

# Dialect Change

*Convergence and Divergence in  
European Languages*

---

*Edited by*

Peter Auer, Frans Hinskens, and Paul Kerswill

 **CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## 6 Processes of standardisation in Scandinavia

---

*Inge Lise Pedersen*

Viewed from abroad, the three mainland Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are rather similar. They are modern welfare states with ethnically and culturally homogeneous populations that have only recently seen substantial immigration from overseas. Their languages are related and to a great extent mutually intelligible, but as far as language standardisation is concerned there are considerable differences. As we shall see, Danish is one of the most standardised languages in Europe. Swedish standardisation comes close to this,<sup>1</sup> whereas that of Norwegian has taken a very different path.

This chapter will focus on standardisation of spoken language in mainland Scandinavia. It will be based on an analysis of the standardisation process in Denmark, and will attempt to disentangle the interplay between ideological, political, demographic, social, and educational reasons why the standardisation of spoken Danish is as advanced as it is. Besides standardisation, the notions of convergence and divergence (cf. Auer and Hinskens 1996: 1ff.) will be used to refer to internal developments affecting the structure of both dialect and standard varieties.

### 1 'Standard Language' and 'Standardisation'

The modern tradition of language standardisation studies begins with the Prague School. Characterising the nature of a standard language, they drew attention to the special range of functions in which it was employed, as well as the direct connection with urban culture and civilisation (Joseph 1987: 13). According to this view, we may consider the presence of a standard language to be a major linguistic correlate of an essentially urban culture. With the advent of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, the definition gradually moves away from seeing standardisation as the product of the functional range in which the language is employed, towards standardisation seen as a process.

Weinreich (1954: 396) claimed that it is necessary to distinguish between standardised and non-standardised language. To avoid the ambiguous word 'standard', he proposed that the term standardisation should be used 'to denote a process of more or less conscious, planned, and centralized regulation of language'.

Most definitions of 'standard language' take the form of a description of certain components of language development which have been identified as crucial (overlapping) stages in the move from the presence of exclusively vernacular varieties to the development of a standard. According to Einar Haugen (1966 (1972): 252), the crucial stages are '(1) selection of norm, (2) codification of form, (3) elaboration of function, and (4) acceptance by the community'. This model has been elaborated by Henriksen, who expands the list to eight stages. These are seen by her as an interaction between a number of factors, some of which are linguistic and others social: a social need for a common norm; practical training in the use of the mother tongue; *propaganda* for the mother tongue; selection of the 'best' dialect as a model; *codification* of form in standardised grammars and dictionaries; functional *extension* (of linguistic form); *expansion* of the range of social uses; and *acceptance* of the norm, both officially and on part of the population at large (Henriksen 1979:7\*f). Haugen and Henriksen differ only in the degree of specification of the individual stages; they agree that the standard language is by definition the common, or shared, language of a society that is more complex and inclusive than those using only vernaculars.

Milroy and Milroy (1985a: 22–23) stress that, in the case of English, only the written form is so fixed and invariant that it can properly be called a standard language. It is only in the spelling system that (almost) full standardisation has been achieved, as only minute deviations from the norm are tolerated, whereas a good deal of variation is tolerated in speech. Therefore they prefer to speak of standardisation as a historical process, like Haugen, but with greater emphasis on the intolerance of variability, as well as 'to speak more abstractly of standardization as an *ideology*, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality'.

## 2 'Standard Language' as Ideology

Standard languages are founded on the belief that varieties other than the selected one are wrong. This proscription goes hand in hand with codification, operating as a 'standard ideology', and often having a strong influence on speakers' attitudes and on their linguistic behaviour. The presence of such an ideology causes the demarcation of a language characterising a certain geographic area, typically a nation state, making it linguistically distinct from other such states.

The 1980s and 1990s saw an extensive literature on linguistic prescriptivism and standardisation in the UK. A thorough discussion of the emergence of a standard ideology and a spoken standard English norm is presented by Mugglestone (1995). She demonstrates how accent, from the late eighteenth century onwards, came to act as a social symbol, with pronunciation becoming a way of articulating social identity as a part of 'good manners'. This

development is related to the reorganisation of society that took place at the same time, the period of the Industrial Revolution, in terms of a change from institutionalised 'rank' to '(social) class' as the conceptual framework for the interpretation of society (Mugglestone 1995: 72, 74).

Bex and Watts (1999) constitutes a widening of the debate, in that spoken standard English is treated at some length, and it also contains some chapters on standard English as seen from outside the UK. Lesley Milroy, in her chapter, suggests that the notion of 'standard English' in the United States is different from that in Britain, because of different ideologies in Britain and the US, related to contrasting national histories and social structures (L. Milroy 1999: 203f.).

James Milroy, in a paper on the ideology of the standard language in Britain, stresses that until the mid-twentieth century the focus on uniformity was less salient than the idea of social prestige and social exclusiveness. 'The variety described as spoken standard English was in reality a supra-regional class dialect that was not used by the vast majority of the population and aspired to only by a few' (Milroy 2000: 20). Another point in Milroy's paper is that the notion of stigma is more explanatory than prestige. Changes in the history of English do not seem to emanate from the highest status groups, and it is by no means clear that the 'standard language' at any given time is a direct product of these groups. On the contrary: features of high-status dialects can be avoided just as low-status dialects are (24). Often people do not want to identify with either the highest-status or the lowest-status usage, and those with the highest social prestige are not necessarily seen as models of language use. Standardisation is a matter of negative identifying and avoidance (i.e. stigmatisation), rather than positive identification, and 'a prestige language is not identical in every respect with an idealised standard language' (25).

In the same volume, Richard Watts traces the ideology of prescription further back than does Mugglestone. He points to the connection with public education and to what he calls the myths of language and ethnicity and language and nationality that form the basis of the ideology (Watts 2000: 30, 34).

## 3 Studies of Standardisation in Germany

In these and other English-language publications, there is little if any consideration of the contemporary German discussion of standard language and processes of standardisation. This is true also of most recent Scandinavian discussions – perhaps more regrettably, since the language histories of at least two of the Scandinavian countries show greater parallels with, and indeed connections to, the German situation than to that of Great Britain.

What is common to Germany, Britain, and Scandinavia is that the standard language becomes a social symbol, as witnessed by the title of Mattheier's

(1991) paper. From the late eighteenth and through the nineteenth centuries language becomes a social symbol in that the written and spoken standard takes over the task of symbolising the new leading social group, the educated members of the bourgeois culture, the *Bildungsbürgertum*.<sup>1</sup> From this social grouping, the standard ideology spreads to other parts of society, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, standard German is no longer a symbol of a particular social group, but has emerged as a national symbol (Mattheier 1991: 41, 43).

Competence in the standard language is an obvious signal of social status, and serves as part of culture and education (*Bildung*) as a line of demarcation between the bourgeois proper and petty bourgeois and the emerging working class. Due to the difference in timing between Britain and Germany regarding the standardisation of speech and industrialisation (industrialisation is much later in Germany than in Britain), the function of spoken standard German as a class accent is less obvious than is the case with standard English. In other words, it is more obvious that what is signalled in different accents in Germany is differences in status and lifestyle more than purely socioeconomic class differences (though, in practice, these may be hard to tease apart) (Kaschuba 1990: 228). Contributing to this is the ideology of the *Bürgerium* and its role and the ideology of Germany as a cultural nation; both make standard German a national symbol and, later, a tool of rationalisation in industrial society (Mattheier 1991: 49ff.; Polenz 1999: 59).

