

The Influence of English in Scandinavia

Three studies of language attitudes and change

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Book reviews

Margrethe Heidemann Andersen: *Engelsk i dansk: Sprogholdninger i Danmark. Helt vildt sjovt eller wannabeagtigt og ejendomsæglerkækt* [English in Danish: language attitudes in Denmark]. Copenhagen: Dansk Sprognævns Skrifter [Publications of the Danish Language Council] no. 33, 2004. 254 pp.

Pia Jarvad: *Det danske sprogs status i 1990'erne — med særligt henblik på domænetab* [The status of the Danish Language in the 1990s, with special reference to domain loss]. Copenhagen: Dansk Sprognævns Skrifter [Publications of the Danish Language Council] no. 32, 2001. 170 pp.

Stig Johansson and Anne-Line Graedler: *Rocka, hipt og snacksy: om engelsk i norsk språk og samfunn* [*Rocka, hipt og snacksy: English in Norwegian language and society*]. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 2002. 318 pp.

The influence of English in Scandinavia: three studies of language attitudes and change

Margrethe Heidemann Andersen's monograph is a research report on the nature of Danish teenagers' contact with the English language and their attitudes toward English loanwords in Danish, comparing these to attitudes prevalent in the Danish Language Council.

Part I titled "Theoretical Considerations" outlines the status of English as a world language, discussing briefly the influence of English as a question of either (American) cultural imperialism or "globalism" — a somewhat obscure dichotomy, particularly as "globalism" is not analyzed *per se*. Chapters I.2 and I.3 deal with the classification of English loanwords according to their relative "directness", also introducing previous literature on the influence of English vocabulary on the Nordic languages in various text types, concluding with a definition of direct loans as

Heidemann Andersen's primary linguistic focus. Language attitude theory, in general, and previous Scandinavian attitude studies in relation to the influence of English, in particular, are summarized in Chapter I.4, together with an excursus comparing this influence with language shift and dialect death processes. Although the use of English by young Danes is seen as an aspect of identity construction, identity theory is absent from the discussion. Chapter I.5 contains an account of the Danish Language Council's principles of standardization regarding the spelling and inflection of English loanwords, as well as an outline of the debate in recent years on the Council's policy vis-à-vis the English influence. The social and linguistic variables of the investigation are presented, together with three general hypotheses regarding young people's relationship to English: it is assumed (1) that contact with the English language is an everyday occurrence in the lives of young people; (2) that they have a positive attitude toward English borrowings; and (3) that they prefer the original English spelling and English plural form of loanwords.

Part II is concerned with empirical methodology relevant to language attitude studies, including the use of direct elicitation through questionnaires or interviews, as opposed to indirect elicitation such as the matched guise technique. Both direct and indirect methods are chosen, associated with the elicitation of conscious and subconscious attitudes, respectively.

Part III makes up the bulk of the volume, constituting a careful account of the empirical procedures and results. The informants were 9th graders and senior high school students from three Copenhagen suburbs. Heidemann Andersen does not attempt to describe the schools with regard to the social characteristics of their student clientele. The informants' English skills and contact with the English language outside school are accounted for (Chapters III.3 and III.4) through statistical analysis of the questionnaire results, as are their attitudes toward borrowings from English (III.5). Not surprisingly perhaps, the general hypotheses are confirmed: young Danes are in close contact with the English language, being, in general, favorably disposed toward English loanwords, particularly when there are no well-established Danish equivalents. The third hypothesis concerning student attitudes toward spelling standards and the formation of the plural, in English loanwords, is confirmed with some qualifications (Chapter III.6). Replies to some open questions in the questionnaire are analyzed by means of discourse analysis (Chapter III.7), though — as the author herself points out — young students' ability to reflect, in writing, on something as abstract as language may be too limited for this kind of analysis to be meaningful.

