

Modern Loanwords in the Nordic Countries. Presentation of a project.¹

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1. Background

In the first chapter of his book on English as a global language, David Crystal sums up the present status of English in the world:

Within little more than a generation, we have moved from a situation where a world language was a theoretical possibility to one where it is a rapidly approaching reality. No government has yet found it possible to plan confidently, in such circumstances. Languages of identity need to be maintained. Access to the emerging global language – widely perceived as a language of opportunity – needs to be guaranteed. [...] Fundamental decisions about priorities have to be made. Those making the decisions need to bear in mind that we may well be approaching a critical moment in human linguistic history. (Crystal 1997: 22)

In the Nordic countries, tensions between indigenous “languages of identity” and English, the global language, have been felt and expressed with an increasing sense of urgency over the past few decades. National language councils have to a varying extent and in different ways addressed the topic, but so far there has been no attempt at a unified Nordic policy on linguistic globalization.

In 1998, at the request of the Nordic Language Council², Professor Helge Sandøy at the University of Bergen was asked to outline a Nordic

¹ I would like to thank Professor Stig Johansson, Oslo, and Professor Helge Sandøy, Bergen, for their helpful comments on the draft of this article.

² The Nordic Language Council is the co-ordinating body of the language councils of the Nordic countries, and represents one of the major sources of funding for the project. The project receives funding from various other sources, the most important of which are The Nordic Joint Committee for Research in the Humanities (NOS-H), The Nordic Academy for Advanced Study (NorFa), The Language Policy Reference Group of the Nordic Council of Ministers, “The New Norwegian” (a project under the Globalisation and

research project on the treatment of foreign words in the Nordic languages. After a brainstorming session with participants from several Nordic countries, a plan for a project proposal³ entitled “*Moderne importord i språka i Norden*” (“Modern loanwords⁴ in the languages of the Nordic countries”; hereafter referred to as MISN) was formed, the main components of which were to be

- a comparison of the *volume* of loanwords in the individual Nordic languages
- the frequency and usage of native *substitute forms*
- the *adaptation* of loanwords to the domestic languages
- official standardization, and
- *attitudes* toward loanwords and substitute forms.

The languages included in the project are Danish, Faroese, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish in Finland and Swedish in Sweden.⁵ Although the scope of the project is not limited to English influence, but includes influence from all foreign languages, English, for obvious reasons, is the focus of attention.

The project held its first meeting in Stockholm in November 2001, and a final conference is planned for the fall of 2005.

2. Aims

The primary aims of the project, as expressed in the project outline, are

1. to make a comparative survey of the treatment of modern loanwords in the languages in the Nordic countries (regarding usage and norms), and

Internationalisation Programme of the Research Council of Norway), The Faroese Research Council, The Swedish Cultural Foundation (in Finland), The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, The University of Bergen, and the language councils of the Nordic countries. The individual researchers involved in the project and their universities and research institutions have also placed some of their time and resources at the project's disposal.

³ The Norwegian text of the plan (Sandøy 2000b) can be found in its entirety at <http://www.hf.uib.no/moderne/prosjektskisse.html>.

⁴ In line with common English usage, *loanword* is used in this article for the term *importord* (literally *import word*).

⁵ Two of the official languages of the Nordic countries, Greenlandic and Sami, were exempted from the project, as other language problems were felt to be more urgent, and in greater need of resources and attention, in these particular language communities.

2. to gain general insight into the basis of language attitudes and specific insight into the attitudes toward loanwords in the Nordic countries (the "linguistic climate").

A subsidiary aim is

3. to provide a background (through a) and b)) for the discussion and decision-making regarding aims and means in language planning and maintenance in the Nordic Language Council, and in the individual language councils of the Nordic countries.

3. Structure and plan

Three main areas have been singled out for special attention: the situation with respect to the *usage* of loanwords and substitute forms, the situation with respect to *official standardization norms*, and the language users' *attitudes* toward loanwords and language. More time and effort are invested in the survey of language attitudes than in the other two areas, as language attitudes have a direct bearing on the linguistic climate of the individual Nordic language communities, and because this is a problem area in which little research has so far been carried out.

