The battle between the three Scandinavias, the past the present and the future

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Overview

• Introduction: On languages and models of language
• The past: The creation of a Nordic imagined community
• The present: The practice of Nordic collaboration
• The future: Utopias of Nordicities
Subject models – language models

• Rationalism, romanticism and mechanicism: ratio versus emotions, the individual vs. the collective, will power versus determinism; the advent of social psychology and interactionalism

• Subjects, politics and language

• Idealized models of language lead to different language policies

• Bühler’s model and language ideologies
Gegenstände und Sachverhalte

Ausdruck

Darstellung

Appell

Sender

Empfänger
The four linguistic competencies

Seen from the individual, language competencies involve:

- **SPEAKING**
- **LISTENING** (UNDERSTANDING)
- **WRITING**
- **READING** (UNDERSTANDING)

Groupings:

- **Productive**: Speaking and writing
- **Receptive**: Listening and reading
- **Primary**: Listening and speaking
- **Secondary**: Reading and writing
The model

- **Rationalism** views language as the product of collective reason and prioritizes the mind: A rational language policy opts for the widest possible range of communication: universalism. Examples: Madvig, Frederik Dreier: Blind angle: The individual’s emotional attachment to language; the community; language variation; FOCUS: Written language; the message

- **Romanticism** views language as expression and looks at the historical embedding of language in culture as an inseparable link: particularism. Example: Herder; blind angle: Power; FOCUS: Speech and literature; literature and ethnicity; the speaker

- **Interactionalism** views language as situated communication; neither the individual nor the community owns language which is created anew every time we communicate. Example: Roy Harris; blind angle: Both variation and structure are products of the routinization of communication; FOCUS: Interaction
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THE PAST – THE CREATION OF A NORDIC IMAGINED COMMUNITY
Benedict Anderson on nationalism

• The French revolution and its aftermath, the Napoleonic wars; drastic changes in the power balance of the North
• The German situation at the beginnings of the 19th Century
• Another kind of romanticism
• The convergence of ideology: university and unification
• The specific nature of German romanticism
• The specific reaction in the Nordic countries
• Creating imagined communities, through a public educational system: Having something in common, but what?
The work of the founding fathers

• Rasmus Rask 1787-1832
  – first Icelandic Grammar 1811
  – The Prize Essay 1814-18
  – first critical editions of the Eddas 1818
  – first reader 1819

• Niels Matthias Petersen 1791-1862
  – The first Professor of Nordic languages (UCPH 1845)
  – The first Nordic Language History (1829-30)
  – educated Carl Säve, the first Professor of Nordic in Sweden (UU 1859)
Rask’s ideology

- Old Nordic as an escape from classic philology
- OUR history, OUR literature, OUR language: The Icelandic fiction
- The Nordic as an alternative to the German
- Secular linguistics
- Comparative philology, orthographies which correctly depict the phonological structure
- A rationalist, possibly also a historicist, definitely a universalist
Petersen’s ideology

- Greek as the centerpiece of classical philology instead of Latin
- Old Icelandic as a literature of the highest order on a par with the Greek tragedies
- Old Icelandic for the people: The saga translations
- A complete curriculum: The History of Language 1829-30, The History of Danish Literature 1853-60
- The Rask-Petersen Orthography 1832ff
- A historicist idealist, a particularist, an anti-German nationalist
Conclusions 1

• The idea of the Nordic rested on the rationalist basis of Rask’s research and was furthered as a historicist, nationalist programme in the two central Nordic powers Denmark and Sweden while Norway was hammering out a romantic ideology as the basis for the new independent nation state.

• This happened in the era of budding industrialism, an industrialism which gradually but with certainty was to deny the ideological superstructure and turn the resulting five Nordic states into nation states with separate linguistic realities.
Why not a common Nordic language?

• What do we mean by ‘a common Nordic language’? Obviously we mean a written standard
• Danish as the possible common Nordic language?
  – before 1814
  – after 1814
• Swedish as the possible common Nordic language?
  – after 1814 and until 1864/69
• Old Icelandic as a common Nordic language?
• Milestone 1: The Danish defeat in 1864
• Milestone 2: The Nordic meeting 1869
• The dialect question and the role of ideologies
  – Romanticism: dialects, the language of the people (OBS The role of the Neogrammarians)
  – Rationalism: dialects, the language of the conservative farmer
  – Interactionalism: dialects, the only remaining variation; resources for identity performances
Conclusions 2

• The dream of Nordicity had shattered on the rock of reality in 1864 and 1869 but the ideological structure remained in the various nation states as part of the curriculum of basic education and the various high schools as well as at universities.