The matched guise experiment, carried out with different informants from the same schools and age groups, uses a variant of this technique

where the same Copenhagen-accented speaker reads the “same” text twice, in a version with a high frequency of new borrowings from English, and one without any such borrowings at all, while other speakers read the text (non- or moderately anglicized) with various Danish regional accents. Despite some weaknesses in the design (pointed out by Heidemann Andersen herself), the results are interesting, including the observation that the younger students show the more favorable attitude toward the heavily anglicized version, and that gender and area of residence, but not ethnicity, are also important factors. Heidemann Andersen compares these results to the attitudes of young Danes toward conservative Standard Danish, on the one hand, and the modern Copenhagen variety of Danish, on the other. The use of informal, slangy English loanwords is associated with the modern Copenhagen variety, characterizing young people and the Danish media.

Part IV contributes a smaller empirical analysis of attitudes in the Danish Language Council (DLC) toward the influence of English on Danish. A comparison of dictionaries shows that, contrary to expectations, the authorized DLC spelling dictionary, *Retskrivningsordbogen*, is more tolerant of English borrowings than another popular authority, *Nudansk Ordbog*, published by a Copenhagen newspaper. Answers to a questionnaire given to DLC employees show that the latter wish for a more clearly stated — though not more restrictive — language policy, and the DLC’s answering service routinely refers direct questions regarding Council policy on English loanwords to various DLC debate and news publications.

Part V summarizes the results, with a return to the view that young Danes’ use of English loanwords is an identity symbol. There is no attempt to characterize the nature of this identity, though we learn that it does not affect feelings of *national* identity, and that some young Danes react negatively to excessive borrowing from English. Young Danes prefer the English plural when using English nouns in Danish, but otherwise their attitudes do not differ significantly from those of the DLC or the rest of the population, though the author thinks that use of English as an identity symbol is more important to young people.

The main weakness of the book is its lack of concern with sociolinguistic theory. The theory chapter is mainly a state-of-the-art overview, and the hypotheses derive from similar investigations rather than a theoretically based scrutiny of the Danish context. However, Heidemann Andersen’s data are substantial and varied, her analyses careful. Her innovative application of the matched guise technique to the study of reactions to loanwords and code shifting proves useful. The book must therefore be considered a significant empirical contribution to descriptions of the contemporary language scene in Denmark.

Pia Jarvad's report was commissioned by the language-policy reference group of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It deals with the influence of English on Danish language and society, in a world balanced between the inseparable forces of — on the one hand — internationalization and the need for English as a lingua franca, and — on the other — localization, i.e. the growing tendency toward nationalism and regionalism and the protection of local languages. After a helpful summary of the book's contents (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 gives a brief introduction to some basic issues, including the two central concepts: "domain loss" and "language policy." Jarvad traces the history of the domain concept, also citing its critics, among whom Haberland (2000) has pointed out that although the term domain loss is immediately meaningful, it does not adequately describe the phenomenon in question: language choice is rarely determined by social domains, but by social networks representing individuals and nationalities, hence languages in competition. "Language policy" is discussed with reference to Scandinavian sources. Jarvad uses the term to denote the codification of the status and formal standard of a language, as well as any actions to strengthen or protect it.

Chapters 3 and 4 summarize the status of Danish in a historical perspective. Danish is an old language with a written standard, which is updated continually by an official Language Council, and with a literary tradition developed over many centuries. It has been thoroughly codified in dictionaries and grammars, being the Danish national language and the first language of the majority of Danes. Chapter 3 contains a systematic overview of the use of Danish by various groups inside and outside of Denmark, and of other languages spoken in Denmark. However, Jarvad cites various surveys showing that a distressingly large percentage of Danes have reading problems, which she attributes to a discrepancy between escalating demands for reading skills in the information society, on the one hand, and political unwillingness to advance mother-tongue teaching in the schools, on the other. Chapter 4 deals with laws and regulations defining the status of Danish. Danish is an official EU language, but there are no laws specifying that Danish is the language of administration and education inside Denmark. This has hitherto been taken for granted, but increasing internationalization is now making such assumptions less obvious. There are various explicit EU requirements regarding obligatory use of the national language, e.g. for regulations and instructions concerning safety and the environment.