The comparative aspect is a basic principle permeating all parts of the project, and will enable researchers to compare and contrast the situation in the different countries in a way that has not hitherto been possible. To ensure maximum comparability, a relatively rigid structure has been imposed on the project and sub-projects. The three areas of focus have been subdivided into seven parts (see below), and further subdivided into projects for each individual language and language community. The result is a staggering 56 sub-projects:

A. The volume of loanwords in the Nordic languages

Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe⁶

B. The adaptation of loanwords to the domestic languages

B1. Adaptation in writing – Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

B2. Adaptation in speech – Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

C. The frequency and usage of native substitute forms

Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

D. National traditions regarding official standardization

⁶ Danish, Faroese, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish in Finland, Swedish in Sweden.

Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

E. The attitudes toward loanwords and substitute forms

E1. Survey investigation – Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

E2. In-depth interviews – Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

E3. Matched guise test – Dan, Far, Fin, Ice, Nor, Swe-Fi, Swe

The results of the project will appear in a series of reports, to be published by Novus Press in Norway. The first volume is a report from a conference on loanwords (Sandøy 2003), and reports presenting the results of most of the sub-projects will be issued subsequently. A report assessing the entire project will form the final volume in the series.

The present article is very much a presentation of ongoing research, and its scope cannot do justice to a project of this scale and complexity. Also, the different parts of the project have reached varying stages of completion, and this is reflected in the space and thoroughness devoted to each sub-project in this article. Some of the preliminary results that are presented have not yet undergone sufficient scientific scrutiny, and both results and analyses may be subject to change. Readers who wish to acquaint themselves with the results and details of the project are encouraged to read the forthcoming project reports.

4. How many loanwords are there in the languages of the Nordic countries? (Project A)⁷

4.1 Previous work

A number of research projects on the extent of English lexical influence on the written language have been carried out prior to MISN. Studies from the larger language communities in the Nordic countries are presented in Ljung (1985) and Chrystal (1988) for Swedish, Hansen & Lund (1994) and Jarvad (1995) for Danish, and Sandøy (2000a) and Johansson & Graedler (2002) for Norwegian. In the smaller communities, less work has been done. Very few studies exist on the scale and frequency of loanwords

⁷ The researchers responsible for Project A are Endre Brunstad, and later Bente Selback. Besides, a number of research assistants have been involved in the excerption of the individual languages: Bente Selback (Dan, Swe, Swe-Fin, Nor), Hanna Simonsen (Far), Anu Lahtinen (Fin), and Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir (Ice, Nor).

in speech; Sharp's (2001) study of English in spoken Swedish is an exception. The existing studies vary with respect to method and scope, and are thus often not suitable for comparison. A central concern in this part of the project is, therefore, to insure that the sources on which quantification is based, are comparable across the different languages and countries.

4.2 Definitions and delimitations: What is meant by modern loanwords?

The object of the study is modern loanwords. "Loanword" (*importord*) here means any word composed wholly or partially of foreign lexical material. The definition comprises

1. direct loanwords, both in their original form, e.g. *workshop*, *pizzeria*, and in adapted or nationalized forms, e.g. *diskotek* (originally *discotheque*);
2. hybrid loanwords, i.e. combinations of direct loanwords and native words, e.g. Nor *freelance-arbeidar* ("freelance worker");
3. pseudo-loans, i.e. words made from foreign word-material, but not used in the donor language, e.g. *snowracer* ("sled with steering wheel and broad runners").

Citation forms are also included. Abbreviations and proper nouns (names, titles, etc.) have been included only when they are used as ordinary words.

"Modern loanword" in this project means any word of foreign provenance that has been introduced after 1945. Standard dictionaries, dictionaries of neologisms and dictionaries of anglicisms (see the list of references) have been used to decide whether to include individual words in the material.

4.3 Sources

Newspapers were chosen as the source material for this part of the project, for several reasons: They treat a wide range of topics, represent a variety of genres, and are written with a general audience in mind. Recent issues are also often available in electronic format. Two time periods were chosen: April and September 1975 and 2000. The original plan was to collect a comparable amount of newspaper text from national and local newspapers in the different speech communities.

A number of practical problems arose in connection with the collection of the source material. Mainly due to differences in size between the language communities, the number of newspapers published and the

size of the newspapers vary considerably. It also turned out to be surprisingly difficult to get access to some of the newspaper issues, and computerized versions of many newspapers were not accessible or non-existent.

4.4 Central research questions, and some preliminary answers

The preliminary results from Project A were presented at a meeting in the fall of 2003; however, it should be noted that the data compilation was not completed for all the languages at this stage. The most important research questions of the project are listed below, with some of the preliminary results. Project A also serves to furnish some of the other sub-projects with a word-list on the basis of which hypotheses about e.g. adaptation and integration may be formed.

