

Krönika över nyutkomna doktorsavhandlingar

Från och med häfte 74 (2023) erbjuder vi nydisputerade forskare inom tidskriftens intresseområden en möjlighet att presentera sina avhandlingar. För denna tredje doktorskrönika bjöd vi in forskare som disputerat mellan 2024 och första halvan av 2025.

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Katrín Lía van der Linde Mikaelisdóttir

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Keywords: Language contact, Norwegianisms, Icelandic manuscripts, social variation, scribal practice

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Abstract

Icelandic manuscripts from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries contain various linguistic, orthographic, and palaeographic features known as Nor-

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wegianisms, characteristics common in Norwegian dialects and traditionally attributed to Norwegian influence. Although their decline in the early fifteenth century has been noted, it has not been systematically investigated, nor have the social conditions behind their disappearance been fully understood. This study provides robust evidence as the first comprehensive, longitudinal analysis of Norwegianisms in Icelandic manuscripts and charters from 1300 to the Reformation, combining large-scale quantitative analysis and statistical methods with approaches from historical sociolinguistics not previously applied to the study of language change in Iceland.

The project examined nine such characteristics, tracing their frequency and variation between 1300 and 1530 with particular attention to their decline after 1400. It also considered the motivations for adopting these forms within the broader social, political, and cultural context, and how use varied between genres, scribal milieus, and regions. The resulting dataset comprises roughly 165.000 tokens gathered from 75 scribal hands in manuscripts and 187 in charters, analysed for spelling variants, linguistic contexts, and inflectional patterns.

The analysis yielded two key findings: First, the orthographic representation of the examined Norwegianisms primarily depends on linguistic or graphemic restrictions, variation in different genres, and the socio-regional context. Norwegianisms are most prevalent in the context of law, Church, and secular administration. Regionally, they are often linked to scribal milieus in west and north Iceland, which may hint at the possibility of diverging socio-regional orthographic conventions or the emergence of certain formal styles or registers. Second, Norwegianisms in Icelandic manuscripts seem to have developed in two distinct waves, challenging previous assumptions of a permanent ousting of these features. They were regularly used until around 1400 and declined significantly shortly after, but several features resurged intermittently in the late fifteenth century. Their eventual disappearance appears to have been mainly caused not by decreasing contact, but rather by the shift in locations and agents of literacy, evolving literary tastes, and the growing influence of new and competing transnational trade in the fifteenth century.

Discussion

To investigate possible explanations for the distribution, development, and presumed demise of Norwegianisms, this study was based on seven case studies:

- The loss of word-initial *b* before *l*, *n*, *r*.
- The analogical restoration of word-initial *v* before *ó*, *o*, *u*, *y*.
- The use of the privative prefix *ú-* instead of *ó-*.
- The form *þessur* instead of *þessi* of dem. pron. *sjá*.
- The forms *eðr* for conj. *eða*, and *meðr* and *viðr* for prep. *með* and *við*.
- The absence of an orthographic representation of the *u*-umlaut.
- The use of the 3rd pers. sing. ending *-(u)r* in the 1st pers. sing. pres. ind. act.

The foundation was a dataset comprising ca. 165.000 tokens collected from 75 hands in manuscripts from c 1300 to c 1530 and 187 original charters. The material was analysed for token frequencies, spelling variants, correlations, and phonological and morphological contexts. Particular emphasis was placed on changes within medieval Icelandic society and intercultural relations from the viewpoint of historical sociolinguistics, specifically, the differences between genres and text types, as well as variation within and between co-occurring hands and their scribal milieus.

Quantitative analysis showed that nearly all features declined sharply around 1400, which coincides with the Black Death in 1402, which decimated the clerical population, likely weakened monastic scriptoria and enabled the secular elite to dominate manuscript production. This decline is consistent with changing centres of literacy, evolving tastes, and growing transnational connections in fifteenth-century Iceland. Yet, most Norwegianisms did not vanish permanently but became increasingly erratic from the second half of the fifteenth century onward, where some forms plateaued after the initial drop, persisted throughout the period, or resurged in the late fifteenth century. In light of these trends, I concluded that the development of the examined Norwegianisms was not characterised by universal decline and disappearance. Rather, it seems to have occurred in two distinct waves: an initial period of regular use in the fourteenth century, followed by a second irregular wave of re-appearing features.