The chapter on the "language climate" (Chapter 5) summarizes tendencies in the Danish language debate around the turn of this century, characterized by Jarvad as a "messy" debate, with a preponderance of views expressing some concern for the future of the Danish language. However,

she is surprised at the considerable number of language-political initiatives (Chapter 6), public as well as private, which would seem to show such worries to be unfounded.

Jarvad's mandate was given in the Preface, being to map, for Denmark, the extent of the linguistic (*sproglice*) phenomenon known as domain loss (p. 13). In Chapter 7 we learn that the mandate even identified the most "important" domains to be investigated: schools, higher education and research, business, administration and politics, culture (high and popular culture, including sports and recreation) (p. 84), which this chapter, then — taking up half the book — sets out to do.

It starts with a presentation of views on the concept of domain loss, citing various theories and questions raised by Ó Riagáin (1997), Preisler (1999) and others. However, although these sources — and Jarvad herself, it seems (p. 83) — agree in strongly questioning the usefulness of domain (loss) as a sociolinguistic concept, along the same lines as Haberland (cited above), Jarvad does not use these arguments to problematize the presupposition behind her mandate, which is that domain (loss) is a relevant and useful sociolinguistic concept. Instead she remains faithful to the conceptualization of her mandate, carefully mapping, in a historical perspective, the use of Danish, and extent of "domain loss" to English, in each of the "domains" identified, in exactly those terms.

Beginning with school and education (as distinct from *higher* education), Jarvad observes that — despite isolated experiments involving the use of English as the language of instruction — there is universal agreement that the language of primary and secondary education in Denmark should be Danish, but that foreign languages, English in particular, should also be strengthened. She points out, among other things, that English as a foreign language has been introduced earlier and earlier in the Danish primary school, at the same time as research has shown no evidence that such a policy in itself will improve children's long-term proficiency in English. In higher education, growing internationalization presents a dilemma: multinational cooperation and exchange make it necessary that educational programs be taught in languages other than Danish, primarily English; on the other hand, if English predominates, Danish educational programs will lose their national identity and anchorage.

"The language of research today is English", Jarvad claims in her summary at the beginning of the book (p. 19), a sweeping statement that does not do justice to the careful analysis carried out in Chapter 7, which shows that such a view is only possible if science is equated with the *natural* sciences. And even so, it seems hard to accept that — just because Danish scientists have to publish their formal reports in English — this means that "the Danish language of science is stagnating and dying out" (p. 19).

Surely Danish scientists do communicate (also) with *other* Danish scientists, and surely — if the situation does not include people who do not understand Danish — they will be communicating in Danish. Rather than lamenting the high percentage of scientific articles written in English within each field (a healthy sign of the international orientation of its research), educators should — as indeed Jarvad does (e.g. pp. 75, 111) — point to the equally important need for research communication and publication, including popularization, at the *national* level (in the national language).

Many Danish business corporations like to claim they use “English as a corporate language”. However, Jarvad’s survey (by means of a questionnaire, pp. 167–170) shows that only at a few, very large corporations do employees actually use English in their everyday communication. Generally the spoken language is Danish, whereas a large proportion of written communication is in English.

Limitations of space prevent me from going into the remaining domains covered by Jarvad’s report. Despite my quarrel with the concept of “domain (loss)” and the author’s rather uncritical acceptance of it as a basis for her approach, the report as such constitutes a highly informative and generally well-balanced analysis of the status of the Danish language in a cross-section of internationalized contemporary Danish institutions.