- What are the similarities and differences between the written languages in the Nordic countries with respect to the volume and distribution of loanwords?

The average proportion of loanwords in running text ranges from approx. 0.2 % in Finnish and Icelandic to 1 % in Danish. This number is higher than the frequency reported in any similar earlier studies (e.g. Chrystal 1988, which, however, is limited to English loanwords).

In all of the languages, nouns represent the most commonly borrowed word class, with between 82 % (Danish) and 95 % (Finnish) of the words.

- What are the most important donor languages?

In all of the languages, English is the dominant donor language after 1945, with around 90 % of the words in all the languages, except Icelandic, which has proportionally fewer words from English. Finnish, predictably, has a noticeable element of Swedish loanwords. Other donor languages of some significance are French, Italian, and so-called internationalisms (Greco-Latin words), but none of these come close to English in number.

- How are loanwords distributed across different subject areas and text genres?

In most of the languages, the text in advertisements contains a higher percentage of loanwords than text in the editorial sections of the newspapers: In Icelandic the advertisements contain 6-7 times as many loanwords as the editorial text. In the Finnish newspapers, however, the distribution is fairly even between the two text types.

Texts aimed at young people and texts about entertainment have an overall relatively high frequency of loanwords, whereas texts about local matters, and, somewhat surprisingly, sports texts have a low frequency of loanwords.

- How have the volume and frequency of modern loanwords changed after 1945?

In connection with the diachronic study, it should be noted that the comparison is between the periods 1945-1975 and 1945-2000. It is therefore not the predictable growth in the number of loanwords that is interesting, but rather, the pace and magnitude of the increase in the different languages. As expected, all of the languages show an increase in the number of loanwords; the largest growth is found in Finnish and Faroese, where the number has increased by five times.

5. To what extent and in what ways have loanwords been adapted to and integrated into the structure of the different languages? (Project B)

5.1 Previous work

Aspects of the phonological, orthographic and morphological integration of loanwords have been treated with varying degrees of thoroughness in a number of previous studies, e.g. Sørensen (1973) on Danish, Hjalmar Petersen (1995) on Faroese, Guðrún Kvaran & Ásta Svavarsdóttir (2002) on Icelandic, Graedler (1998) and Sandøy (2000a) on Norwegian, and Dahlstedt, Bergman & Ståhle (1962) and Söderberg (1983) on Swedish. Some of these studies may aid in the forming of hypotheses for the present project, where cross-comparison, again, is a central concern.

5.2 Integration in writing (Project B1)⁸

The basis for the analysis of the integration of loanwords in the written language is the words and categories extracted from Project A (see the sections under 4 above). A list of all the orthographic and phonotactic combinations in

⁸ Professor Helge Omdal acts as co-ordinator for Project B1. The practical work will be carried out by a number of researchers: Pia Jarvad (Dan), Hanna Simonsen (Far), Ulla Patola (Fin), Ásta Svavarsdóttir (Ice), Helge Omdal (Nor) and Åsa Mickwitz (Swe-Fi, Swe).

the relevant donor languages (most notably English) will serve as a maximum list for the orthographic integration, against which any adaptations in the forms of the loanwords may be checked. For example, the English letter combination <ou>, pronounced [ʌ], as in *tough*, may be rendered as Danish <u> or <ø> (*tuff/tøff*), Norwegian <ø> (*tøff*), Swedish <u> (*tuff*), etc. Some other tendencies in the written language which are held by some to be the result of foreign (i.e., English) influence, may also be compared, e.g. the writing of compounds as separate words, the use of capital letters in adjectives denoting nationality, and the use of an apostrophe in genitive forms. When the lists from the different countries are completed, it will be possible to extract the adaptation types that are comparable across different languages.

A similar list for morphological integration will contain potentially comparable adaptation types, e.g. the use of English suffixes in participle forms (Nor *headhunted* vs. *headhunter*) and in the plural of nouns, the variation between the *-ing* and *-ning* suffix in Danish and Swedish (Swe *kidnapping* vs. *kidnappning*), gender assignment in nouns, adjective inflection, etc.

The word-lists from Project A are used to ensure a similar basis for comparison in the seven languages. However, since the word-lists from project A are relatively short, and the range of forms displayed is correspondingly limited, a decision has been made to supplement the basis material with data from other sources, preferably computerized newspaper corpora, which are both convenient to use and similar in kind to the basis material. The practical work in Project B1 has just started at the time of writing, and will be completed during the fall of 2004.