As pointed out above, standardisation of the spoken language took place at the same time in Britain, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, but it is not synchronised in the same way with industrialisation. To understand the different courses that standardisation took, and the balance between social and national functions, it is necessary to see how standardisation and modernisation are intertwined.

#### 4 Standardisation: A Summary

In living languages, standardisation is an ongoing process. According to Haugen (cf. above) it consists of a number of elements in a relatively fixed order: selection of a leading variety, codification, elaboration, and acceptance of the

<sup>1</sup> The core notions of '*Bildung*' (i.e. education and culture seen as inextricably bound up with each other) and '*Bürgerium*' (the state of being bourgeois, or middle class) merged in a new social grouping united by a critical distance from the privileged aristocracy and absolute monarchy and supporting a modern, secularised, post-corporate, enlightened civil society, i.e. defined by a shared culture. '*Bürgerlich*' means both bourgeois and civil, pointing to a real historical relationship, the interconnection between the rise of the middle classes and of the civil society. It is no mere coincidence that it is difficult to translate the above-mentioned core notions into English (for a thorough discussion, see Kocka 1993: 3ff.), whereas the semantic structure of the Scandinavian languages in this field corresponds better with German, with *Bildung* being translated as *dannelse* (Danish) and *bildning* (Swedish), *Bürgerium* as *borgerskab*. In the following Dan/Norw *dannet* is rendered as *educated*.

norm. As the ideal goals of a standard language, codification may be defined as minimal variation in form; elaboration as maximal variation in function. In other words: a full-fledged standard must be an omnifunctional language, able to fulfil a range of official roles, in addition to being a means of informal communication.

The written language is standardised earlier and to a higher degree than is the spoken language. The standardisation of European written languages started in the early modern period around 1500 with printing (and in some cases the Reformation) as important preconditions, and it was accomplished for orthography, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon during the nineteenth century.

As regards the spoken language, a standard ideology and the selection of 'the best dialect' typically go back to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries in many countries. A more consistent codification and a simultaneous elaboration of function (not to mention dissemination and acceptance by the public) did not gather momentum until the end of the eighteenth century. This stage is closely connected with the stages of the modernisation process when bourgeois culture and nationalism emerged (Mattheier 1991: 41ff.; Linke 1991: 263; Feldbæk 1994: 139, 144).

#### 5 Linguistic Standardisation in Mainland Scandinavia: An Overview

##### 5.1 Sketch of the political and linguistic history of mainland Scandinavia

Linguistic standardisation began after the dissolution of the political union that had united the Nordic countries under the Danish king from 1397 to 1523. From this year to 1905, there were two independent Scandinavian states, Denmark and Sweden. Accordingly, two standard languages, Danish and Swedish, were developed (Haugen 1976: 245–248, 323–332). Norway belonged to the Danish realm until 1814, and was then ceded to Sweden, with internal self-rule, until independence in 1905. Denmark and Sweden, then, both have a long tradition as independent states, while Norway was under Danish hegemony for over 400 years (Haugen 1976: 346–352).

From 1660 to 1814, Denmark was a conglomerate and multilingual state consisting of the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway with the North Atlantic possessions of Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein (Feldbæk 1990: 94–101). Sweden, too, was a multilingual state which, until 1809, included Finland and, for substantial periods, provinces on the south Baltic coast as well as part of Pomerania (Haugen 1976: 346–347).

In the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, the indigenous population was Sami (Lappish) speaking (Vikør 2002: 9–10). Other parts of the Swedish empire had Swedish, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, and German as native languages (ignoring the fact that Scania in the south of Sweden was Danish speaking, and some borderlands with Norway were Norwegian speaking). Finland was administered in Swedish, the other Swedish possessions mostly in German.

Danish was the main language in Denmark, and was used in the administration of Norway. The two duchies were German speaking, except for northern Schleswig, where only part of the population of the towns used German (Bjerrum 1973: 51ff). In Norway, Danish was used in church and for primary education. This meant that the Old Norwegian written language disappeared at the end of the medieval period, with the consequence that no modern standard was developed until the middle of the nineteenth century, when two different written standards emerged: a Dano-Norwegian (called *bokmål*, i.e. book language); and a New Norwegian (*nynorsk*) based on selected dialects from the western part of the country (Vikør 2002: 6–7).

Today, then, there are three nation states with three separate languages, but four written standards. Prescription and codification of the written languages is quite formal in all three countries, for about fifty years performed by official language boards<sup>2</sup> (in Sweden also the Swedish Academy). In Denmark, this culminated in a 1998 law obliging all public servants to follow regulations (mainly related to orthography) laid down by the language board.

In Denmark and Sweden the *spoken* languages have been standardised, too, although less explicitly. It is a moot point if a spoken standard exists in Norway even today, although it is made likely by the mere existence of a publication subtitled 'A guide to Eastern Norwegian spoken standard language' [Norwegian: 'En veiledning i østnorsk standardtalspråk'] (Vinje 1987; see also Sandøy 1998a: 164). It is clear, however, that a Norwegian spoken standard, to the extent that it exists, is far less functionally elaborated and is used by proportionally far fewer people than is the case for standard Danish and Swedish. It has been estimated that 15–20 per cent of the population use what could be called spoken standard Dano-Norwegian [Norwegian: *bokmålets normaltalemål*] (Vinje 1998: 152).

## 5.2 Denmark and Sweden: parallel processes of standardisation

The Danish and Swedish written (or rather printed) standards originated in the sixteenth century. They are associated with the Lutheran Reformation of the

church; linguistically, they are based on dialects in the respective metropolitan areas (Zealand and Mälardalen).

The emerging Danish standard language was morphologically modern, but orthographically more etymological than phonetic (Skautrup 1944–1970 [1947]: 187), while the Swedish orthographical norm from the very beginning (i.e. Gustav Vasa's translation of the Bible 1541) differed from the spoken language (especially regarding inflexional suffixes), in its attempt to establish a link back to the monastic scribal tradition of fifteenth-century Vadstena. At certain points (e.g. the adoption of *ä ö* for *æ ø*, and final unstressed *-a*) the Swedish standard is best described as conditioned by a conscious divergence from the neighbouring language, the formerly hegemonic Danish: the use of *-e* in endings in official documents from the sixteenth century is dependent upon a writing tradition which goes back to the time of the Scandinavian Union and the Swedish–Danish–German civil service language of this time. An abrupt change from *-e* to *-a* in official documents took place in 1612, during the Swedish–Danish War, 1611–1613 (Haugen 1976: 327; Svensson 1981: 132). The change is usually perceived as ideologically conditioned (Teleman 2002: 198).

The translations of the Bible in 1541 and 1550 are considered to be among the first manifestations of deliberate orthographic standardisation in Sweden and Denmark, respectively, although much more variation was tolerated than is usual today. In letters and other handwritten documents, a further one or two hundred years would elapse before a standardised orthography had been established. By the end of the eighteenth century, it is apparent that standardisation was achieved both in Denmark and Sweden. In Sweden, codification of spelling was made explicit in 1801 in a comprehensive manual, followed by a spelling dictionary in 1874, both issued by the Swedish Academy (Vikør 1993: 152; Teleman 2002: 108), while an official Danish orthographic dictionary was published in 1872 (Grundtvig 1872; cf. Jacobsen 1973: 40f.).