• Nordic philology as a professional enterprise building on Neogrammarian theories dominated the long 19th Century at the universities until STRUCTURALISM came along.
Structuralism

- The retreat from ideology
- The international view: Linguistics instead of national philologies or national philologies as furnishing the general linguistic effort with materials and examples
- Rhythmic differences in the advent of structuralism in the Nordic countries: first Denmark (the inspiration from the Prague circle), then Norway, then reluctantly Sweden and Finland
THE PRESENT: NORDIC COLLABORATION
A Nordic language policy?

• The Nordic states have cooperated since the Helsinki treaty (1962)
• Nordic cooperation is based on the fact that the five member states will benefit from it
• The Nordic member states are: Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Denmark
• Finland, Sweden and Denmark are members of the EU, Iceland and Norway are not
• BUT: Do these five states really make up a natural region?
THE NORDIC STATES as one or more REGIONs

Geographically:

- Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland: *The Far North or the North Atlantic*
- Norway, Sweden, Denmark, *(Scandinavia)* + Finland
- The Baltic states,
- North West Russia
The NORDIC countries as a historic REGION

Historico-culturally:

- Scandinavia, the Faroe Islands and Iceland: historical common background; colonialism and post-colonialism
- Finland has historically been tied both to Sweden and Russia, cf. above
- Greenland was once a Danish colony, cf. above
From a linguistic point of view

- The Faroe Islands, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Sweden and Swedish-speaking Finland make up a special Nordic branch of Germanic
- Finnish is not Indo-European but belongs with Estonian (and Hungarian) to the Fenno-Ugric family
- Greenlandic forms part of the Eskimo family
Conclusion 1

- **Geographically** the Nordic countries have much in common with the Baltic states, but why not then include also Poland and (Northern) Germany (bordering the Baltic sea)?

- **Historico-culturally** the Nordic countries (incl. Finland) form a close knit unit based on the ideas of the welfare state (a strong and expensive state, flexicurity), secularization and gender equality.

- **Linguistically** Scandinavia, Iceland and the Faroe Islands form a unit; Finland is the odd man out and Greenland is peripheral both geographically and linguistically.
The present day collaboration is pragmatic and apparently not based on any Romanticist Nordic ideology.

But why then collaborate primarily in the Nordic region?

There does seem to be a sense in which the Nordic states represent a third way, i.e. a way which is neither identical to free market capitalism nor to state monopolized socialism.

But this is a fact about the Nordic societies creating ample opportunities for pragmatic collaboration but not a common ideological stance; the idea of the Nordic is in practice based on sociology, not the humanities or any romantic ideology for that matter.
2A: EXEMPLIFICATION: THE NORDIC DECLARATION ON LANGUAGE POLICY
The Nordic declaration (2006)

• Background
• Content and structure
• Effect

• You may download the text from this site:
The Nordic Council of Ministers are in charge of Nordic Cooperation. They wanted a document which would focus the effort. As it turned out the ministers did not eventually want to make the declaration legally binding as such but they committed to working in the direction outlined in the declaration.
written by a group of Nordic scholars and then delivered to the Nordic Language Board

sent to all interested parties with a call for a response within a not too strict time limit (actually a lot of comments were received)

after the hearing: changed accordingly by the Nordic Language Board

finally delivered to the Nordic Committee of civil servants so that they could prepare the text for the signing process during the assembly of the Nordic members of parliament 2006

Signed by the Ministers late November 2006
Structure

A preface, an introduction, a main text of declaration and a background paper

- The preface states that the ministers are agreed to work in the directions specified in the main text
- The introduction states the terminology used
- The text itself states the point of departure, the aims and objectives (based on the rights of every citizen living in a Nordic country) and finally details four questions to be worked on in future collaborative efforts
Anyone living in the Nordic region has a right to
- acquire the language of the society he or she is living in
- to acquire a Scandinavian language
- to acquire an internationally significant language
- to maintain and develop his or her L1
Aims for a common Nordic language policy

- that everybody is capable of reading and writing the society-upholding language of his or her country
- that everybody in the Nordic region may communicate freely with each other - if necessary through an interpreter
- that everybody has knowledge of their own language rights and the language situation in the Nordic region
- that everybody has very good knowledge in one language and in addition knowledge of at least one more internationally important language
- that everybody gets support for the development of their L1
- that everybody has general knowledge of what language is and how it works
The four areas to work with in further collaboration

- language comprehension and language skills
- parallel use of languages
- multilingualism
- the Nordic region as a forerunner in Europe
What kind of discourse is this?

