

Lexicography and lexicological research concerning Nynorsk and Norwegian dialects

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Nynorsk ('New Norwegian') is a dialect-based written language standard of Norwegian which was codified at the middle of the nineteenth century. It is one of two official standard language varieties of Norwegian; the other is *Bokmål* ('literary language'), which originally developed from Danish, due to Norway's subordination under Denmark from about 1400 until 1814. The nineteenth century was a period of Norwegian nation building, in the context of a looser union with Sweden which was dissolved in 1905, when Norway became a fully independent kingdom. The codification and establishment of *Nynorsk* was part of this nation building, in parallel with a gradual Norwegianization of Danish in Norway, which resulted in modern *Bokmål*. While *Nynorsk* gained foothold in rural Western Norway and adjacent areas, *Bokmål* is dominant in the rest of the country. At present, between 10 and 15 % of the population use *Nynorsk* as their written standard language. In speech, however, local and regional dialects are more freely used than in most other countries, and they are recognized as important parts of the general linguistic heritage of the Norwegian people. The dialects are structurally akin to *Nynorsk*, or they combine features from both standard languages. Urban dialects and dialects of Southeastern Norway are, however, strongly influenced by *Bokmål*.

The pivotal person in the Norwegian linguistic nation-building process was *Ivar Aasen* (1813-1896), a self-taught linguist of rural stock. During the 1840s, he travelled around in Norway collecting dialect data more thoroughly than anybody had done before him, and by systematic comparison he concluded that they were branches of a single language derived from medieval Old Norse, and different from Danish. He published a comparative grammar and a dictionary of the dialects. Thereafter he codified a written standard based on a comparison of the dialects, but in fact closest to the speech of Western Norway, where many Old Norse features had survived better than in the rest of the country. This standard, *Nynorsk*, was taken into use by Aasen himself and a growing number of other rural-based Norwegian intellectuals. It was reformed in the twentieth

century, coming closer to the modern Eastern dialects (spoken in the demographically most expansive parts of Norway), and it has yielded an impressive literature both in quality and in quantity. It has been formally equal to Bokmål since 1885.

In any emerging language standard, lexicography and lexicology are important for its well-functioning and survival. Vocabulary has to be expanded to fulfill its tasks in the modern world, while at the same time cultivating the traditions of the language and the community. Dictionaries have to be produced, constantly updated and taken into use in order to give the language a firm usage basis. In Nynorsk, there developed a purist tradition early on, first directed generally against internationalisms, but later restricting itself to the resistance against words coming from Bokmål, Danish and Low German (from the Hansa period, which was the period when Old Norse were superseded by Danish and the ancient kingdom of Norway was subsumed into the Danish monarchy). Instead, dialects words, Old Norse words and “national” neologisms were promoted. This purism has been modified in modern times, but it has dominated the discourse on Nynorsk for a long time.

Ivar Aasen was the founder of modern dialectology and lexicography of Norwegian. His ground-breaking work was made possible by a scholarship given to him by the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, which he received through his years of travel in the 1840s and some years more until the Norwegian Parliament took over the responsibility. This society, founded in 1760, has been an important factor in the modernization of Norway.

The present report is based on a seminar arranged by the Society on the 9th and 10th October 2009. It draws the line from Aasen’s work to the present state of lexical research and lexicographic production concerning Nynorsk and the Norwegian dialects. The contributions have been centered around four themes:

1. The history and present state of Nynorsk lexicography,
2. The major work in this field, Norsk Ordbok, a twelve-volume dictionary of Nynorsk and the Norwegian dialects, which is ongoing and scheduled to be finished in 2014,
3. Tendencies in the lexical development of Nynorsk and the dialects,

4. Future prospects of Norwegian lexicographic and lexicological research, particularly concerning Nynorsk.

We proceed to present summaries of each contribution.

Lars S. Vikør: The history of Nynorsk lexicography – a survey

Nynorsk lexicography started with Ivar Aasen's normative dictionary from 1873, based upon the dialects in the choice of lemmas and their definitions and usage information, but with a standardized lemma form of each word. Aasen used the prevalent Danish language as his metalanguage, in which the definitions were written. The earliest generations of Nynorsk dictionaries had to be based on the fact that Danish was the only developed written language in Norway at the time.

This survey lists all dictionaries involving Nynorsk in some way from Aasen till the present time (in so far as the author has been able to collect information of them all). It only contains works covering the general language (for terminological dictionaries, see under Dysvik below). It is separated in several sub-lists according to the character of the dictionary. They are:

1 *Nynorsk to and from Norwegio-Danish*, from before the systematic Norwegianization of the Danish language. Here Aasen's dictionary belongs, alongside with Schjøtt's (see below) and some others from before 1914. These are founding classics of the Nynorsk tradition. The list contains seven works.