Only later did morphology and syntax become subjects of standardisation: conjugation of verbs shows great variability in Danish grammars from the eighteenth century, and word order in subordinate clauses was standardised only during the nineteenth century (Gregersen and Pedersen 2000). In Sweden, standardisation of morphology took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well (Teleman 2002: 172f.).

## 5.3 Standardisation of the spoken language

A spoken standard language proper in these countries is a much later phenomenon, and the standardisation of speech follows a more winding path. It became the received wisdom that the best pronunciation was that which deviated the least from spelling (as for English; cf. Romaine 1998). Both in Denmark

<sup>2</sup> Danish: *Dansk Sprogævern*; Swedish: *Svenska språknämnden*; Norwegian: *Norsk språknemnd* (since 1972 known as *Norsk språkråd*).

and Sweden, the history of the spoken standard language has been described as an approximation to the written language as a result of growing literacy, especially in the nineteenth century (Brøndum-Nielsen 1951: 92f.; Skautrup 1944–70 [1953]: 182; Wessén 1937: 300f.);<sup>3</sup> in the words of the linguist P. K. Thorsen: 'Without exaggeration, it could be claimed that the movement that has created, and is still creating modern common spoken Danish is nothing other than a constant battle between written language and Copenhagen dialect' (Thorsen (1906) 1929: 153, my translation). Most researchers agree on this. Brink and Lund (1975: 241, 768), however, in their thorough description of spoken standard Danish, seem to hold a different opinion. They claim that orthography has exerted only a slight influence on pronunciation, stressing that spoken standard Danish is the result of a natural development; it is not an artifact. This might very well be an apparent disagreement only, partly due to the fact that Brink and Lund are studying the age cohorts from 1840 to 1955, i.e. immediately after many changes had taken place in the (emerging) spoken standard. They do acknowledge that many changes in pronunciation came into spontaneous speech via the language used in recitations and orations throughout the nineteenth century, and this is the means by which orthography was able to influence speech. This is in line with Widmark's (1991) analysis of spoken standard Swedish; according to her, the public spoken language was the mediator between speech and writing in the last part of the nineteenth century.

In what follows, we shall take a closer look at the developments in Denmark, especially during the nineteenth century, and demonstrate that the influence from the public spoken variety is crucial for the standardisation process of spoken Danish, too (cf. Pedersen 1997). In Copenhagen, around 1800, the distinction between public and colloquial language was categorical and based upon general differences, whereas we would find only minor differences between educated colloquial speech and Copenhagen Vernacular. Around the middle of the century, this sociolinguistic structure was changing into two contrasting varieties: a High Copenhagen, with standard language functions; and a stigmatised Low Copenhagen. From now on there are only minor stylistic differences between public and educated colloquial language. Attitudes to dialects outside Copenhagen were not affected by this development; throughout the nineteenth century (rural) dialects were perceived as corrupt (Pedersen in press).

<sup>3</sup> In this connection literacy must be specified as writing skills, since reading skills were considerable already in the seventeenth century in both countries. It is evident from parish registers that proficiency in reading is taken for granted at the end of the seventeenth century, since a lack of proficiency is explained or excused (Appel 2001: 363).

## 6      The Standardisation of Spoken Danish

### 6.1      Selection of dialect

During the seventeenth century, grammarians engaged in an intense discussion as to which dialect was the 'best' in relation to the written language. The choice was between Zealandic ('like knowledgeable Zealandic men speak, refined and in assembly' (Danish: *stirligen og i Forsamling*, e.g. in council or in court) (Sylv 1685: 3)) and the language spoken by individuals born in the capital of Danish parents, or academic people from the university of Copenhagen (Gerner 1690: 30). In both cases, it is emphasised that it is a matter of the public spoken language; it is not a question of the language of the common people, but the language of educated speakers only. In the words of these old grammarians, we glimpse the contours of a tripartite division of spoken Danish varieties.

This three-way split is also found in Høysgaard (1747: 370, 385), and is clearly expressed by most grammarians around 1800. In the introduction to Jacob Baden's grammar, we find this idea expressed thus: 'In all languages cultivated through writing, a threefold pronunciation is found. The common man pronounces the words that he has learnt, not from writings but only from oral tradition, in one way [lit.: "different"]. The pronunciation of the educated man in civil life is different; and that of the public speaker different again' (Baden 1785: 1, my translation). The same categorisation is found in a grammar for German students, where the author distinguishes between four ways of pronouncing Danish: '(1) The formal language, as among preachers and secular orators, and when Danish is taught; (2) decent persons' colloquial language [*die Sprache hübscher Leute im täglichen Umgang*]; (3) ordinary people's pronunciation; and (4) Danish spoken by other Germans' (Tode 1797: 2, quoted from Nielsen 1952: 34).

Time and again throughout the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth century, we are presented with not a bipartite division between dialect and standard but a three-way division; none of these three parts can be labelled a spoken standard language. The standardised written language was matched by two spoken elite varieties, both functionally and socially restricted, and neither qualifying as a spoken standard proper.

### 6.2      Public vs. educated colloquial speech

We have a description of these two elite varieties from the pen of Jakob Hornemann Bredsdorff. In 1817, Bredsdorff published what is probably the oldest Danish text in phonetic transcription. It contains a story pronounced as would 'the educated Dane in orations and formal recitations' [Danish: *den cultiverede*

public  
spoken

*Danske... i Taler og det højtidelige Foredrag*] and a dialogue in 'colloquial language' [Danish: *Hverdagssproget*]. 'A' speaks a Danish free of all (local) peculiarities (i.e. educated colloquial speech), while 'B' uses Copenhagen vernacular [Danish: *i A's Replikker frit for alle Idiotismer, og i B's efter den sædvanlige københavnske Udtale*]. Once more we meet the three-way division; interestingly, the subject of the dialogue is a discussion of the use of the formal orational style. The two speakers do not agree on whether or not one should distinguish between public speech and conversation. A's educated colloquial speech in Bredsdorff's dialogue is characterised by forms like *maj* (orthographically 'ask'), *føle* (follow'), *øjet* (the eye'), *inte* (ikke 'not'), Bredsdorff's Copenhagen Vernacular is not far from this, though it contains some forms with different vowel qualities, like *maj* (mig 'me'), *ge* (give 'give'), *jaj* (jeg 'I'), *højeste* (højeste 'highest'), *ente* (ikke 'not'), all of these characterised by diverging more from writing than do A's corresponding forms.

In contrast to this, Bredsdorff's formal public style is very close to the written language. It is a kind of spelling pronunciation with forms like: *havde* (orthographically *hande* 'had'), *sagde* (*sagde* 'said'), *mig* (mig 'me'), *give* (give 'give'), *det* (det 'it'), *sælv* (*selv* 'self'), *sburgt* (*spurgte* 'asked'), *følge* (følge 'follow'). In some cases we are presented with different word forms: *ekte* (ikke 'not', vs. colloquial *inte*), and plural verb forms (vs. colloquial singular forms): *vi skule* (*vi skulle* 'we shall').

