universities where English is a medium of instruction. The implications of the findings are far-reaching for educational policy and practice in the Nordic countries and call for further research. This includes further study of English curricula and instruction so as to align them better with the rich English input attained extramurally, re-examination of English and L1 teachers' education in light of the changing role of English, and better documentation of the English needs of university staff and students.

The findings they cite in this quotation are from their own research (Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsdóttir 2018), which they assert "have implications far beyond the Icelandic context and depict a radically changing linguistic environment where English has become indispensable as a utility language at all levels of society."

Indeed, **Hartmut Haberland**, Professor Emeritus of German Language and Sociolinguistics of Globalization (Roskilde University, Denmark), discusses domain loss in academia not only in terms of the national languages of the Nordic countries, but for foreign-language learning, as well:

> For me, one of the most striking things to realize was that if you look at the use of languages in academic research in linguistics in Denmark since the 1930s, the "domain loss" often referred to was not one of Danish to English, but of French and German to English. Similar observations can be made in academia for mathematics and several of the natural sciences, and also for the use of additional languages outside academia, for which there is ample anecdotal evidence. To me, the most important eye-openers were three publications that deal with the choice of academic languages in teaching and research in Germany, Norway, and Sweden: Jürgen Schiewe (2001) looked at the change of language at the universities of the German-speaking countries in a long historical perspective and showed that the changing choice of languages in academia was triggered by changing views of the role of academic institutions in society. Independently, Bull (2004) showed the same for Norway. Finally, Salö (2017) explained the present choice of publication languages on the basis of the linguistic capital that a publication language contributes to the competitive edge of scholars in different academic fields and career stages.

Echoing the problems of "domain loss" (see Chapter 6), **Bent Preisler,** Professor Emeritus in the Department of Communication and Arts (Roskilde University, Denmark) advances that:

> […] two opposing views have for decades dominated the debate on the use of English in Denmark and its consequences: One is prescriptive, warning us that English is going to take over various Danish social "domains" unless an official language policy is enforced. However, nobody has been able to define what exactly a "domain" is. The sociolinguistic concept of "practice" seems more viable, and I think a great deal of future research will be concerned with the role of English in defining some of the practices making up a postmodern society. Refuting the "domain loss" argument, the current, and prevailing, assumption is that English and Danish can *coexist* within Danish society – that they can be "parallel languages." Strictly speaking, however, Danish and English could only be "parallel" in the sense of "existing within the same institution": the two languages do not share the same functions. One is used where – for the sake of communication – the other could *not* be. They are in "complementary distribution," "complementary languages." This concept could become a stepping stone into future research on developments in the relative prestige of Danish and English in Denmark. The "Complementary Languages" theory also explains why I do not, after all, feel odd about writing this in English: It *could not* have been written in Danish because I assume my potential readers will include some who do not know Danish. Simple.

Thus, Preisler's overview of the situation of higher education and language use falls in line with the premises of Chapter 7 in this volume, although Chapter 7 goes on to emphasize the roles of parallelingualism and translanguaging. At the other side of the argument of domain loss and language threat, **Tore Kristiansen,** Professor Emeritus of Nordic Studies and Linguistics (Copenhagen University, Denmark) surmises about what will happen if English loses its dominance as the world's main international language:

> Although a Danish dictum warns that "It is difficult to predict, especially about the future," it feels safe to predict that the future of English-related research in the Nordic countries (as in the world more generally) will depend on the future of the English language, whatever that future might be in the short and long historical perspective. No doubt, the lesson from history is that the fate of an international language (or lingua franca) depends on developments in the relationships of power among peoples/countries (dominance and subordination in a variety of societal domains: economically, politically, culturally …). Since the contemporary role of English in the world is the product of "world orders" (British Empire, US post-WWII dominance) that are likely to (continue to) undergo substantial changes in the decades

> to come, the linguistic consequences of this will certainly (continue to) be of crucial research interest. It has been suggested, for instance, that the position of English in the world is so strong that it has reached the "point of no return": English will remain the dominant lingua franca independently of (changes in) power structures. This can become an important issue to follow in the Nordic countries, where the traditional lingua franca role of "Scandinavian" is increasingly challenged by English, not only among Nordic non-speakers of "Scandinavian," but also in the sense that Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes often shift to English instead of talking to each other in their own language. This tendency is likely to continue in the short-time perspective, but what about the longer perspective? Will the status and expansion of English remain unaffected by reduction in UK/US power? Or, would/could the emergence of a new "world order" revitalize "Scandinavian" communication in the Nordics?

Kristiansen's viewpoints at the end of his quotation offer an ancillary to those offered in Chapter 2 of this volume, namely that English has the potential to offer a neutral and fair language which, in essence, contributes in some ways to Nordic cohesiveness.

