

Language & Culture in the West–Nordic Region

Reykholt Conference, May 23–24, 2016

Present:

Madame Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, President of the Republic of Iceland 1980-1996 and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages.

Members of the UNESCO Cat. 2 Vigdís Internationale Centre Board: Jens Allwood, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg; Peter Austin, Professor of Linguistics at SOAS University of London; Lars Borin, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg and Director of Språkbanken; Bernard Comrie, Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Anne Holmen, Professor at the University of Copenhagen and Director of the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use; Anju Saxena, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Uppsala.

University of Iceland - Members of the Vigdís International Centre Board: Auður Hauksdóttir, Professor of Danish and Director of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute; Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, Professor of French; Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson, Director of Research at the School of Humanities; Guðrún Kvaran, Professor emerita of Icelandic; Þórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics.

Members of the West-Nordic network:

Denmark

- Nina Møller Andersen, Lecturer on Danish as a foreign language, University of Copenhagen
- Karoline Kühl, Associate Professor of Danish, University of Copenhagen
- Peter Juel Henriksen, Associate Professor of Digital-linguistics, Handelshøjskolen, Copenhagen.

Faroe Islands

- Malan Marnersdóttir, Professor of Faroese Literature, Fróðskaparsetur
- Bergur D. Hansen, Assistant Professor of Faroese Literature, Fróðskaparsetur

Greenland:

- Per Langgård, Special Advisor for the Greenland's Language committee
- Katti Frederiksen, Head, Greenland's Language committee
- Karen Langgård, Assistant Professor of Greenlandic Literature, University of Greenland

Norway

- Gunnstein Akselberg, Professor of Social linguistics, University of Bergen

Sweden

- Ulla Börestam, Professor of Linguistics, University of Uppsala

Iceland

- Auður Hauksdóttir, Professor of Danish, University of Iceland
- Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor of English, University of Iceland
- Gísli Magnússon, Assistant Professor of Danish literature, University of Iceland
- Pernille Folkmann, Assistant Professor of Danish, University of Iceland
- Þórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, University of Iceland

Other participants:

- Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, Professor of French literature, University of Iceland
- Birna Bjarnadóttir, Researcher, University of Iceland
- Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, Professor of Spanish, University of Iceland

Special invitees: Kristján Árnason, Professor of Icelandic, University of Iceland

The speakers:

Daniel Chartier is a full professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal and holder of the Research Chair on Images of the North, Winter and the Arctic. During the past years, he has published 15 books on the North, the Arctic and Québec studies, in a pluridisciplinary and intercultural perspective, including an essay on the foreign image of Iceland during the crisis (in French: *La spectaculaire dérouté de l'Islande*, PUQ, 2010; translated in English: *The End of Iceland's Innocence*, Reykjavik, Citizen Press, 2010; University of Ottawa Press, 2011). The book was declared “Book of the month in foreign affairs” by the Canadian state radio. In 2014, he co-published a book with Louis-Edmond Hamelin entitled *La nordicité du Québec*. A co-director of the “Iceland and Images of the North” research project, in 2007-2008, he also held the Research Chair of Contemporary Québec Studies at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle — Paris 3, in France. He is the editor of 3 book series at the Québec University Press. He has published numerous articles and given papers at conferences in more than 30 countries on the themes of pluriculturalism, media reception, Northern Arctic and Inuit issues, and cultural history.

STIG ELIASSON (Ph.D. in Linguistics, Harvard University; M.A. in Slavic Languages and German, Uppsala University) is Professor emeritus of Northern European and Baltic Languages at the Institut für Slavistik, Turkologie und zirkumbaltische Studien at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany. His publications fall into the areas of phonological theory, cognition and phonology, Swedish phonology, language contact, code-switching theory, contrastive linguistics, second-language acquisition, language ecology, historical linguistics, and runology. He founded the Nordic Association of Linguists and built up the program of Northern European and Baltic Languages in Mainz.

Anju Saxena (Ph.D. 1992, University of Oregon, USA) is Professor of Linguistics at Uppsala University, Sweden. The focus of her research is on the languages of the Indian Himalayas in particular and South Asia in general. Her publications include *Himalayan languages* (Mouton de Gruyter 2004) and *Approaches to measuring linguistic differences* (De Gruyter Mouton 2013). She is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of South Asian languages and linguistics* (de Gruyter Mouton).