Three factors appear to have impacted their orthographic representation in the first wave: linguistic and/or graphemic restrictions, genre, and socio-regional context. Norwegianisms generally occur in restricted phonological or lexical environments, often in legal and religious vocabulary. They are most common in formal genres such as ecclesiastical, hagiographic, legal, and administrative works, while largely absent from sagas. In the fifteenth century, however, these contextual distinctions became less pronounced, suggesting that scribal practice rather than text type determined their persistence.

A likely explanation for this shift lies in changing scribal practice. Norwegianisms are most common in large, elaborate codices produced by fourteenth-century ecclesiastical scribes, with notable differences between the Helgafell group and the Benedictine monasteries in the North. Such variation suggests the presence of diverging socio-regional conventions or the development of formal registers. Norwegianisms appear in many texts without clear ties to Norway and were not necessarily shared across Norwegian literary communities. While some scribes may have consciously imitated such forms for export, it seems more likely that they had become part of the regular orthographic repertoire of scribes already accustomed to their use.

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Bio

Katrín Lís van der Linde Mikaelisdóttir holds a PhD in Icelandic Linguistics from the University of Iceland. She works as a researcher and project manager at the Centre for Digital Humanities and Arts in Iceland (CDHA/MSHL) as well as for the Advanced Training in Digitization of Older Texts (ANTIDOTE) network. In addition, she teaches Old Icelandic at the University of Iceland.

Selected publications

- Haraldur Bernharðsson, Katrín Lís L. Mikaelisdóttir, and Roberto Luigi Pagani, Forthc.: “Icelandic Script and Orthography in the Fifteenth Century.” In *Innovation in Icelandic Textual Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Lena Rohrbach, Karl G. Johansson, and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson. Leiden: Brill.
- Haraldur Bernharðsson, Katrín Lís L. Mikaelisdóttir, and Roberto Luigi Pagani, Forthc.: “The Icelandic Language in the Fifteenth Century.” In *Innovation in Icelandic Textual Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Lena Rohrbach, Karl G. Johansson, and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson. Leiden: Brill.
- van der Linde Mikaelisdóttir, Katrín Lís, Forthc.: “Intra-Writer Variation in the Works Attributed to Helgafell Hand H1: One Scribe or More Than One?” In *Book Production at Helgafell? New Perspectives on a Suspected Scriptorium in*

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Laura Zieseler

Thesis: Zieseler, Laura. 2024. *On the Integration of Non-Native Nouns in Faroese*. Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag.

Keywords: Faroese, loanwords, language change, morphology, orthography

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Abstract

This study analyses the integration of vowel-final non-native nouns in Faroese (as for instance *pizzain/pizza'in/pizzadín.FEM.NOM.SG.DEF*) based on written language material ranging from computer-mediated communication (CMC) to traditional printed media, and covering several domains, registers, and styles. The study's database consists of a total of 114 types and 786 tokens compiled between summer 2016 and autumn 2020. In order to gain a holistic insight into the underlying processes, both intralinguistic—orthography, phonology, morphology—as well as extralinguistic—language ideology, metalinguistic discourse—factors are examined. Several aspects make this object of investigation particularly worthwhile: Besides being the smallest and least researched modern-day Scandinavian language, Faroese also has one of Scandinavia's youngest, most historicising orthographies, as well as a strong tradition of lexical purism. Its ideological climate is directly influenced by two polar opposites, namely progressive Danish on the one hand, and conservative Icelandic on the other. All of these intricacies are also shown to have an impact on the observed integration strategies of the nouns examined. These strategies are described as the result of both native and non-native analogical forces that lead to ongoing contact-induced language change, including the refunctionalization of the silent grapheme ⟨ð⟩. For this structural innovation, which previously has not been subject to

comprehensive linguistic analysis, the term *⟨ð⟩-declension* is coined by the author. With regard to language-internal aspects, the study's theoretical framework draws on the concept of analogical formations as well as on aspects of Natural Morphology. Language-external aspects influencing the normative status and treatment of these particular non-native nouns are scrutinised through the lens of various metalinguistic phenomena. The results indicate that new written norms are being established through a "bottom-up Faroeseisation" catalysed by CMC and currently gradually spreading to other communication forms. Overall, morphological noun-integration in written Faroese appears to be far more common than indicated by previous studies (cf. e.g. Simonsen & Sandøy 2008). Contrary to purist fears, these nativisation strategies follow systematic rather than random patterns, resulting in novel structures that do not simplify Faroese nominal morphology, but rather increase its overall functional complexity.