• The discourse of the Nordic Declaration reverts to a ‘rights’ and ‘morality’ approach to language policy
• It is more the language of the democratic citizen, even perhaps the French revolutionary *citoyen*, than the language of an imagined community
• In adopting this discourse the declaration more or less presupposes a special Nordic identity, a special relationship between precisely these five states while still celebrating their differences by being published in 9 different languages
State regulation of the conditions for the use of various languages as resources within the domains regulated by the state, i.e. primarily:

- education
- research
- culture (books, films, journals, newspapers, magazines etc.)
- mass media (radio, television)
- tourism as a special case
One of the central problems in the present Nordic Language policies: Internationalization
Education and the role of English

- What languages should be taught in schools?
  - ‘mother tongue’
  - other ‘official languages’
  - ‘linguae francae’, ‘foreign languages’, ‘minority languages’, ‘international auxiliary languages’

- How much for each language?
  - When (at what age) does teaching start?
  - How many lessons?
  - What strategy?

- Who will teach?
  - Which prior education, if any, do the teachers have?
Central problems

If we let the market forces decide, ENGLISH will soon become the ONLY international language, but that would be tantamount to having no language policy at all.

What about the future fall of English? Should we start developing Spanish, Chinese as viable alternatives?

What about the other traditional European foreign languages, what role for them?

How should we treat all those citizens who do not have a Nordic language as their first language?
A case in point: Parallel language use

• The Nordic communities, in particular the three Scandinavian countries top any ranking of English competence in the world (often with the Netherlands)

• This is why English has been seen as the solution rather than the problem in the

• INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NORDIC UNIVERSITIES
The Work of the NMR Group

• Indicators for Inter-Nordic comparisons
  – comparisons are difficult now; nevertheless: English is rapidly gaining ground, biannual status taking according to a common schema may be the right way
  – baseline information once and for all: Language policies or only internationalization policies

• Biannual status reports:
  – Masters’ theses, PhD theses and scientific output by staff (English or Nordic) in English or Nordic?
  – Educational matters: Exchange students and full degree students; BA/BS, MA/MS and PhD educational
  – Programmes taught in English (as announced)
  – International staff hired in the years reported on
dilemmas

• Is this group the result of an ideological struggle between nationalists and internationalists and how does this struggle relate to contemporary struggles within the Nordic nation states?
• How can we produce scientifically based advice?
• Can we finance research? Or do we have to rely on what goes on in the Nordic countries and Europe at large?
dilemmas

- Is this group the result of an ideological struggle between nationalists and internationalists and how does this struggle relate to contemporary struggles within the Nordic nation states? **YES**
- How can we produce scientifically based advice? **BY consulting with researchers and by studying results**
- Can we finance research? **NO!** Or do we have to rely on what goes on in the Nordic countries and Europe at large? **We do!**
The asymmetry between production and perception

- *Lingua receptiva*
- The Nordic model
- The export of the Nordic model to other areas which have equivalent linguistic situations: German and Dutch; Slavic languages; Romance: Spanish and Portuguese
- Understanding the Nordic language and speaking English; Speaking a Nordic language and understanding English
- Proficiency levels in production and comprehension and the discussion about ELF
The ELF discussion

• ELF: English as a Lingua Franca, particularly within academia
• What KIND of English is practiced in science and the humanities?
• What KIND of English should be taught in science and the humanities?
• Normative vs. descriptive research
• Can you derive ‘ought’ from ‘is’ in the case of ELF? The problem of unrealistic expectations
Language support

• Academic language skills, oral and written:
  – terminology, comprehension and production
  – genre, comprehension and production
  – discourse, comprehension and production
  – style, comprehension and production

• What do we know about the language skills required to be a competent lawyer/GP/vet/linguist/mother tongue teacher/biochemist etc.? And how may this knowledge be transformed into efficient language support for the individual and for larger groups of students and staff, administrative or scientific? LSP vs. ‘the whole package’
What will happen?