Trond Trosterud (Ph.D 2004, University of Tromsø) is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Tromsø. He has published on the morphology and syntax of various Uralic and North Germanic languages, and on sociolinguistic topics related to Russia and the Nordic countries. For the last 15 years he has led the Giellatekno Saami Language Technology Center

at the University of Tromsø, developing linguistic models and tools for North Saami and other circumpolar languages.

Glenn Ole Hellekjær is a Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Oslo, Norway. His research interests include academic reading in English, language needs analysis, CLIL and English-Medium Instruction in higher education, and English teacher education.

Lisbeth M Brevik is an Associate Professor of English Didactics at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Oslo, Norway. Her research interests relate to reading comprehension instruction, strategies, assessment, and classroom observation in English as a second language.

Katti Frederiksen (*1982, Narsaq, Greenland) has a Masters Degree from the department of Greenlandic Language, Literature and Media from Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland). Current work: Oqaasileriffik, Greenland Language Secretariat since 2008.

Per Langgård (*1949, Esbjerg, Denmark) studied Nordic Literature as an undergraduate. After a summer job at Thule Air Base in 1970 he stayed in Greenland working for the Royal Greenland Trade Department until 1973 when he was matriculated as a student of Eskimology at the University of Copenhagen. During studies and after graduation in 1980 he spent 3 years as a teacher in a small village in Southern Greenland. When the Inuit Institute (forerunner of Greenland's University) was founded in 1983 he joined the first staff and when the institute later became a university he worked there as an Assoc. Professor. During the years at the university he did research into and taught Greenlandic grammar and Greenlandic modern literature as well as socio- and applied Greenlandic linguistics. When the new Language Secretariat was established in 1998 he was relocated there as a senior consultant. Since 2005 his main interest as a head adviser has been the development of a fully-fledged program of Greenlandic language technology.

Bergur Djurhuus Hansen (b. 1968) holds a Ph.D. in Literary Methods and Theory and is Assistant Professor (adjunktur) at the Department of Language and Literature at the University of the Faroe Islands. He has published articles on Nordic poetry and in 2015 he published a monograph on the travel writings of the Faroese pastor K.O. Viderø (1906-1991).

Malan Marnersdóttir (Dr.Phil. & Ph.D) is a Professor at Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, the University of the Faroe Islands. She teaches literary history and contemporary literature, poetry and pictorial art, post-colonial studies, and feminism, and has published books and articles on the same issues. She is the co-author of *Føroysk bókmentasøga 1* (2011), (Faroese Literary History, Vol. 1), and is writing the following volume covering the period 1900-1960.

Gunnstein Akselberg is a Professor of Scandinavian Linguistics, University of Bergen. He has particularly worked with onomastics, dialectology and sociolinguistics, but also with subjects like standardisation of Norwegian, language history, etymology, literature and language. Akselberg has written a number of books and articles. He is a former Dean at the Faculty of Humanities.

Auður Hauksdóttir (Ph.D. and M.A. in Danish, University of Copenhagen) is a Professor of Danish at the University of Iceland, and the Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages. Her work has mainly revolved around Danish language and culture. She has taught Danish on all educational levels, written educational material for secondary school, worked as a translator between Icelandic and Danish, and been a tourist guide in Iceland for Danish and other Nordic travellers. Her research domain is the Danish language, in particular Danish as a foreign language, comparative linguistics, and the history of Danish culture and language in Iceland.

Karoline Kühl (*1976) is Associate Professor at the Department of Nordic Languages and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen. She holds a PhD (2008) from the University of Flensburg on South Schleswig Danish, the Danish-German contact variety spoken by the Danish minority in the Danish-German border region. Since then, she has continued her work on the varieties of Danish outside Mainland Denmark both with regard to the acquisition of literacy in a L2 and with an analytical-descriptive focus. She has worked on the Faroese variety of Danish at the University of Hamburg and on the Danish spoken by Danish emigrants and their descendants in North America and Argentina at the University of Copenhagen. Karoline Kühl is currently research manager of the project 'Danish Voices in the Americas' (2014-2018, University of Copenhagen) which is funded by the A.P. Møller Foundation, the Carlsberg Foundation as well as the Department of Nordic Research and the Department of Nordic Languages and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen. Her interests and publications lie within the field of corpus-based variational and contact linguistics, sociolinguistics and heritage linguistics.

May 23, 2016

Min. and discussion notes.