A generation later, Israel Levin still distinguished between a spoken literary language, or the type of language characteristic of the public lecture, which was perceived as the main object of grammatical description, and the colloquial language or the idiom in which educated Danes communicated in private conversations [Danish: *Skriftsproget* (*Bogsproget*), *eller den Sprogform, der udpræger sig i det offentlige Foredrag... fra Talerstolen, prædikestolen, og den tragiske Scenes Bræder, er nærværende Grammatiks Hovedgjensstand; men ogsaa de væsentligste og meest betydende Phænomener af Talesproget* (*Omgangssproget*), *eller det idiom, hvori dannede Danske meddele sig hinanden i den private Samtale, angives overalt*]. In his grammar only the most important phenomena from this variety would be described in relation to the written language (Levin 1844: V–VI).

In the nineteenth century, public and educated colloquial language differed on several linguistic levels, as is evident from the above examples, but mostly on the lexical and phonological level. Some phonological differences are lexically conditioned, but the majority of differences are more general.<sup>4</sup> The public forms tend to be closer to the written form.

<sup>4</sup> The examples below are taken from a number of texts; for further examples, see also Skautrup (1953).

In educated colloquial speech we find diphthongs like [iɥ, eɥ; w, ø; w, a; w, u; w] and [eɪ, aɪ], where public spoken language would have a (long) vowel + consonant, e.g. in the words [sgɪwʔəð] vs. [sgɪʔbeɪ] *skibet* 'the ship', [se:w] vs. [se:bə] *sæbe* 'soap', [lø:w] vs. [lø:bə] *løbe* 'run', [law] vs. [laʔɥ] *lag* 'layer', [sn:w] vs. [sn:və] *sove* 'sleep', [ru:w] vs. [ru:bə] *røde* 'shout', [sdeʔɥ] vs. [sdeʔɥ] *steg* 'roast', [baɪʔɥ] vs. [bøʔɥ] *bøger* 'books'. Another main difference is consonant loss in educated colloquial speech and Copenhagen Vernacular vs. substitution in public language, especially by fricative d in words like *kedel* 'kettle', *hvidkål* 'cabbage', *rødvín* 'red wine', *bløddøgt* 'soft-boiled', *Bredgade* 'Broadstreet' (street name).

Besides this, educated colloquial speech was characterised by many assimilations: assimilated /r/ > /s/, /r/ > /r/ and /rd/, /lg/, /lv/ > /ll/, /nd/ > /n/ and /rd/ > /r/, where public style would prefer unassimilated forms. This applies to a great number of words e.g. *kirsebær* 'cherry', *kurr*, *arve* 'basket', *inherit*, *vilde* 'wild', *sælge* 'sell', *kaly*, *halve* 'calf, half', *gulve* 'floors'; *binde*, *vinde* 'bind, win'; *myrde*, *gjorde*, *jorden* 'murder, did, the earth'.

According to contemporary descriptions, the split between public and colloquial speech was highly salient until the late nineteenth century. As late as 1873, in an article 'Literary language and the dialects', Pauline Worm distinguished between three different kinds of Danish and gave some examples of how they sounded (Worm 1873: 87):

Literary Danish <sup>a</sup>	Cultivated Copenhagen	Ordinary Copenhagen	English
Kan du ikke ryge?	Kan du ikke ryge?	Kadunte ryge?	Can you not smoke?
De skulle ikke have det	Di skal ikke ha de	Diskante haate	They shall not have it
Vi vide hvad vi ville	Vi véd va vi vil	Vi vé va vi ve	We know what we will
Pigen har været i vandet	Pien har været i vanned	Pien ha vært (våren) i vanned	The girl has been in the water
Hun ligner sin moder;	Hun liner sin mor;	Hun liner hinesses mor;	She looks like her mother;
Hun er mageløs nydelig	Hun ær mageløs nydeli	Hun æ maveløs nydelien	She is exceptionally pretty
Jeg kan ikke slugge halve æbler	Jæj kan ikke slue halte æbler	Jækante slue halle ævler	I cannot swallow half apples
Et egetræ i Kjøge og et bøgetræ i Støge	Et ejetræ i Køje å et højetræ i Støje	Ed ajetræ i Kåje å ed højetræ i Støje	An oak in Køge and a beech in Støge

<sup>a</sup> The Danish terms are: *skriftdansk*, *dannet københavnsk*, and *simpelt københavnsk*.

In these examples we find both differences in pronunciation (mostly of the type mentioned above), inflectional differences, and enclitics versus non-enclitics.



Worm was the head of a girls' school in a provincial town, and she may have been old fashioned or linguistically conservative, but she demonstrates that in many urban circles formal public language and educated colloquial language (in her terminology literary Danish and educated or cultivated Copenhagen) were still perceived as two different varieties, each of them with a functional area of its own. One was not more correct than the other, but it was important to observe the rules of where and when they could be used.

### 6.3      *Colloquial speech in early bourgeois society*

The clear distinction between public and educated colloquial speech corresponds to the sharp differentiation between social spheres. Spoken language both mirrored and maintained the sharp societal distinction between public and private: 'With the differentiation of social spheres (for instance, production, family, politics) . . . individuals became increasingly and continuously tied to forms of specialised activity. This involved a more thorough and reinforced differentiation of roles between those engaged in economic activities and in education, between domestic and non-domestic labour, between production and reproduction, between men and women' (Kocka 1993: 14).

This differentiation between spheres seems to have been more important, linguistically, than were social differences, and the stylistic differences were growing in the first half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, however, bourgeois culture as a style of life, a code of conduct – and a way of speaking – claimed universal social validity for itself, seeing itself as the point of reference for other social groups. This is interconnected with the emerging national identity.

Until this time, and certainly through much of the eighteenth century, the languages of the ruling class in Denmark were to a great extent German and French. For long periods, German had been the preferred language in the royal family, as well as the colloquial language not only of the greater part of the upper classes but also of many ordinary citizens in the major towns, too. Consequently, language choice had not been decisive for an individual to be perceived a good patriot.

Starting in the 1770s, a new Danish national identity entered its formative stages. The members of the royal family who took power at a palace revolution in 1772 identified themselves with a demonstrative Danishness; Danish was introduced as the language of the court, and in 1776 a Law of Indigenous Rights was proclaimed, giving those born in the conglomerate state exclusive rights to hold office. Indigenous rights were defined by place of birth, not by language (Holstein was German speaking), but to the cosmopolitan elite the law was seen as anti-German and as a cultural setback, whereas the Danish bourgeoisie reacted enthusiastically. 'In 1776, the new national identity was

entrenched within a numerically small, but dynamic urban section of Danish society which saw itself as the interpreter of the people, the nation' (Feldbæk 1994: 143, my translation).

After another coup d'état in 1784, the ruling circle was again dominated by an aristocratic, German-speaking, and culturally German group, and criticism of the rulers could be construed as anti-Germanness. Here we are presented with a new national discourse in the emerging bourgeoisie, stressing place of birth *and* language (Damsholt 2000: 117), and educated spoken Danish became a social marker of this group. Some German bourgeois families left the country during these years, others consciously shifted to Danish as their colloquial language, since to be German speaking tended to be perceived as pro-German and unpatriotic (Winge 1992: 314).