Johansson and Graedler’s report is based on a research project posing much the same questions about “English in *Norwegian* language and Society” (the title of the project, my italics) as those regarding (English in) *Danish* language and society posed by the two works dealt with above. In fact, this is a more comprehensive account than either of these, including among other things a historical overview of the development and diversification of English and Norwegian, and the way the two languages have influenced each other in Norway; a thorough analysis of the influence of English on the Norwegian language *code*, especially in the form of loan words; and a detailed account of the *use* of English in Norway, with recommendations regarding issues of language policy and the relative status of Norwegian and English in the future. The aims and contents of the book are summarized toward the end of Chapter 1, after a discussion of the concept of “Anglo-Norwegian”: Anglo-Norwegian is English used in Norway and/or by Norwegians, which is not necessarily the same variety as that (or rather, *those*) spoken by native speakers of English. In other words, Anglo-Norwegian refers to the mutual influence between English and Norwegian, in a Norwegian context. Although this is a source of linguistic and cultural enrichment and dynamism, it may also give rise to communication problems. Being concerned especially with English influence on Norwegian, Johansson and Graedler list a series of questions which “linguisti-

cally aware” Norwegians should ask themselves in determining whether or not to use words and expressions in English with their Norwegian interlocutors. Thus the book’s approach is normative, the aim being to further language awareness for the sake of good communication and, ultimately, for the protection/strengthening of the Norwegian language. However, the book is not “against” English: “*We do not have to choose either English or Norwegian, but should accept both English and Norwegian, according to what the situation requires*” (p. 32, authors’ italics).

Chapter 2, on the status and diversification of the English language in the world, is also a summary of important issues in the recent debate on the relationship between English and other languages/cultures. The detailed historical treatment of loanwords in English (“the mongrel tongue” p. 53), at the beginning of Chapter 3, may seem a little less relevant, but does of course put the ensuing discussion of loanwords in Norwegian in an interesting perspective. Chapter 4, titled “Who uses loanwords and why?”, begins with the use of loanwords in dictionaries, showing that English is by far the biggest contributor of loanwords to modern Norwegian, after which examples of English loanwords in running text, from various *engelskdominerte områder* (‘English-dominated fields’), are examined. The word “domain” (with its, usually misleading, connotations of conceptual precision) is refreshingly absent here, though the definition of “English-dominated” is not quite clear. The spoken language is dealt with mostly as it relates to young people’s use of American slang, and although key concepts such as “identity” and “subculture” are introduced, along with other “motives for using English loanwords” (pp. 127–128), the discussion of research on (and attitudes toward) loanwords in the spoken language is not embedded in any particular social theory.

The chapters on how English loanwords are adapted to fit the conventions and systems of the Norwegian language code (Chapters 5–7) are interesting not least to a Danish reader, because of the close similarity between the two languages and the fact that they face nearly identical pressures from English. After the presentation (in Chapter 5) of the factors at work in the process of loanword adaptation — linguistic, psychological and social — one is perhaps not surprised to find that this process in Norwegian tends to exactly parallel the process in Danish. However, a Danish reader perusing Table 6.2 (Chapter 6: pp. 164–166) will note that, at the orthographic level, the integration of English loanwords has gone farther in Norwegian than it has in Danish. In their treatment of the morphological level (Chapter 7), Johansson and Graedler themselves make reference to research regarding another Scandinavian language (Swedish: Ljung 1985), pointing out that speakers’ choice between English and indigenous inflectional patterns in loanwords has been shown to vary according to speakers’

demographic background. This chapter also includes a detailed discussion of the *semantics* of English words used in Norwegian (pp. 197–198).

Indirect borrowings from English, such as semantic loans and substitution, are dealt with in Chapter 8. This chapter seems more explicitly prescriptive in its approach than preceding chapters, listing numerous criteria and principles for the construction and communicative appropriateness of substitution loans (pp. 219, 222). An analysis of articles from the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* (p. 226–227) seems to show that attempts to introduce substitution loans have been largely successful.

Chapter 9 is concerned with the relationship between (use of) loanwords and code switching, including analyses of transcripts from an investigation into young people's spoken interaction, from the 1990s. The final chapter (Chapter 10), somewhat unexpectedly, contains warnings against “domain loss” after the domain concept has been absent so far. The chapter discusses plans for strengthening the Norwegian language in the domains of business and higher education, reiterating the call for increased language awareness so young people will learn to put both English and Norwegian to good use according to the situation.