Discussion

In the first part of the study, the nouns are examined according to their structural make-up in their respective donor language, i.e. type of final vowel and its prosodic (unstressed vs. stressed) and/or graphotactic (realised or silent) status. Based on the hypothesis that the integration processes are underpinned by analogical formations, and that they tend to proceed in the direction of reduced markedness, the model of four-part proportional analogy and principles postulated in Natural Morphology are applied. Thus, the integration of non-native nouns is described as the result of both native and non-native inter- and intraparadigmatic analogical forces acting either independently or synergetically. These integration strategies are revealed to derive from a fairly small and stable set of analogical formations provided both by the L1, Faroese, and the L2, Danish. As a consequence, native stem inflection (*pitsuna*(FEM.), *temu*(r)(NEU.)) competes with novel, non-native word-based inflection (*pizza'ini*(FEM.), *tema-ir*(NEU.)), in which the boundaries between foreign content morphemes and native grammatical suffixes are usually marked using apostrophes or hyphens. Furthermore, some orality-induced orthophone forms such as *temaið* can be traced back to spoken Faroese, where certain native nouns have suspended vowel deletion, i.e. *hjártaið*. Hiatuses emerging in different phonetic environments as a result of inflection are often broken by the insertion of silent *⟨ð⟩*. This refunctionalisation of *⟨ð⟩* is regarded as the outcome of an analogical formation based on native graphonotactic patterns. Examples for this

⟨ð⟩-declension include *pizzaðunum*, *demoðina*, *temaðir*, *mottoðid*, *cowboyði*, *garantiður*, *battariðum*, *ideðir* etc. Like apostrophes and hyphens, orthographic hiatus-breaking ⟨ð⟩ (as well as its substitute ⟨d⟩ on non-Faroese keyboards) can be regarded as “innovative separators” and hence as instances of *digital mediation* (Androutsopoulos 2016).

Following a linking chapter on the (meta)linguistic significance of the grapheme ⟨ð⟩, the second part of the study delves into a language-external perspective, starting with a breakdown of the notion of linguistic purism and its history on the Faroe Islands. After centuries of *interlingual* Danish–Faroese diglossia, a new, *intralingual*, primarily *medial* diglossia has emerged between written, officially prescribed, purist Faroese on the one hand and (conceptually) oral, vernacular, Danicised and internationalised Faroese on the other. On this backdrop, various metalinguistic devices such as explicative vs. normative glosses (e.g. *evni* (*tema*) vs. *tema* (*evni*)), so-called scare quotes (e.g. *internet* “*meme’ini*” *eru*), and introspective reflections as well as explicit criticism are analysed. Their frequency indicates that the average Faroese language user tends to critically judge both their own normative competence and that of others, reflecting a kind of linguistic insecurity that in this study is referred to as *schizoglossia* (Haugen 1962). This is pointedly illustrated by several threads from the public Facebook group *Føroysk rættstaving*, which serves as the Faroese language community’s “unofficial language council”. Since spoken Faroese is a high-intimacy language (Leonard 2016), its internalised norms are particularly resistant to top-down prescriptivism. Instead, the normative “voices from below” establish new implicit written norms through informal, non-institutionalised bottom-up Faroecisation, which ensures the language’s continuing vitality and may eventually even close the existing medial diglossic gap.

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Bio

Dr. phil. Laura Zieseler (b. 1985 in Schwerin, Germany) is a research assistant at the Chair of Scandinavian Linguistics at the University of Greifswald. She studied Scandinavian, English and American Studies, and graduated with an M.A. in Intercultural Linguistics. From 2009 until 2012, she was granted a scholarship from the German Academic Scholarship Foundation, and won an award for her PhD thesis in 2020. Currently, she is working on her habilitation project on clippings and hypocorisms in the five Scandinavian languages. Her research interests include morphology, writing systems, language contact and change, comparative linguistics, sociolinguistics, CMC, and language ideology.

Selected publications

- Zieseler, Laura, 2017: “*Hey nórdar!* Investigating Faroese-English Language Contact in Computer-Mediated Communication.” *Fróðskaparrit* 64. Pp. 35–66.
- Zieseler, Laura, 2024: “Focus on Faroese: Digital Insights into the Smallest North-Germanic Language Community.” In *Heritage Languages in the Digital Age: The Case of Autochthonous Minority Languages in Western Europe*, ed. by B. Arendt & G. Reershemius. Bristol: Multilingual Matters & Channel View Publications. Pp. 54–76.