Overall, the views espoused by our commentators support the decision to approach the main topic of this book from a more sociolinguistic perspective than a World Englishes view, per se. English is used by a (vast) majority of the population in the Nordic countries. In the current era, this use of English, for most people, starts at a very young age. From a linguistic perspective, this equates to an increase in societal multilingualism, not the creation of new varieties of English. While there are exceptions – some would say even increasing exceptions – most citizens of the Nordic countries speak national languages with each other the majority of the time.

## Changes in research approaches of language and language use

A major distinction noted repeatedly by the scholars consulted for this chapter was a difference in how we view language and languages as part of a dynamic system, rather than as something rigid and fixed. This view of language was likewise quite naturally espoused by the authors of this volume. Such a viewpoint is expressed succinctly by **Haberland** (Roskilde University):

> When I look at the history of studies on English in the Nordic countries, the first thing that comes to mind is that the topic grew out of English studies, but over the last 30 years has moved to a more "ecological" approach (in the sense the term was used by Einar Haugen), i.e., not so much focusing on the role of English in the Nordic countries vis-à-vis the national languages, but on the interplay of all the languages involved, national and international.

This notion is expanded on by **Anna Mauranen,** Professor Emerita of English (University of Helsinki, Finland):

> The fundamental change in viewing languages as not isolated systems but as mingled and mixed in society and individual cognition is gaining ground beyond the academic vanguard, and most likely to continue for some time to come. I should think it probable that the future will see even further diversification in lines of research – a trend we have seen since the 1990s. Contextualized, embodied, multimodal, and multilingual research seem currently strong, even on the rise, while of course new trends may be around the corner […]. Notions of language have undergone a major shift toward multilingualism, fluid boundaries, mingling and mixing languages, the embeddedness of language in its complex social contexts, with new user groups coming to the fore. Strictly structural views of language such as those embraced by contrastive linguistics, which was strong in the Nordic countries in the 1980s, including L2 learning research, have largely faded.

**Mauranen** continues, echoing the expense to other foreign languages, as mentioned previously by Haberland:

> English research is so closely in tune with global trends in the Nordic countries that it probably continues strong, with a wide variety of topics of interest and schools of thought. By contrast, other European languages, formerly enjoying much research interest, like French, German, or even Spanish, may decline.

Several of the scholars credited previous research as laying the groundwork for studies or lines of investigation that are relevant for the future. Professor **Mauranen** (University of Helsinki) reflects on different emergent stages of the study of English in relation to other languages as well as with regard to scientific approaches:

> Current trends show a renewed interest in local and minority languages, which together with the multilingual emphasis stands in stark contrast to the last few decades when languages were kept strictly apart. In the 1980s, Nordic research into English focused largely on either historical linguistics or L2 learning, with corpus linguistics gradually seeping into the former, starting at the University of Helsinki. Corpus linguistics rose to prominence in the 1990s, with many outstanding researchers from the Nordic countries, and continues solid, the emphasis now on quantitative methods. The 1990s saw an explosion of lines of research relating to text and discourse beyond the sentence, language use in real life, authentic speech in context, sociolinguistics, and

> pragmatics. Many continue today, but paradigms have shifted; for example, variationist sociolinguistics has conceded to numerous new approaches, code-switching to multilingual practices, and pragmatics has become dominated by Conversation Analysis and Interactional Linguistics. Until the 2010s, the native speaker was the sole acceptable object of study. Since then, L2 users have been distinguished from learners, although in learner-language research the native essentially still constitutes the gold standard. In the early 2000s, English as a Lingua Franca was anathema to English scholarship, but in a decade or so the multilingual turn changed among younger scholars, and ELF became quite mainstream.

Professor **Leppänen** (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), also looks back on changes in the field of English studies, mentioning contributions that remain relevant to this day:

> The study of the spread, uses, and meanings of English in Nordic societies is an established field in Nordic sociolinguistics – especially in Denmark and Finland. In these, the pathways, and trends of English uses are well documented. This tradition provides a basis for future investigations: on the one hand, for tracing how both the attitudinal and usage trends of an entire population have evolved, and, on the other, how the micro-level settings where English is used alongside the national languages have changed. In other words, there is both solid valuable chronological time series for studying the variation and change of English in Finland, and detailed qualitative descriptions on how and for what (communicative, social, and discursive) purposes English has been used in different societal, institutional, and everyday contexts and how they have evolved over the years. What needs to be an important premise in future research is that English is no uniform entity but, as suggested by Leppänen and Nikula in the early 2000s already (2007, 365), the ways and settings in which English is used in Finland (and no doubt in other Nordic countries) are multiple and varied. They cover at least three broad types: (a) those that are monolingual in English, (b) those that are predominantly in Finnish but with some English elements used, and (c) bilingual situations in which participants make use of resources from both English and Finnish. Ascertaining whether these types are still typical remains one of the tasks that future research should tackle.