5.3 Integration in speech (Project B2)⁹

Much less systematic research has been done on the adaptation of loanwords in the spoken than in the written language. As a consequence, Project B2 has a wider scope and is more ambitious than Project B1: In addition to an investigation and comparison of the adaptation strategies used by language users in the various language communities, the project will also analyze potential correspondences between integration strategies and social variables, such as lifestyle (see below, section 8.3) and age.

⁹ Pia Jarvad acts as co-ordinator for Project B2. The practical work will be carried out by a number of researchers: Margrethe Heidemann Andersen (Dan), Ulla Patola (Fin), Ásta Svavarsdóttir (Ice), Helge Omdal (Nor), Malin Dahlman (Swe-Fi), and possibly Sjúrdur Gullbein (Far).

As in Project B1, a list of all the potentially relevant phonological and morphological problems or variables has served as a starting-point for the investigation. For example, the English sound [w] in word-initial position, e.g. in *walkman*, may be pronounced as either [w] or [v] in most or all of the languages involved. Questionnaires focusing on phonology and morphology will be distributed to 40 respondents for each of the languages. The questionnaire contains a number of questions covering 20 phonological and 20 morphological variables relevant to post-1945 loanwords. The questions will be asked by a researcher, and have been composed to elicit responses that will reveal the speaker's choice of integration in each case. The following are examples from the draft version of the Danish part of Project B2:

- Ordet *tricky* betyder "som er kompliceret og svær at blive klog på". Man kan fx snakke om at en sag er tricky. Hvordan vil du bøje ordet hvis du skulle bruge det om flere sager?
- Hvad kalder man musik som er uden brug af elektricitet, ledninger eller forstærker, især akustisk? (*unplugged*)

(Andersen 2003)

All the interview sessions will be taped, and then analyzed. At the time of writing, the collection of the Finland-Swedish and the Danish data is nearly completed, and the results of the entire sub-project will be presented in the fall of 2004.

6. To what extent do language users in the Nordic countries accept and use proposed domestic substitute forms (avløserord) for loanwords? (Project C)¹⁰

6.1 Previous work

The volume of literature on lexical purism varies considerably between the Nordic countries, as does the energy with which new domestic words have traditionally been proposed as replacements for foreign ones, and the

¹⁰ Guðrún Kvaran acts as co-ordinator for Project C. The practical work will be carried out by a number of researchers: Pia Jarvad (Dan), Kristina Atnadóttir (Far), Hanna Hakala (Fin), Guðrún Kvaran (Ice), Helge Omdal (Nor) and Åsa Mickwitz (Swe-Fi, Swe).

enthusiasm with which they have been accepted among the language users. Iceland, along with Finland, is well known for its reluctance to admit loanwords into the language's official word-stock, and for its well-developed system for the creation, introduction and spread of new Icelandic words; see, e.g., Halldór Halldórsson (1979) and Kjartan G. Ottósson (1990) on Icelandic, and Ikola (1985) on Finnish. In some of the other Nordic countries, on the other hand, proposed domestic substitute forms have often been largely ignored, or have been the object of ridicule. Brunstad (2001) is a recent comparative account of purism in Danish, Swedish, Faroese and Norwegian.

6.2 Material and analysis

Lists of words from Project A (see the sections under 4 above) will also form the basis for the investigation of the language users' acceptance of substitute forms. The relevant words will subsequently be tested with the aid of supplementary material. The project is still in its early stages, but guidelines and strategies have been agreed upon, and results are expected to appear in 2004.

7. The prevailing tendencies and traditions in official language standardization (Project D)¹¹

This part of the project investigates the official standardization practice in each country with respect to the introduction of substitute forms and the adaptation of loanwords. The individual language councils of the Nordic countries are responsible for this sub-project, and will produce comparable historical overviews of the language policy in the area of loanword standardization. A report will be published in June 2004.

¹¹ Jan-Ola Östman acts as co-ordinator for Project D. The practical work will be carried out in co-operation with the Nordic language councils: Pia Jarvad, Margrethe Heidemann Andersen, Erik Hansen and Jørgen Schack (Dan), Jógvan í Lón Jacobsen (Far), Pirkko Nuolijärvi and Pirjo Hiidenmaa (Fin), Ari Páll Kristinsson (Ice), Helge Sandøy and Svein Nestor (Nor), Leila Mattfolk and Åsa Mickwitz (Swe-Fi) and Martin Ransgart (Swe).