While the educated Danes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might shift between different languages according to situation, interlocutor, and social domain (cf. Pedersen in press), the new educated bourgeoisie would prefer to speak Danish to all interlocutors competent in this language. Consequently, a new linguistic awareness was emerging, with a stylistic differentiation taking place within spoken Danish; inter-language differences changed into intra-language differences.

We can add to this the demographic development of Copenhagen. The capital had seen rapid growth during the seventeenth century; however, between the beginning of the eighteenth century and the 1840s population growth ceased. Copenhagen was still a medieval type of town, surrounded by ramparts, and because of this stagnation the majority of the inhabitants were born and bred in the capital. Thus, the social conditions were right for the emergence of a close-knit bourgeois community with a focused linguistic norm of colloquial speech.

From the first half of the nineteenth century, we have much contemporary evidence that the same colloquial forms were used by ordinary and higher class people, and no systematic class-related differences in pronunciation have been reported in Copenhagen dialect from this time, only insufficient command of foreign words by the common man (cf. Brink and Lund 1975).

### 6.4      *Public spoken Danish and political and social developments from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries*

At the beginning of this period public spoken Danish was used only in a few functional domains. It was heard in courts and in the pulpit, and a Danish theatre was open in 1722–1728, and again from the 1740s. In all other public domains, languages other than Danish were used. There was no public political debate about this, and German remained the language of command in the army (although not in the navy); Latin continued as the language of instruction in



grammar schools and at the University of Copenhagen; while Danish was used for elementary teaching, but only in reading. Within the next generation, Danish became used for many more public domains, taking in educational institutions and politics. The first lectures in Danish at the University of Copenhagen were given during the 1770s (from about 1840 all lectures were in Danish); grammar schools changed into mainly Danish-speaking schools around 1800; and compulsory education (in Danish) was introduced in 1814.

By now, many things were changing. Politically, absolutism was on the wane, and an animated public political debate took place, especially within the bourgeoisie in Copenhagen, where the mercantile elite and the intelligentsia formed a political alliance in the National-Liberal party, struggling against absolutism and against the more conservative group of large landowners and loyal urban lower middle classes and their rural counterpart, the freeholders.

From the 1840s all public domains were Danish speaking, and in 1849 a new constitution introduced a democratically elected parliament. Through this development, wider circles were politically mobilised. New groups of people entered the public arena, among them a new 'minor elite' of farmers and primary school teachers (often dialect-speaking farmers' sons). By now, participation in public debate was no longer a privilege of a small bourgeois group in Copenhagen, but had been greatly widened. Many contemporary observers point to the 1850s as a sociolinguistic turning-point (Skautrup 1944-1970 [1953]: 185).

The societal changes of this period may well have had a bearing on the sociolinguistic restructuring and redistribution that was taking place. The public language was the subject of teaching, and in 1814 compulsory education was introduced, and many young people went to evening classes and Folk High Schools. Add to this that through their public activities (in teaching, public meetings, (local) policy, or in one of the numerous co-operative societies and other associations that were formed) broader groups could also learn the public language in natural use, though they did not necessarily have the same opportunity for learning the colloquial language, used among educated individuals in private conversation. To learn this code (and the rules of style shifting) one needed to have access to the bourgeois salons and the opportunity to take part in the social life of the Copenhagen bourgeois families. These circumstances led to some kind of compromise: the borderlines between public and colloquial speech became blurred, and the educated colloquial speech style expanded functionally at the expense of the public style. At the same time this colloquial style was converging on the public style, by adopting certain features from it, especially features that were closer to the written language than were the corresponding features in the older, colloquial variety. This compromise marked the rise of a spoken standard language – and at the same time the beginning of a new dialect split.

## 6.5      *The emergence of a socially stratified spoken standard language*

We know from contemporary witnesses that the former local urban dialect in Copenhagen was gradually diverging into two sociolects. A number of variants in the traditional colloquial variety, which was becoming moribund, came to be avoided, primarily those deviating from orthography. These had been perceived as correct when used in private conversation, even among educated citizens, but from now on they were stigmatised. A reallocation took place from stylistic to social markers, the 1840s and 1850s being the decisive years for this development.

The stigmatised forms were primarily diphthongal pronunciations of words like *købe* 'buy', *sæbe* 'soap', *lag* 'layer', *neg* 'sheaf', *bøger* 'books', *låg* 'lid', from this point onwards pronounced with vowel + [b], [x]. Not all diphthongal pronunciations were changed. In highly frequent words, such as the personal pronouns *mig*, *dig* 'me, you' and the reflexive pronoun *sig*, the diphthongs were maintained, as they were in other frequent words, for instance, *leg* 'play', *steg* 'roast' (but not in the homophone *steg* (pret. of *stige* 'climb')), *løg* 'onion', *røg* 'smoke'. There was also a tendency towards the restitution of assimilated consonants, especially in bisyllabic words, resulting in alternations between singular *gub*, *kav* 'floor, calf' (pronounced with a final /l/) and plural *gule*, *kabe* (with /lv/), and in even more unpredictable forms like *jord*, *mord*, *færd*, *påfærd* 'earth, murder, expedition', going on with a single /r/, vs. *hyrd*, *hyrde*, *morder*, *ferdes* 'herd, shepherd, murderer, move', pronounced with /r/d/.

The new dialect division was a split between the politically dominant group of professionals and merchants *vis-à-vis* artisans and workers, and it seems to have been the middle classes that were changing their language by stigmatising many features of the former common local dialect, while the lower classes stuck to the traditional dialect features. In place of the stigmatised variants, the middle class adopted phonological features from the public style into the colloquial style.

The dialogue in the musical *Gjenboerne* ('The Neighbours Opposite' 1844, in Høstrup 1889) could be perceived as an example of an early stage of this development, since it indicates a certain divergence between the speech of students and artisans, and between academic people and *petit bourgeois*. Not only the journeymen but also the wife of the rather affluent coppersmith are characterised by using the colloquial features listed above, while the students' pronunciation is unmarked, in so far as their lines have the usual spelling. It is beyond doubt that this lack of marking signals that the students and academic people do observe the current rules of pronunciation, unlike the artisans using an old-fashioned way of speaking that is being stigmatised.

These changes took place during the 1850s when a societal modernisation set in. In 1857 the ramparts round the medieval town were demolished, in 1858 the

guild system was abolished and replaced by trade legislation, and a period of growth began. A ring of new suburbs was built, and these suburbs were socially segregated, by contrast with the old town, where different social groups were living closer to each other.

Only now were the foundations laid for the modern spoken standard, built on the Copenhagen dialect. According to Brink and Lund (1975), it is a 'natural development' within the Copenhagen dialect. The majority of changes from this period, however, are restitutions, in some cases hyper-restitutions, e.g. *solgte* 'sold', *valgt* 'selection', pronounced with a velar fricative, not originally belonging to the roots of these verbs. These changes are best understood not as local Copenhagen dialect phenomena only but as intimately connected with the social and political societal changes at the national level.