Additional commentary highlights the role of informal learning and attitudes toward English, themes similar to those in Chapter 4 of this volume. Professor **Kristiansen** (University of Copenhagen), for example, expresses the possibility to explore diachronic or comparative data about norms and language attitudes.

For him, the distinction between what he calls "overt" and "covert" norms are key factors:

> In research on *language status*, a most important issue concerns the distinction between overt (public, explicit) and covert (private, implicit) norms, and the elicitation of empirical data representing covert norms. The MIN project found that the Nordic populations offered quite different overt and covert attitudes toward the influence of English on their languages and speech communities. Covert attitudes revealed positivity toward English-colored speech in terms of social values associated with media "dynamism," and some comparisons of evaluation data and use data indicated an impact from positive covert attitudes on language use. In terms of the possibility of language politics to influence *language status* – and the language-ideological climate of a speech community in general – the issue of overt vs covert attitudes (including their relationship to the modern media universe, and to language use) was important 20 years ago, and is no less important today.

Kristiansen notes his participation in the MIN project, a project which is cited multiple times in this volume (Kristiansen 2005, 2009, 2010, 2015; Kristiansen and Vikor 2006; Kristiansen and Sandøy 2010). His notion of "covert" norms, similar to the "bottom-up learning" discussed in Chapter 4, links in particular to young people and their use of English (as discussed also in Chapter 3 and 11). Professor **Sandøy** (University of Bergen), reflects on the language use of Nordic children:

> Anecdotal reports tell us about extensive usage of English among children in kindergartens and primary schools. Is this a "play language" that imitates the language in the mass media, or is it used in normal communication? In addition, we should find out whether children and young people continue to use the equivalent amount of English in adulthood or is the pattern the same as in the use of Norwegian that when the young people become adults, they tend to adapt their speech habits to their parents' habits. If this is the case, the use of English can be interpreted as an age-grading phenomenon.

Sandøy raises a highly pertinent perspective, and one that is yet to be tested through longitudinal data: will today's Nordic youth shift to using fewer English-sourced borrowings and less English in general as they age, or will they carry their English-language use with them into adulthood, thereby serving to alter the future of their native, national languages?

In a succinct overview of how the study of English has changed in the Nordic countries, **Philip Shaw,** Professor Emeritus of English (Stockholm University,

Sweden) likewise mentions the role of children and the potential they represent as purveyors of language change toward English:

> The volume of research in English studies is determined by the supply of teacher-researchers, not the demand for research, so it will remain high. But its content has changed and will change. Scandinavian English studies in the 1980s was a typical foreign-language discipline focused on the dialects, history, and analysis of its target language as spoken by native speakers, sometimes the urban or rural working class in the spirit of Labov and sometimes the least privileged – African Americans or Creole users. By the 2020s our field has become focused on English as the language uniting the global middle class and is thus no longer a foreign-language discipline. In Sweden it probably needs to pay more attention to the Englishes of a wider range of second-language users. In particular, I think we should pay attention to the use and usage of children. When the commercially driven spread of English-medium instruction leads to English in the school playground, dramatic changes are on their way.

Rounding out the discussion of the general topic of the foundation and future of research on English in the Nordic setting, Professors **Arnbjörnsdóttir** and **Ingvarsdóttir** (University of Iceland) underscore even further the complex relationship between languages and language systems, especially from a social perspective:

> Additionally, there is still scant knowledge about the multiple functions of English among speakers in the Nordic countries. Will English stabilize as a utility language and continue to serve as a source for translanguaging at the grassroots level? Or will it, perhaps, change and evolve to serve another social purpose, with or without, the local languages? Furthermore, the study of English in the Nordic countries can inform and deepen the discussion on the situational aspects of language use. The notion that a speaker has a mother tongue first and then has proficiency in a second or foreign language fails to capture this new multilingual environment. Finally, further research is needed on the role of language(s) as a source of group and individual identity.

The full creative use of language repertoires is highlighted, for example, in Chapter 10, in Kytölä's investigation of online discourse. The observation that a speaker is not divided up according to respective language proficiencies links to another important observation made by some of the other scholars: that is, the role of (more) recent immigrants to the Nordic countries and their relationship to the national languages of the Nordic countries, to English, and to their own heritage language(s). The role of immigrants to the Nordic countries is brought

to the forefront in Chapter 11, and mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3. However, a critical investigation of immigrants to the Nordic countries and their language use is remiss as a focal point of a chapter. Professor **Preisler** (Roskilde University, Denmark), for example, notes:

> Denmark houses some 600,000 immigrants and refugees. We badly need to know how the use of English in Denmark affects some of those whose first language is not Danish. What is the role of English in their lives? Do they see English as a "threat" or as an "opportunity"? Regarding opportunity, do we take advantage of *all* the linguistic and cultural resources available in Danish society?