To sum up, my review of these three volumes, by now well-known points of reference in the Scandinavian language debate, has described three different (and in various ways complementary) approaches to the subject of this debate, i.e. the relationship — within the Scandinavian societies — between the indigenous languages and English: Margrethe H. Andersen's *Engelsk i dansk: Sprogholdninger i Danmark* is an empirical investigation based on sociolinguistic methodology, comparing in descriptive terms language change tendencies from below to the attitudes of linguistic authorities, which is a new and interesting angle. Pia Jarvad's *Det danske sprogs status i 1990'erne* is a sociologically based analysis of language use and language-political developments, providing a valuable overview of, and discreetly prescriptive commentary on, the balance between Danish and English across a range of Danish institutions. Finally, Stig Johansson and Anne-Line Graedler's *Rocka, hipt og snacksy: om engelsk i norsk språk og samfunn* is a comprehensive survey of the use of English loanwords and other features in Norwegian, well-balanced in its prescriptive concern with language attitudes, and with a great wealth of examples of Anglo-Norwegian which in themselves represent a significant contribution to the description of contemporary Norwegian. Together, these three books form a substantial record of language attitudes and language change in Scandinavia at the turn of the 21st century.

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English in Denmark and Sweden: two studies of usage and attitudes

Bent Preisler's *Danskerne og det engelske sprog* reports from a well-conceived study which combines a questionnaire-based representative survey with in-depth interviews conducted with individuals from several Anglo-American-rooted subcultures in Danish society. This design not only allows for a multi-faceted picture of the English influence, it also serves as a framework for the development of Preisler's main argument, namely that we need to distinguish between influence (or change) from above, and change from below, in order to understand how the English language has come to hold such a strong position in the Danish society. From above, through the educational system and international business world, English is first and foremost a *useful* language, and a good command of English is necessary due to globalization. From below, emphasis is put on the *high status* of English, a much more emotional value.

The questionnaire survey involved a stratified sample of 856 Danes, who were visited by interviewers during the years of 1995 and 1996. The data was collected by means of an impressively detailed and well-constructed questionnaire. The analyses focus on multi-dimensional correlations and result in both expected and unexpected findings. Most Danes consider themselves reasonably good at English; about two-thirds can master an easy practical contact situation with the English language. More alarming, though, is that one fourth of the informants cannot master such a situation, like showing the way to a bus stop. This is a serious matter,

especially since 90 percent of the informants answer that they meet English as often as every week or every day. The group of Danes that have no or little English knowledge is devoted a special interest in Preisler's book; he describes them as functional illiterates. Preisler estimates that 20 percent of the Danish population cannot participate in a casual conversation in English. Many members of this group are more than 45 years of age, have left school early and have little or no formal education of English. However, 10 percent of this group are younger than 45 years, and ought to have had good opportunities to learn English at school.

The qualitative part of the study consists of interviews with representatives from different subcultures: *hip-hop*, *computer nerds*, *rock music*, *death metal* and — as a comparison from another age group — *radio amateurs*. The interview section opens with a presentation of subcultures as a societal phenomenon, written by Kjeld Høgsbro. In this introduction a model of description and analysis is presented, with a particular focus on whether English proficiency is a matter of how the individual is positioned in relation to the core of the subculture.

Frequent code-switches to English are a stylistic feature among the (high-status) participants in all of the studied subcultures. This can be seen as a result of two different circumstances: many “native concepts” are English, since all the subcultures have their origins in American communities, and English is the language of communication within the subcultures. Networks across national boundaries are also a salient feature of subcultures, which calls for an international lingua franca. The emotional value of English, its high status, is clear in many of the interviews. Representatives of both rock music and death metal claim, for example, that English is a better language for rock lyrics (or song texts) than Danish.

All the chosen subcultures are male cultures, where women can be described as “hang-arounds” or low status participants. A rather depressing view of female abilities and psyche is displayed among some of the interviewees (“girls ain't worth shit, man”). Preisler argues that these male networks are competitive and enforces norms that the high-status members represent.