As a reflection of this, we may take a dictionary published (under a pseudonym) in 1866: *Ordbog over Gadesproget* ('Dictionary of the Urban Lower Class Dialect', literally 'street language'). In the preface, the editor indicates that 'vulgar speech has an overwhelming power, due to the contemporary stronger life of freedom, and due to the popular direction in which society has turned more and more' (my translation). According to the author (Kristiansen 1866: V), these are the reasons for the emergence of slang, especially after 1848. Since this dictionary also includes word forms from the former educated colloquial variety, it tells about the stigmatisation that is going on in these years.

The admission of new members into the middle class from outside the ram-parts and outside the close-knit Copenhagen bourgeoisie made the new middle class less locally oriented than the lower classes, who maintained the local dialect features. The sorting out of formerly shared colloquial features led to a reallocation of stylistic features to social dialect features, coinciding with the beginning of the change of the old close-knit Copenhagen speech community into a modern segregated town.

## 6.6      *The rise and fall of the Copenhagen sociolects*

During the next generation (from about 1870) the difference increased between educated, or middle-class, speech, and the speech of the working class of the incipient industrialisation, with the working class leading the linguistic change. The new industrial workplaces attracted workers from all over the country, native Copenhageners were a minority in their own city, and the newly built suburbs resembled new towns, where dialect levelling and koineisation outweighed dialect continuity. They were close-knit communities, though their linguistic expression was a series of local workers' dialects differing from the older local dialect in several respects, for example, a split of /a/ into two different qualities depending on the following consonant: fronted [æ] before dentals and back [ɑ] before labials and velars.

In their work on the standard language and the Copenhagen dialects, Brink and Lund (1975) demonstrate that the general differences between 'Low' (L) and 'High' (H) Copenhagen dialects began with speakers born after 1800. Speakers born prior to 1800 might have certain socially correlated words or forms, but no general differences. The social dialects diverge most strongly among speakers from the second half of the nineteenth century. In speakers born after the turn of the century, the general differences diminished.

After about 1900, the Copenhagen sociolects were converging for quite a long time. Features used only by L-speakers would be taken up by H-speakers, and vice versa. The consequence was a convergence of norms, and a tendency that certain features that once were social markers came to function as style markers instead. The result of this development was evident in a sociolinguistic study from the 1980s, where it was concluded that stylistic and gender-related differences were more pronounced than were social class differences (Gregersen and Pedersen 1991).

Twentieth-century developments within the spoken standard, and the relation between the spoken standard and the metropolitan dialects, will not be further commented upon. Instead, we shall take a look at the acceptance of the spoken standard outside the metropolitan area.

## 6.7      *Acceptance of the spoken standard by the population*

Spoken standard languages were established in most European countries as part of the modernisation process of the nineteenth century, but the dissemination and acceptance of the standard outside the bourgeois groups of the metropolitan area differs a great deal. In Denmark, all provincial urban dialects have changed into regional standards, presumably during the nineteenth century, judging from contemporary comments and from the fact that the towns in North Schleswig, which was part of Germany in 1864–1920 and therefore less exposed to standard Danish in this period, maintained their traditional dialects at least until the 1940s. The urban dialects in Sweden have been better maintained, and the Norwegian and Fennic-Swedish ones even better (cf. Pedersen 2001).

In a paper on London's role in the standardisation of English (Keene 2000: 98) Keene points to the fact that the force of metropolitan culture has been constantly increasing, and that, within Britain, the rapid growth of London both in size and wealth led to a systematic hierarchy of towns, where the metropolises interacted with these towns more or less intensely, according to their place in the hierarchy. Keene introduces a measure of 'urban potential' that could be used to identify 'those areas of the country where exchange and interaction between individuals is likely to have been most intense' (102). Similar hierarchies of centres might be found in Scandinavia, and their interrelations might well contribute to explaining when or why some provincial towns have either

lost or maintained their local dialects (cf. Sandøy 2000: 356; cf. also Chambers and Trudgill 1980: 197).

One of the strongest instruments of the inculcation of the standard has always been the school. In most countries the written standard has been the one and only written language taught in primary schools, and very often it was perceived as 'the language'. Denmark is no exception to this rule; indeed, we find many comments about dialects as corrupted speech, especially from the early nineteenth century. This is doubtless not unconnected with the fact that compulsory education (including writing lessons) had been introduced in 1814, and the 'right' pronunciation has been considered a condition of the correct way of spelling. The school has played a crucial role in the propagation both of the standard language and of standard-language ideology (Kristiansen 1990).

The question arises why the acceptance of the spoken standard language is far more widespread in Denmark than in other European countries (as is widely believed). Is it due to the small size of the country, to (language) ideology, demography, social or political conditions? There can be no doubt that standard language ideology is very strong in Denmark, but we need to consider whether this is the main cause for the extent of standardisation there. It may be that the societal embedding of the standard ideology is crucial. Could the strong ideology be explained by the peculiarities of Danish history?

Three or four such peculiarities are interrelated. One is that the modernisation process took a different course in that the agrarian sector was developed into a market economy prior to industrialisation and was of great importance to the economic upturn (Stilling 1987: 59). The impact of the agrarian reforms around 1790 and the agrarian crisis of 1818–1838, resulting in agrarian capitalism, were the most important political, economic, and social motors of the transformation of Danish society from feudalism to capitalism. During the recession following the Napoleonic wars, urban economic activity was stagnant until the 1840s, especially in Copenhagen (due to the economic consequences of the secession of Norway in 1814). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the independent farmers' class had been strengthened (cf. for example, Vammen 1990).

Another factor was that the landed aristocracy were politically marginalised. This development can be seen in the context of the policy of the absolute monarchy from 1660 onwards. The Danish absolute monarchy was an anti-aristocratic project, which adhered to a taxation policy that saw the (independent) peasant farmers, and not the landowning nobility, as the central pillar in the agrarian economy. Therefore, modernisation could be accomplished based on an independent class of farmers, who were able to accommodate to the market without being resisted by a nobility with strong political influence (Clemmensen 2002: 458).

A third factor is demography. The increase of population in Denmark was second only to that in England, and by about 1870 a good deal of this increase

took place in new rural towns, springing up around the railway stations (in Danish called '*stationsbyer*'). These rural towns were the location for agrarian industries and service companies, and they made up the connecting link between producers and consumers, between country and town (Stilling 1987: 49, 61).

As a fourth factor, it is worth mentioning the particular course of the Danish revivalist movement, compared with many other countries. An important and numerous group developed in a less pietistic direction than many others, inspired by the priest and poet N. F. S. Grundtvig. This movement emphasised that an authentic Christian life implied an active secular life, and that Christianity implied humanity. During the years 1850–1900, they founded a great number of Folk High Schools [Danish: *folkehøjskoler*], spread throughout the countryside, based on this philosophy – but also a product of the profit from the co-operative agrarian capitalism. The Folk High Schools contributed to the creation of a new self-confidence among the peasantry, while at the same time being agents of an urban mentality, at least in some spheres. The result was that the same individualisation process spread simultaneously in the countryside and in the towns, that is, there emerged a more homogeneous mentality among rural and urban people than was the case in many other countries. Almost all leaders of the influential peasant movements in the 1840s and 1850s came from this movement; accordingly, strong class-conscious cultures in opposition to the bourgeoisie did not develop, based either on aristocratic or traditional peasant values (Vammen 1990: 299).