And Professor **Leppänen** (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) adds:

> Given that Nordic countries are now visibly multilingual, an important topic for future research is also to study the ecology of English with not only the national languages but also with other languages, such as Arabic, Estonian, and Ukrainian. Deciding what the role of English should be in a multilingual society that strives to ensure its openness and inclusivity is crucially important (see e.g. Salö et al. 2022).

## Nordic exceptionalism; the Nordic countries as a model

A final theme raised by one of the scholars consulted for this conclusion connects clearly with some of the core issues raised in the introduction to this volume. In the Nordic countries, there is an overall strong ideology about social equity and equality: this is a modern core sensibility among Nordic populations. During the past twenty or more years, there has been a steady increase in the number of people, including highly skilled workers, who move to the Nordic countries with the expectation that they will be able to carry out their working, as well as their social, life in English. Likewise, the number of international applicants to English-speaking programs at Nordic universities has increased many times over in the past two decades (Hultgren, Gregersen, and Thøgersen 2014). There has been much speculation about changes to the epicenters of English in post-Brexit Europe. With current statistics in mind, it seems likely that the Nordic countries are in a strong position to serve for developing English-speaking communities, especially linked to higher education and the workforce.

These facts raise some critical questions about how English-language norms, attitudes, and ideologies will be perpetuated in the Nordic context. The Nordic countries find themselves at a critical junction in terms of their role in shaping the future of English. That is, they have the opportunity to expand

their ideals of equity to modern-day multilingualism, including, crucially, to the English language. Will the Nordic countries uphold norms of use that are rooted in other social systems, namely the class-based system and history of colonialism exerted by Great Britain, then followed up on by the USA in its role as a superpower? Or, will the Nordic region succeed in serving as a model of equality and social belonging through language, addressing in a fair and just way the many complexities of the English language in the modern world? Can the "Nordic Model" extend to the use of English? These questions are approached by **Andrew Linn**, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research, Head of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and Professor of Language, History and Society (University of Westminster, UK), who points out that the Nordic countries in essence have the luxury of eschewing English while at the same time reaping the benefits of it:

> Ten years ago I launched the project *English in Europe: Opportunity or Threat?* to compare the changing role and status of English across the countries of Europe and across several key domains, notably science and research, higher education teaching and learning, and business and commerce. The driver for the project was the realization that in the Nordic countries the situation was one of very high levels of competence in English tensioned against an academic and political backlash against English, compared with the Balkan region of South-East Europe where low levels of competence went hand in hand with great enthusiasm for more and more English. In the meantime, while there were 8,089 English-medium courses in higher education globally in 2014 when that project concluded, by 2021 there were 27,874. According to the recent *Future of English: Global Perspectives* report (Patel et al. 2023), English learning, the use of English in professional domains, and the wide-eyed enthusiasm of governments, universities, business institutions, and parents (for better or for worse) continues unabated. No Nordic country features among the 50 country case studies on the future of English globally, suggesting that the North is not really in the spotlight today when it comes to "the issue of English." Norway has pioneered sociolinguistic thinking on problems that are much more of a challenging reality elsewhere in the world: language standardization, language planning, language change, domain loss, business communication. Much of this has been colored by the "pessimism of privilege." The demonization of English began in the 1960s because politically and economically it wasn't a big deal to make an enemy of English in order to rehabilitate the internal tussle between Bokmål and Nynorsk. In much of the rest of the world, a negative response to English simply isn't an option. […] The big questions globally for English now are: its role as part of a complex multilingual reality; its role in employment globally; equity and inclusion globally; the use of AI [Artificial Intelligence]

in teaching and learning. The Nordic countries have huge experience in all these areas and the future is not agonizing despondently about "domain loss," as was the case in the first decade of the 21st century, but contributing openly and generously and non-colonialistically to addressing the practical, social, and economic challenges around English globally. The "most important issues today" are not to be found in the Nordic countries, but rich experience and a well-resourced infrastructure are, so, for me, "the future of English-related research in the Nordic countries" lies outside the Nordic countries.

The Nordic countries have fought for – and won –a place at the global table, with English serving as one means of achieving this status. These nations now serve as a model for other nations and populations which are actively striving for "a place at the table," in part through English. The choices, both big and small, that have paved the way for English in the Nordic setting serve as a model for other locations. This volume has laid out the tensions, the triumphs, and the social realities that are impacted through the fervent adoption of English. We hope the wealth of information gathered in these pages can serve as a source of introspection and consideration for multiple audiences not only within the Nordic region but around the world.

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