Auður Hauksdóttir welcomes all. She introduced the members of the Vigdís International Board, the participants in the West-Nordic Language & Culture Contact research project, and other people present. She then introduced Madame Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who opened the conference with a brief presentation.

Keynote-address: Professor Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir chaired the keynote-session and introduced Professor Daniel Chartier, who gave a presentation on the North as a cultural, plurilingual and intercultural place. (See attached slides). In his address, Chartier emphasised his notion of the North as a pluricultural and circumpolar region, and that the methodology of the research projects of his Laboratory at the University of Quebec is centred on deconstructing images that have been constructed by ‘the south’. Within this context, Daniel spoke about his notion of the ‘North’ as being a collection of discourses, which in turn need to be deconstructed. He also made a note of the fact that in comparison with many other regions of the world, there are not many inhabitants ‘in the North’. What this means is that the images of the ‘North’ tend to be created outside of the ‘North’. He then introduced the Laboratory’s current research projects, including collaborative conferences, workshops and publication series.

Discussions: Within the context of Daniel’s notion of the ‘North’ as being a collection of discourses, and how the images of the ‘North’ tend to be created outside of the ‘North’, he stressed that countries like Germany, France and Spain have been influential in the construction of the ‘images of the North’. Participants also wondered about how the Laboratory’s current research projects could serve as an inspiration for possible joint research projects between the Laboratory and the West-Nordic research network. In addition to collaborative conferences and the established international workshops-programme, the Laboratory’s publishing efforts entered the picture and how publishing - in translation - a selection of original works from the West-Nordic region could also be a possibility. When asked about the origin of his interest in the images of the North, he explained briefly how it all began with comparison cultural studies of Quebec and Scandinavia.

First session, Monday afternoon: Professor Þórhallur Eypórsson chaired the session, featuring Stig Eliasson’s paper “Language Ecology and Language Contact”, Anju Saxena’s

“Language Contact in the Himalaya”, and Trond Trosterud’s “Language Technology for the Circumpolar Languages”.

Discussions: See below.

Second session, Monday afternoon: Professor Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir chaired the session, featuring Glenn Ole Hellekjær’s paper “The Unmet Need: Occupational English Skills in Norwegian Higher Education”, and Lisbeth M Brevik’s “Online Gaming and English Skills in Norway”.

Discussions: Before discussing the papers from the first afternoon session, there were numerous responses reg. the subjects of English skills in Norwegian higher education, and computer games and languages in Norway. One participant asked if children in Norway were allowed to play computer games during classes. Given Brevik’s emphasis on boys and gaming, people also wondered if girls were playing the same games, and how it influenced their English. Kristján Árnason ferried the subject of English skills and gaming into a bigger context, also in relation to Stig Eliasson’s paper, and discussed the relation of one language to another and the well-known problem of how one language stands towards another language. What is the problem according to the two papers on English skills and gaming in Norway? Is money the main subject, or the way in which the Norwegian government is losing money because of the lack of sufficient English skills among the educated workforce, or is the problem related to the fact that children in Norway are playing computer games in English and while doing so, they do not master good enough English? Or is Norwegian the main concern, and the fact that children in Norway read less and less and play more and more online games that are all in English? Árnason also asked: What does it mean to be good in in either English or Norwegian? How do we measure language skills? Katti Frederiksen pointed out that in Greenland, boys are better in Danish than girls, in part because of gaming. Is English or Danish a threat to native languages in the West-Nordic region?, was also asked. In reply to this question, Bernard Comrie pointed out that historically speaking, language contact has characterized the region. Anju Saxon also made the point that a fruitful approach to the question of language contact in the West-Nordic region would be to explore several linguistic aspects of more than one language. In response to her paper, Þórhallur Eypórsson asked if she detects any possible connection between her research in the Himalaya and the West-Nordic region? Her reply: Methodology! The linguists among the West-Nordic network could study several variations of linguistic aspects in specific parts of the region, and draw a map of the patterns that appear reg. the subject of language contact. Thereby, the West-Nordic network could contribute in a significant manner to the subject of comparative linguistics. Language technology would be one part of the research’s methodology: All conclusions should be listed in a database. Participants also discussed the subject of language ecology, and Auður Hauksdóttir asked if the methodology in culture contact, which was introduced by Daniel Chartier, could be applied to the language contact part of the West-Nordic research project. She also asked how to approach the subject of vocabulary and technology, and if it would be possible to apply the technology to make lists of the vocabulary (for example loanwords) within parts of the West-Nordic region. In response to these questions, and within the

connection of Danish in the West-Nordic region, someone mentioned social media as a possible source for research.

