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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* ***k****á* *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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