8. The language users' attitudes toward loanwords and substitute forms (Project E)

8.1 Previous work

Some earlier investigations of language users' attitudes to foreign (English) words and the use of English exist for the larger speech communities. Ljung (1985, 1988) presents a large survey where close to 2,000 respondents reported on their attitude to the use of English in Sweden. Simonsen & Uri (1992), Masvie (1992) and Pettersen (2000) have all carried out similar investigations on a smaller scale in Norway. In Denmark, several studies have focused on attitudes to the use of English, e.g. Jarvad (1995), Preisler (1999) and Andersen (2002).

8.2 The survey investigation "Nordic Language Attitudes" (Project E1)¹²

The main purpose of the survey investigation is to examine what patterns of language attitudes may be revealed through traditional quantitative methods.

Professional opinion poll institutions¹³ were commissioned to carry out a survey during February and March 2003. Twelve questions were put to a random sample in each community: 500 in the Faroe Islands and Swedish-speaking Finland, 800 in Iceland, and 1,000 in the remaining countries, in total close to 6,000 respondents.

In addition to questions about attitudes to loanwords, the respondents were interviewed about their attitudes to English, to language in general, and to certain basic societal values. The survey also contains information about a number of social variables: the respondents' sex, age, income bracket, level of education, region/district, size of the household, and computer literacy and ownership. The following are some examples from the Norwegian version of the questionnaire:

¹² Lars S. Vikør is responsible for the co-ordination and analysis of Project E1. The researchers responsible for developing and carrying out the project are: Tore Kristiansen (Dan), Jógvan í Lón Jacobsen (Far), Pirkko Nuolijärvi (Fin), Kristján Árnason (Ice), Lars S. Vikør (Nor), Leila Mattfolk (Swe-Fi) and Olle Hammermo (Swe).

¹³ Opinion AS Norge, in co-operation with Hermelin Research in Denmark, Sweden and Finland, the Gallup Institute in Iceland, and Fynd in co-operation with Fróðskaparsetur Føroya in the Faroe Islands.

Modern Loanwords in the Nordic Countries

- *Påstand*: Det brukes alt for mange engelske ord i norsk i dag. Er du: Helt enig (etc.)
- *Påstand*: Det bør lages nye norske ord som erstatter de engelske ordene vi får inn i språket. Er du: Helt enig (etc.)
- Hvilket ord foretrekker du å bruke av *mail* og *e-post*?
- Hvilket ord foretrekker du å bruke av *bodyguard* og *livvakt*?
- Hvilket ord foretrekker du å bruke av *design* og *formgivning*?
- Hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstand: Det hadde vært best om alle i verden hadde engelsk som morsmål?

8.2.1 Some preliminary results

Some preliminary results of Project E1 were presented at a meeting in Iceland in May 2003.

Regarding the amount of exposure to English, the survey shows that Icelanders were more exposed to English than any other groups, but at the same time, they were also the most skeptical toward English. The Faroese and the Swedish-speaking Finns reported the lowest exposure to English.

In the questions about attitudes, the Norwegian respondents proved the most puristic; 62 % of the Norwegians feel that too many English words are being used in their language today, while 21 % disagree with this claim. The corresponding figures for the Danish respondents, at the other end of the scale, are: 41 % agree, 44 % disagree.

As regards a question about the substitution of new domestic words for the loanwords, the Faroese and the Icelandic groups were most in favor, 67 % and 63 %, respectively. This is hardly remarkable, as both countries have a language policy that strongly promotes substitute forms for foreign loanwords.

Somewhat surprisingly, 29 % of the Swedes, more than in any other country, are in favor of English as the only mother tongue, whereas the Danish respondents are the most positive toward English as the working language in Nordic companies (51 % in favor). Interestingly, the Norwegian results indicate that the preference for English as a global mother tongue is highest in the groups that report the lowest exposure to English.

A more detailed analysis of the results, which will no doubt reveal interesting patterns and contrasts, will appear in a report presenting the results for the individual countries, as well as a comparative summary.

8.3 The in-depth interviews (Project E2)¹⁴

The second sub-project under the language attitude part of MISN is a qualitative investigation, the main purpose of which is to elicit the language users' views and reflections in personal interviews, and in group conversations (in groups of three) between people who know each other.