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

Min. and discussion notes.

First session, Tuesday morning: Professor Gunnstein Akselberg chaired the session, featuring Katti Frederiksen's paper "The Language Situation in Greenland", and Per Langgård's paper "Language Technology for a Less-Resources Language and Language Technology for a Language that is Complete and Essential to Society".

Discussions: In her presentation, Katti Frederiksen reported on a substantial language survey, which investigated Greenlandic, Danish and English skills among children in elementary schools high school. The findings were discussed. As noted by Katti, the language situation in Greenland is critical. There is an evident lack of native teachers and dictionaries. Greenlandic is under threat, and the same is true of Danish, which in turn poses a great threat to the native language. Why? For Greenlanders, Danish has been the key to higher education. English is part of the problem, in the sense that the government of Greenland would like to replace Danish with English as an official language. In his paper, Per Langgård expressed the same concerns regarding the language situation in Greenland. What is more, he is of the opinion that the easiest way to kill the native language is to support the conservative elite in Greenland. Participants asked about written texts, and if there were any effort taking place now in Greenland to encourage people to write in Greenlandic. Karen Langgård expressed her view that before children in Greenland learn a foreign language, they need to learn how to read and write in Greenlandic. Kristján Árnason asked about existing resources within the educational system. Katti confirmed that there are no books available in, for example, grammar, and that most of the existing teaching material consisted of old books. Per added that all existing written material was in Danish, and that the educational system in Greenland is isolated and insufficient. Participants also asked if the language spoken by families in Greenland now was Greenlandic. Katti replied that this is the case. Glenn noted that the same problem existed among Sami in Norway, not the least in regards to the critical lack of resources within the educational system. Auður then asked what the Vestnorden network could do to assist? Per replied that the network could be of great assistance, not the least reg. grants he would like to apply for through some ministries. Within this context, he mentioned a joint project on 'gaming'. Trond mentioned that before people can implement various computer devices and online games in Greenland, Greenland needs to provide a better internet connection. Bergur also asked Katti who it was who managed the language survey she reported on in her paper. Danes, Katti replied.

Second session, Tuesday afternoon: Assistant Professor Gísli Magnússon chaired the session, featuring Bergur D. Hansen's paper "The Influence of German/Danish Vitalism in Faroese Literature in the First Half of the 20th Century", and Malan Marnersdóttir's paper "Carl Jóhan Jensen and Schopenhauer in the novel *Eg síggi teg betur í myrkri*."

Discussions: In his paper, Bergur D. Hansen drew on his doctoral thesis "Er heima til?" in a discussion on the Faroese writer Kristin Osvald Viderø (1906-1991), and the influence of German and Danish Vitalism in his works. A traveling student of theology in the 30's and 40's, his main interest was Lebensphilosophie and the question of the origins of our culture. Viderø always travelled East, never West. The reason: The West (and English) was for business and practical related matters, and therefore less poetic. His concern reg. the cultural development of the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century was people's evident lack of attention to life itself. He translated several key texts, among them *The Old Testament* and Homer's *Odyssey*. During his lifetime – and constant travels - he occupied himself also with the question of cultural centres as opposed to the periphery; the metropolis and the village. In her paper, Malan Marnersdóttir continued to discuss the influence of German philosophy in Faroese literature – and thereby the richness of cultural movements in the West-Nordic region – presented a work-in-progress on Carl Jóhan Jensen's novel *Eg síggi teg betur í myrkri*, which is nominated this year for the Nordic Council's Literature Award. In addition to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Kant is also present in a novel where an Icelandic protagonist appears on 'the edge' of Europe; a character that is based on the life and works of Einar Benediktsson (1864-1940), the Icelandic poet and entrepreneur. As to be expected, the discussions that followed these two talks centred on the importance of including specific research projects on literature and culture within the West-Nordic network. Auður also noted that literature is a key factor in the movement of languages, and wonders if a specific language literature- language study could be included in the overall project. As pointed out, literature is a profound source on cultural movements and the history of ideas in any given region of the world. Specific research projects on literature and cultural movements in the West-Nordic region need to be included in the West-Nordic network.