Whether female dominated sub-cultures work in the same way as introducers of English would be interesting to find out. Hopefully, this study will inspire to similar work where that field might be covered. Undoubtedly, Preisler's findings are valid for all of Scandinavia and this study, which actually tries to explain *why* young people use so much English, deserves to be further read and discussed.

The doctoral thesis of Harriet Sharp is a longed-for contribution to the ongoing research on English influence on the Swedish language, since there

is hardly any previous research on *spoken* Swedish in a language contact perspective. Sharp's study deals with code-switching in two different social settings: business meeting conversations in a shipping company, and casual conversations among young adults.

The primary aims of the study are to establish how frequent English expressions are in the corpora, to describe their formal, functional and code-switching characteristics, and to determine their integration in the Swedish discourse. In defining "use of English", Sharp chooses not to distinguish between code-switching and borrowing, thus avoiding a rather problematic methodological discussion, but treats all English lexical items equally as results of language transfer. A code-switch is thus defined as any token of English, even a single word.

Another dilemma of definition is what constitutes an *English* lexical item. Here again, Sharp uses a rather wide definition, and registers all English lexical items which have entered Swedish after 1850 — proper nouns and names included. This early set time limit allows well established and frequently used words as *tajt* (*tight*), *test* and *jobb* (*job*) to count as code-switching, which is something for the reader to bear in mind.

The two corpora, consisting of more than 16 hours of videotaped material, show two different incorporation strategies for English. The participants of the business meetings (the COOL Corpus) code-switch as often as once every 14 seconds, whereas the young adults of the Visby corpus code-switch every 58 seconds. In the latter corpus gender is also a factor — women code-switch significantly less often than men. Why that is the case is not explained here, but it is an interesting fact that hopefully will inspire further study.

In the COOL Corpus, 78 percent of the loan-lexemes are nouns. In the Visby Corpus, only 37 percent of the tokens are nouns, while interjections and pronouns are more frequent. Only a small proportion of loan-lexemes occur in both corpora. An exceptional position among these is held by the word *okay*, a "dynamic discourse marker" which has many discursive functions and is described in some detail.

The structure analysis shows that the majority of code-switches occur in "mixed utterances" (utterances where both English and Swedish occur). In most cases the code-switch is limited to a single word and occurs only once, a typical utterance being *Tur att båtarna ligger i Pacific!* ('Luckily, the ships are in the Pacific'). Unmixed utterances are more often used in the Visby Corpus, and most of those unmixed utterances are single English words, especially interjections. In both corpora, speakers distinguish clearly between English and Swedish, and as a result "sandwich words" (structure words in between English lexical items) are realized in the matrix language, Swedish.

In the Visby Corpus, the presence of full English clauses can be explained by the “quoting game”, an activity where the young adults, in order to enjoy themselves and establish a (linguistic) spirit of community, imitate TV commercials and/or popular films and sit-coms. Linguistically, the unmixed English utterances can be characterized as basic and almost formulaic in nature, probably requiring little cognitive effort.

The analysis of integration focuses on standardization, inflection and word formation and also language alternation cues, so called “flagging devices”. The code-switches in the COOL Corpus are found to be highly integrated in the discourse where they occur. Non-standardized code-switches are frequent, due to the many specific shipping terms, but English nouns and verbs often have Swedish inflection. Participants of the business meetings flag linguistically, often using the phrase *so called*. The young adults prefer paralinguistic flagging, in particular voice modification. They also use flagging more frequently, approximately at every second non-standardized token.

Both corpora exemplify asymmetrical code-switching with Swedish as a matrix language governing the semantic and syntactic structure of the utterances. The fact that speakers seem to distinguish clearly between matrix language and code-switches should reassure anyone worried that Swedish might be threatened by the English influence. Sharp’s conclusion, in any case, is that “English words are an asset rather than a liability for Swedish speakers” (p. 199). That might not be the final argument in this discussion, but Sharp’s well-written thesis is an important contribution to the research field and breaks new ground, in investigating spoken discourse.

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