This investigation is based on in-depth interviews of 24-48 respondents in each language community. To ensure comparison, a number of decisions were made with respect to the interview design and the selection of interviewees. This selection was aided by insight from sociological and social psychological theories: the interviewees were chosen from four social ("lifestyle") groups, according to their place in the hierarchical structure of modern work places:

- Group A: Well-educated senior executives in traditional business establishments with a conservative corporate culture (e.g. manufacturing company, shipping company).
- Group B: Well-educated mid-level managers in modern business establishments with a modern corporate culture (e.g. advertising, information technology, media).
- Group C: Lower-level employees in the service sector (e.g. bank, computer company)
- Group D: Industrial workers in traditional manufacturing companies.

Along with the social variable, an effort was made to keep two other variables constant, viz. an age bracket of 25-35, and an equal distribution between the sexes. However, in some of the smaller language communities in particular, it proved difficult to get a sufficient number of interviewees from some of the lifestyle groups if these principles were strictly adhered to. Most of the field work in the project was carried out during 2002.

¹⁴ The researchers responsible for project E2 are Jacob Thøgersen (Dan), Jógvan í Lón Jacobsen (Far), Saija Tamminen (Fin), Hanna Óladóttir & Halldóra Björt Ewen (Ice), Marit Merete Lunde (Nor), Leila Mattfolk (Swe-Fi) and Catharina Nyström (Swe).

Central topics during the conversations are the interviewees' use of and experience with English and other foreign languages, and their attitudes toward language and education, loanwords, and language policy. Most of the questions asked in the opinion poll survey were also raised in the in-depth interviews, but the latter naturally allowed scope for explanation, elaboration and expansion of the topics, and thus provide somewhat different responses.

This part of the MISN project is by far the most time-consuming, as it involves the planning, practical arrangement, taping, transcription and analysis of many hours of conversation. A number of the researchers involved in this sub-project will use the results as thesis projects for their university degrees, but joint reports will also be published in the MISN series of project reports.

8.4 The matched-guise tests "EVA ENG" (EVALUATION of ENGLISH influence in text; Project E3)¹⁵

The matched guise technique is engineered to control all variables except the language. It involves asking respondents to evaluate the personal qualities of speakers whose voices are recorded on tape, and where the same speaker uses different linguistic varieties. The purpose of the matched-guise tests in Project E3 is to measure people's evaluations of the speakers in two language samples, one "pure" version and one English-influenced version. In contrast to sub-projects E1 and E2, the matched-guise technique is an indirect method, since it does not directly ask for the respondents' attitudes to language.

Nationalized versions of the same text will be used for all the languages involved, and an attempt has been made to include the same (or very similar) English words in all the different English-influenced versions. A version of the same text with adapted and/or substitution forms instead of the English loanwords will represent the contrast. As far as possible, the recruitment of respondents will reflect the choice of respondents in Project B2, i.e. a balanced proportion of people from different age groups, sexes and social groups (and, possibly, geographical regions).

The work involved in Project E3 will be carried out during 2004.

¹⁵ Tore Kristiansen and Jacob Thøgersen are responsible for the design and planning of the test, which will be carried out by Tore Kristiansen (Dan), Jógvan í Lón Jacobsen (Far), Halldóra Björk Ewans (Ice), Leila Mattfolk (Swe-Fi), and possibly Saija Tamminen (Fin).

9. Final comments

In order to understand internationalization and globalization processes, the result of which may involve the loss of entire domains of language use to English, and in extreme cases, even language death, we need to examine the language as it is being used, as well as try to uncover the attitudes, conscious and unconscious, held by the language users. Comparative studies like MISN will of necessity involve a certain structural rigidity, but on the other hand, the comparative aspect may provide valuable insight into cultural differences over and beyond the actual object of study, the language. A comparison of different data types may further our understanding of, e.g., the function of common conceptions about language (language awareness), and the basis of the formation of attitudes.

In an article in *Språk i Norden* 2002, Helge Sandøy emphasizes the MISN project's overall focus on language as a cultural phenomenon in society (Sandøy 2002: 75f; 87). An important aspect in forming our understanding of language as a cultural phenomenon is its role as a symbol of identity. Many potentially distracting social, political and cultural characteristics are relatively similar in all of the Nordic countries, whereas the issue of national identity as projected and maintained through language may be said to vary a great deal. In this respect, the Nordic countries represent a highly suitable laboratory for comparative studies of these matters.

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Links

The project's homepage: <http://www.hf.uib.no/moderne>