Luca Riccardelli

Thesis: Riccardelli, Luca. 2025. *Central Scandinavian dialectology from a diachronic perspective*. Rome: Università di Roma “La Sapienza”. <https://iris.uniroma1.it/handle/11573/1739948>

Keywords: Scandinavian dialectology, Norwegian-Swedish dialect continuum, Central Scandinavia, linguistic geography

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Abstract

The aim of the dissertation is to analyse and contextualise the shared phonological features of several varieties spoken across the Norwegian-Swedish border, arguing for the existence of a Central Scandinavian dialect group.

Such group appears to be characterised by 1) the partial participation to innovations that are typical of either Western or Eastern Scandinavian; 2) the presence of independent innovations and 3) a set of conservative features. More precisely, the varieties of interest are spoken in part of the counties of Trøndelag and Innlandet in Norway and Jämtland, Härjedalen and Dalarna in Sweden, where field investigations have been conducted via the administration of questionnaires and the recording of interviews. The collected data is then compared to older recordings and transcriptions retrieved via archival research, thus providing diachronic depth to the study. The study offers a novel interpretation of the theories brought forward by Sandøy (1996) and Dalen (2005) via the application of a geolinguistic approach. In particular, the study confirms the typically Central Scandinavian character of previously researched phenomena such as tripartite monophthongisation and apocope, while also identifying previously unresearched features such as the inhibition of progressive *j*-Umlaut in certain phonological contexts.

Discussion

The first account of the label *Sentralskandinavisk* is found in Helge Sandøy's *Talemål* (1996). Sandøy's work distinguishes itself from the large majority of the contemporary accounts precisely because it displays a transnational and geolinguistic approach to the analysis of Norwegian dialects. Fundamentally, in the context of the previous studies (including e.g. Bandle, 2011), the Central Scandinavian area has always been analysed through the lens of innovations, whether they initially emerged within the area itself or resulted from the diffusion of West or East Scandinavian traits.

However, one of the crucial points of my study is that of highlighting the presence of substantially conservative or divergent traits among Central Scandinavian varieties that set them apart from West and East Scandinavian without necessarily constituting transitional features. Some of these features are constituted e.g. by the tripartite monophthongisation of primary Old Nordic diphthongs or by the restriction of innovations that are otherwise considerably widespread over all of mainland Scandinavia, such as progressive *j*-Umlaut. The analysis of these developments and their diffusion (both within the Central Scandinavian area and elsewhere) will sometimes prove itself to be considerably valuable for a novel diachronic explanation of the phenomena themselves.

In order to operate relevant diachronic observations, the investigated material had to be collected from both contemporary and older sources.

The main and richest contemporary resources that were already available at the beginning of the research are constituted by the Nordic Dialect Corpus and the SweDia2000 project database. A great deal of the material has been collected through fieldwork investigations. The fieldwork activities consisted of the recording of interviews and the administration of written questionnaires. In total, 67 speakers were interviewed, while 93 participated to the written survey. The older material consists of the recordings and transcriptions from the Norwegian *Målførearkivet*, currently available as the LIA Norsk corpus (Hagen & Vangsnes, 2023), and of a collection of 67 transcriptions provided by the *Institutet för språk och folkminnen* (ISOF). The interviews included in these collections were conducted as early as 1935.

Through the application of a geolinguistic approach (Bartoli, 1945; Bye 2011), it was possible to identify the routes of diffusion of several typically Central Scandinavian innovations, such as tripartite monophthongisation, apocope and palatalization of long alveolars. Most of these features appear to have had their epicentre between Sør Trøndelag and Nord Østerdal, later spreading to the neighbouring Swedish provinces. The more conservative feature of inhibited progressive *j*-Umlaut suggests that, differently from what had been stated in earlier accounts, the fronting of *ja* and *jo* did not spread from a single epicentre in Eastern Sweden, since fronting of *jo* seems to have spread from South-Central Norway. Furthermore, the inclusion of several informants from different age groups allowed for an analysis of generational variation, highlighting the recent spread of macro-regional Central Scandinavian tendencies, especially in the case of younger speakers from Nord Østerdal, which tend to conform to Trøndersk influences in opposition to Urban East Norwegian (e.g. with regards to the palatalisation of long alveolars).

In conclusion, the Central Scandinavian area constitutes a rather distinct and even lively dialectal area which is worth investigating further on other levels of analysis such as morphology and syntax.

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Bio

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Selected publications

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