After the war in 1864 and the loss of Schleswig and Holstein, reducing Denmark to a Danish nation state, the National-Liberals, with their ideas about the privileged right to power of the 'educated classes', were repulsed. A protracted constitutional conflict followed, a struggle between left and right over parliamentary government. At the core of the left wing in this constitutional struggle were the freehold farmers. In a wider European context, farmers would more often constitute the rank and file of conservatism.

To sum up: in Denmark, the development of capitalism and industrialisation proceeded in close interaction with the agrarian sector. Class alliances and class compromises, with farmers as the pivot, prevailed (Clemmensen 2002: 464), and Denmark became a bourgeois agricultural country where the formation of a homogeneous mentality, shared by both rural and urban people, had the effect that strong class-conscious cultures did not develop. This should be combined with the fact that the modern market-oriented farmers took an active part both in co-operative societies and in numerous associations, and, accordingly, interacted with many people outside their own village or parish. Their fields of activity were much larger than the local dialect speech communities.

This whole development made the farmers predisposed to standardisation, or, their actual social interaction rather than passive exposure made it less natural

for them to maintain the restricted rural dialects. For obvious reasons, a dialect levelling process had set in already before 1900, resulting in regional dialects or accents replacing the former local dialects.

In Sweden, modernisation of the countryside came a little later than in Denmark. The modernisation process as a whole was somewhat different: industrialisation played a greater role, including in the countryside where large industrial firms were founded. However, some parts of agricultural Sweden maintained a traditional way of living throughout the nineteenth century. All this produced a less homogeneous, less consensus-oriented, society. The modern egalitarian orientation of Sweden was a product of the Social Democrats of the early twentieth century.

If this analysis of modernisation in Denmark is correct (and it is the mainstream analysis of Danish historians), the local dialect-speaking communities were much more predisposed, in their mind-set, to be influenced by the standard in schools and via modern mass media, etc., than was the case in many other countries. Add to this the geographical conditions in Denmark (a small country with no natural hindrances to communication) and the fact that most farmers' wives nowadays have a job of their own outside the farm (or indeed are farmers in their own right), with the result that nearly all children go to nurseries from the age of 1, and we find the perfect scenario for complete standardisation, since the standard language or a regional standard is the unmarked speech code of all institutions (cf. Pedersen 2003).

## 7 A Comparison of the Standardisation Processes in Denmark and Sweden

The sociolinguistic conditions seem to be very much alike in Denmark and Sweden from early modern to modern times. At the same time, the development of the capital cities followed very similar paths. In this section, I examine the extent to which these parallels resulted in similar outcomes for standardisation.

### 7.1 *The demographic development of Copenhagen and Stockholm in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries*

The long-term population growth in Copenhagen and Stockholm is very similar (and similar to the growth of most European metropolises) in that the rapid growth took place in early modern and modern periods, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. According to the Swedish historian Sven Lilja, the general conclusion from the long-term population development of Stockholm is the city's dependence on, and close links to, the Swedish monarchy as a political entity. Stockholm, as the capital, grew and stagnated in tandem with the growth and stagnation of Sweden's political power (Lilja 1995: 337).

It was not until the early seventeenth century that Stockholm really expanded. In a few decades between 1620 and the 1690s the population of Stockholm

increased from round 10,000 to more than 50,000 inhabitants. This was the period when Sweden rose to the status of a European power, and Stockholm became the administrative, political, military, and cultural focus of the early modern Swedish state. After this, there was stagnation until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the next period of expansion began.

In Copenhagen, the growth was already considerable by about 1600, and the following century saw a strong expansion of the capital, due to the organisation of a nationwide administrative apparatus and a standing army as a tool of the new absolutist monarchy (against the Swedish threat!). By about 1690, the number of inhabitants is estimated at 60,000 (Gamrath 1980: 36, 172), but from then on there was a long period of stagnation, until urbanisation following industrialisation gathered speed in the last part of the nineteenth century. Shortly after 1900, the number of inhabitants had reached 500,000 (Lilja 1996: 357).

During the seventeenth century, both Copenhagen and Stockholm were established as capitals proper, with the major political institutions permanently located in the cities. Both rich merchants and the aristocracies were attracted by this, and a general prestige was assigned to the inhabitants and their dialects. The demographic development meant that during the seventeenth century they had few native citizens and many newcomers (many of the newcomers were not native speakers of Danish/Swedish, but native speakers of other languages (mostly German) from within the realms, or else they were foreigners). Linguistically, this would have produced koineisation, with the result that the spoken dialects of the capitals selected for standardisation would already have been levelled and simplified compared to the neighbouring dialects (cf. K. M. Pedersen 1999 on the simplification of gender in the Copenhagen dialect during the sixteenth century).

The eighteenth century was a more stable period; only in around 1850 did another period of rapid growth begin in both cities with many new arrivals, mostly Danes/Swedes from elsewhere in the two countries. The modern industrialised metropolises were born, and new working-class dialects came into being.

### 7.2 *The rise of a spoken standard language in Sweden in comparison with Denmark*

The Danish and the Swedish speech communities developed in very much the same way, though at any particular time one or the other might be a little ahead in certain areas. Swedish gained some domains earlier than Danish did: university teaching in Swedish is reported from the 1730s (Teleman 2002: 21); in Danish from the 1780s. The Swedish royal court preferred Swedish and began to use a Swedish court dress during the reign of Gustav III in the second half of the eighteenth century – though at the same time French seems to have figured

more prominently in Sweden than in Denmark, especially during the eighteenth century when nobility in Sweden preferred French both in colloquial speech and in written communication (Teleman 2002: 24).

In her inspiring article on literary and spoken Swedish ('*boksvenska och talsvenska*') Gun Widmark examines the standardisation processes of spoken Swedish, which seems to take a course parallel to those of Danish. She goes through the considerable literature on the subject, concluding that for long periods Sweden seems to have been a diglossic society with a sharp line of demarcation between private and public language, comparing this to the contemporary situation in Switzerland (Widmark 1991: 175). Widmark calls particular attention to public spoken language, pointing to the fact that school was perceived as a domain of public language, with many dialect speakers using the public spoken language when reading aloud and saying grace or other prayers. That is to say, many Swedes were bidialectal with public spoken Swedish as one variety in their repertoire and either educated spoken Swedish (i.e. educated Stockholm dialect) or a local dialect as the other (1991: 179).

The establishment of a spoken standard in Sweden was analogous to the similar process in Denmark, as were further developments.

### 7.3 Linguistic development in Copenhagen and Stockholm in the second half of the nineteenth century

Koisiinas (1988b: 137) describes the linguistic development in Stockholm on the basis of data from speakers born in the 1860s to the present day. The two oldest speakers, born in the 1860s, speak 'quite different varieties', and the same was the case a generation later. Among Stockholmers born round 1900, there is a very marked difference between speakers of 'H' and 'L' varieties. While the L variety seems to have changed very quickly, the H variety seems to be more stable, with continuity between the speakers born forty years apart. There is a marked difference between these two varieties at all linguistic levels, but the two varieties have also some features in common, especially phonological ones. For example, speakers of both varieties use the so-called Stockholm 'e' (instead of 'ä': thus, *mäta* ('to measure') is pronounced as if spelt *meta*, a feature most prominent in the H speakers).