The final report has to discuss:

• Language policy and educational policies
• Internationalization and its bonuses
• Internationalization and its drawbacks
• Striking the balance! How do we obtain GOOD parallel language use?
• Who should take which kinds of action?
A bird’s eye view

• Parallel language policy is just one initiative
• The central question is whether Nordic collaboration should aim to create a Nordic area where everybody understands everybody
• The focus on understanding
• The inner circle: Swedish, Norwegian (two kinds!) and Danish
• The outer circle 1: Faroese and Icelandic
• The outer circle 2: Finnish, Meänkieli, the Sami languages and Greenlandic
The ideology behind all this

• There is both science and ideology behind all this
• The science has subtly changed from (structuralist) linguistics in general to (more or less applied) sociolinguistics: The study of domains, the ethnographic methods, the quantitative approach
• The ideology has changed from pure romanticism to a strange mixture of straight materialism and secular liberalism: We’re in it for the money; the Nordic market rules!
Do we mean it?

• That depends on who ‘we’ are
• As a veteran in Nordic collaboration I can safely say that I have always enjoyed it; but at the same time: It is becoming ever harder to accomplish anything; bureaucracy is threatening to suffocate any initiative from below; Nordic collaboration has become a game for the civil servants
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THE FUTURE: UTOPIAS OF NORDICITIES
Whither?

- Nordic collaboration should be the first step towards responsive and responsible global citizenship
- As such it would involve a confrontation with all the small but important differences between the Nordic countries as a first example of THE OTHER which awaits us at any crossing of borders - or even crucially within our own borders
- The NORDIC LABORATORY for internationalization
- Thanks to the inspiration of the CSS-partners: Henrik Rahm, Rikard Schönström and Robert Zola Christensen and last but not least Anna Smedberg Bondesson
An example

- There seems to be a crucial difference between Swedish and Danish public politeness strategies.
- Danes value the speaker’s being honest and direct and hence abhors any self censoring.
- Swedes take the perspective of the addressee and hence abhors any potential Face Threatening or even offending act on the part of the speaker.
- This would make a perfect example for confrontation with THE OTHER.
Where does language fit in?

• We know that Danes think their language is (relatively) ugly
• We know that Swedes agree
• We know that Swedes think their language is relatively OK beautiful
• We know that Danes somewhat grudgingly agree
• WHY IS THIS?
Where does language fit in? ctd.

• Danes look at their language as a written language
• The written language is ideally completely without any variation and indeed spoken language variation is actually slight in the Danish speech community
• The Danish orthography does not at all depict spoken Danish structure, hence speech is a rotten variant of *the language*, ergo: Danish is (relatively) ugly
What about the Swedes?

- Sweden is not (like Denmark) a mono-pole speech community. There are at least two poles (the Stockholm-Uppsala region and the Malmö-Lund region and possibly even a Göteborg region as well) with recognized ways of speaking Swedish.

- Hence Swedish is not one thing and even so the Swedish orthography does a better job of depicting spoken language than the Danish one.

- Swedish is varied (though not as varied as Norwegian) and not only the written language.

- This makes it possible to enjoy the beauty of Swedish dishes.
Back to the beginning

• If we who are involved in Scandinavistics study the Nordic region without too much ideology involved, we may by confronting our neighbours’ beliefs and practices shed light on some of our own most fundamental beliefs and practices: Beliefs about the good society, beliefs and practices concerning morality, beliefs about language, beliefs about what is worth preserving while entering a global(ized) society, beliefs about the future! We must rethink Scandinavia!

• As with civilization, according to Gandhi: It is (still) a very good idea!
References


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I've always been fascinated by how our relationship with TV has evolved over the years. Let's explore the past, present and future in 3 min. The lines between entertainment and communication are becoming increasingly blurred as some of these shows require your active participation. You can access all this content from your car, glasses, and even billboards on the highway. A TV is no longer a box in your living room. Instead, it exists everywhere to give you exactly what you want to watch. TED Conferences, past, present, and future. Programs & Initiatives. Details about TED's world-changing initiatives. The other reason that it's difficult to resist temptation is because it's an unequal battle between the present self and the future self. I mean, let's face it, the present self is present. It's in control. It's in power right now. So there's this battle between the two selves that's being fought, and we need commitment devices to level the playing field between the two. Now I'm a big fan of commitment devices actually. Tying yourself to the mast is the oldest one, but there are other ones such as locking a credit card away with a key or not bringing junk food into the house so you won't eat it or unplugging your Internet connection so you can use your computer.