In the speech of informants born in the 1930s, the differences are far less marked. There are still socially conditioned differences, but they are more subtle. A certain convergence between the two varieties has taken place, from both sides.

The Stockholm material gives the impression that Stockholm speech was for a long time divided into two clearly differentiated sociolects, which, in the course of the twentieth century, have converged and have been (at least partly) levelled to one dialect where the social differences are still indicated, but much less obviously. Koisiinas puts forward the hypothesis that periods with social

egalitarianism will lead to the convergence of subvarieties within a regional dialect (Koisiinas 1988: 139).

The stages of the standardisation process are analogous in the two capitals, as are the relationships between the metropolitan dialects and the spoken standards. Koisiinas points to socioeconomic and demographic changes in the Stockholm region as an explanation of these linguistic changes, and also draws our attention to the fact that a new dialect split seems to have taken place during the second half of the twentieth century between suburbs with many immigrants and other parts of the metropolitan area. Once more, the parallel between Copenhagen and Stockholm is striking, the difference being that this is happening some years later in Copenhagen (Møller and Quist 2003).

### 8 The Norwegian Case

Both in Oslo and in Norway as a whole matters were very different. After the dissolution of the Union with Denmark in 1814, the re-establishment of a Norwegian literary language was at the top of the national agenda. The crucial issue was which social group's speech should form the basis of this new

Norwegian literary language: the Danicised urban elite or the rural dialect speakers (cf. Maehlum in press). This choice has not yet been made, or rather both groups have been chosen, one by the advocates of Dano-Norwegian (*bokmål*), the other by the advocates of New Norwegian (*nynorsk*).<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the rise of a spoken standard, there are both resemblances with and differences from the other Scandinavian countries. Among the Norwegian-born, we find the same tripartite division of the speech community as in the other Scandinavian countries. In about 1800 (Kølle 1774, according to Seip 1916: 16), the urban elite groups developed two varieties, a public, official variety (*høitidsprose*) and an educated colloquial language (*den dannede dagligtale*). The official variety could be characterised as a Norwegian-based pronunciation of the Danish literary language, and this was, in fact, in more complete accordance with the written norm than the equivalent Danish variety. Consequently, the Danish spoken by individuals from Oslo was perceived to be one of the 'best' or even the best (Wilse 1790, according to Seip 1916: 13) ways of speaking Danish. In the other variety, the educated colloquial language, the Norwegian base was more prominent, but also this variety was much influenced by Danish written forms. It is assumed that a southeastern variety of Norwegian was perceived as the most prestigious among these 'blended' Danish-Norwegian varieties. The third category of speech was Norwegian dialects, both rural and urban (Seip 1920).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, we find the same functional expansion of the educated colloquial code at the expense of the public official

<sup>5</sup> Before 1929, these two standards were known as *riksmål* and *landsmål*, respectively.



one as in Denmark and Sweden, and the same tendency to adopt features from the official variety. This meant that certain social distinctions were enforced, and the mother tongue of the Norwegian elite diverged from the dialects of the common people, and moved closer to Danish. According to Mæhlum (in press), this may be looked upon as the culmination of a long process in which Danish was perceived as a socioculturally superior code, and Norwegian was devalued. From around 1820 the stage language in Kristiania (now Oslo) was discussed (Løkensgard Hoel 1996: 91ff.), and the result was that Danish actors were hired, and Danish was the only stage language from 1830 to the middle of the century; only from 1863 were Norwegian actors in the majority. This means that during the first half of the nineteenth century, Copenhagen had even confirmed its position as the normative centre for correct spoken language in Norway (Vinje 1984: 222). However, the Norwegian situation differed from that of Denmark in that the social dimension was fused with a national aspect (Jahr 1996: 86). Militant agricultural parties in both countries were fighting what they perceived as urban hegemony, personified as the class of civil servants (Clemmensen 1994: 148), but in Norway this class was Danish or Danicised, i.e. the social opposition was combined with a national one.

This national aspect, combined with the existence of two closely related written standards, an urban Dano-Norwegian and a 'genuine Norwegian' one based on rural dialects, established a different linguistic climate, although in practice the relationship between the two written codes has always been asymmetrical. The very existence of a dialectally based written language has had a symbolic function as an identity marker for the population outside the centres, and has been a means of self-assertion for groups otherwise marginalised in a modern centralised society (Mæhlum in press). It has thus strengthened the position of the dialects, and made this counter-culture more visible than was the case in Denmark and Sweden. This was made easier by the fact that the Norwegian capital was only half the size of Copenhagen and Stockholm, and Norway as a whole was less urbanised than were its neighbours. The result has been that the standardisation process within spoken Norwegian has taken a different course, and the dialects have a more privileged status than is usual in Scandinavia (Vikør 1993: 207).

A resolution of 1878 (Vikør 1993: 206) concerning spoken language in the classroom takes the stance that instruction in primary schools, as far as possible, should take place in the spoken language of the children, i.e. in their dialects. This principle is still valid, although in a somewhat modified version: 'In their oral training, pupils may use the language they speak at home, and the teacher must give due consideration to the speech of the pupils in his vocabulary and manner of expression' (from the Primary School Act of 1969). As a consequence, the Norwegian school has not played the same role in the inculturation and popularisation of the standard norm as have Danish and Swedish

schools, and there has never been any codified Norwegian spoken standard variety. Implicitly, this has also had a bearing on the use of dialect in many functional domains where a standard language is the unmarked code in other countries.

It is an open question, though, if this unusual situation in Norway will be maintained in the future, considering societal developments in contemporary Norway. In recent years, there has been a tendency towards 'normalisation', i.e. towards a focused variety based upon a *bokmål*-like norm with a southeast Norwegian pronunciation (Vikør 1994: 204; Mæhlum 2003: 94f.; Akselberg 2003: 157f.; Sandøy 2003: 227).

## 9 Conclusion

This short account of Scandinavian history has demonstrated that Norway has taken its own course due to its particular political situation. Danish and Swedish, on the other hand, followed very much the same line of development, with Danish being somewhat ahead due to the different course that modernisation took in these two countries. The written languages were standardised at about the same time and to the same degree in both countries, while the selection of the 'best' spoken language also took place in the same way at the same time, in a way that was closely connected to the demographic development of the capitals as a consequence of the societal changes leading to much stronger, centralised states. In both countries, public and educated colloquial styles tended to converge. This simultaneously led to socially divergent varieties, because the lower classes maintained colloquial variants which, from this point on, became stigmatised among middle-class speakers. In this connection, stigma seems to present us with a more plausible explanation than does prestige (cf. the discussion in Milroy 2000).

Stylistic differences were transformed into social ones during the nineteenth century – possibly a little later in Sweden than in Denmark. The emerging sociolects continued to diverge throughout the nineteenth century, whereas they have been converging on each other concurrently with demographic, social, political, and educational changes in the twentieth century.

The discussion in this chapter has allowed us to answer the question why the standardisation of spoken Danish is advanced relative to some neighbouring countries. It has been demonstrated that there is no monocausal explanation, be it standard ideology, prescriptivism, urbanisation, democratisation, or industrialisation. Both ideology and economic, social, and political contexts have had a bearing on the process. Language ideology is not independent of these societal processes; on the contrary, it is embedded in them.