2 *Monolingual Nynorsk dictionaries and word lists*. "Word lists" means (small) spelling dictionaries, mostly produced for the school. This is the most prolific genre here, the first one dates from 1897 (Nynorsk was allowed as a language of instruction in basic schools in 1892, and the first official – state-governed – spelling of the language came in 1901), the youngest one from 2008. The total number of items is 32 (although this figure is deceptive, because many of them have gone through successive reprints, most often after revisions, while I have here only noted the first edition of each book, only giving brief information on later editions under each item). Most date from after 1960, following the spelling reform of 1959 (25). But also the few large monolingual Nynorsk dictionaries are in

this list, primarily Norsk Ordbok (see under Wetås below) and the one-volume Nynorskordboka with more than 90000 lemmas.

3 *Bokmål and Nynorsk*: This list includes dictionaries between the two varieties, mostly (in fact almost exclusively) from Bokmål to Nynorsk. Most of them are so-called “Norwegianization dictionaries”, featuring Bokmål words (mostly from Danish and German) which are or have been rejected in Nynorsk because of its purist tradition, and giving their Nynorsk equivalents. Purism is significantly weakened in Nynorsk, but there are still stylistic norms in the language which make general use of common Bokmål-derived words look awkward to many. There are twelve items on this lists.

4 *Nynorsk to and from foreign languages*: This list includes 27 items, and the foreign languages involved are Old Norse (4 items, but all are different editions of the same work, with changing authorship through successive generations from 1909 till 2008), German (5), English (8), French (2), Latin (2), Swedish (1), Icelandic (1), Faroese (1), Danish (2) and Russian (1). The type and scope of the dictionaries within each language pair is vastly different, but we cannot specify this more here.

5 *Bokmål and Nynorsk together to and from foreign languages*: These are dictionaries where Bokmål and Nynorsk lemmas are listed together with some code indicating which variety the lemmas belong to (typically + for Bokmål and * for Nynorsk). The list includes 17 items, and the languages involved are Swedish (5), English (2), German (2), Icelandic (3), Danish (1), Dutch (1) and Polish (1). Besides, one Scandinavian dictionary (1994) covers both Danish, Swedish and Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk), but restricts itself to the “false friends” within these closely related languages (as do several other dictionaries involving Danish and Swedish). In many of these books, particularly the smaller ones, Bokmål forms are given as “normal”, while Nynorsk words and forms are given where they deviate markedly from Bokmål.

Lars S. Vikør: Steinar Schjøtt – a pioneer of Nynorsk lexicography

Steinar Schjøtt (1844-1920) was one of the early supporters of Nynorsk. He was a teacher and an author of successful textbooks on Norwegian, European and world history. He also translated Snorri

Sturluson's Norwegian kings' sagas from Old Norse to Nynorsk. But his most comprehensive product was a set of two dictionaries: (Norwegian-)Danish – Nynorsk (DNO, 1909) and Nynorsk – (Norwegian-)Danish (NO, 1914). Both were in one volume, and unlike Aasen's dictionary, they incorporated modern vocabulary generated in the expansive growth of the Nynorsk literary language (or in some cases created by the lexicographer himself). The DNO was the largest and the most important of the two. It contained a lot of idiomatic expressions, and it filled a deepfelt lacuna in Nynorsk lexicography at the time, considering that almost all adult Nynorsk users at the time had been educated in Danish and to a large extent "thought in" this language when they were writing texts. They lacked established norms as to what to do when it was difficult to find a Nynorsk word or expression adequate to their needs. Schjøtt's DNO, thus, was very important in the development of Nynorsk as a modern written language during the first decades of the twentieth century. It was much used, and reprinted in 1926.

The article gives a brief biographical sketch of Schjøtt, and then proceeds to describe the dictionaries. Its main part discusses the DNO, in particular certain problems encountered by Schjøtt on the borderline between established (Norwegian-Danish) usage, the need for a well-developed and rich modern vocabulary, and the Nynorsk purist ideology. His solutions and the criticism that he met on certain points in this respect, are discussed in some detail, and an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses is given.

Sylvi Dysvik: Nynorsk LSP lexicography

This article surveys and lists Nynorsk dictionaries related to LSP: language for special purposes. After an introduction delimiting the concept LSP lexicography (*fagleksikografi*) and briefly assessing the state of Nynorsk LSP lexicography, the article consists of a series of lists of dictionaries classified in different groups, much like the corresponding survey of general dictionaries in Vikør's article above. In each group, the scope varies from brief term lists (often within general books on the subject) to voluminous dictionaries. There are six lists.

1 *Headwords and explanations in Nynorsk* (ofte with Bokmål and other languages added): eight dictionaries, three covering medicine, and one each covering agriculture, veterinary medicine,

differ technical disciplines, linguistics and onomastics. The most recent works (human and veterinary medicine, from 1988 to 2004) give English parallel terms.

2 *From Bokmål to Nynorsk*: Includes 11 dictionaries, covering tele-communications, law (3), theology, pharmacy, military terminology (2), technical terminology (2), administration (2). One of them combines law and administration.

3 *Nynorsk to or from foreign languages*: Includes eight dictionaries, covering anatomy, trade, (formal) letter writing (formulations etc.), fisheries, sociology (2), computer science, politics. The four last-mentioned carried headwords in English with equivalents in Nynorsk, without explanations.

4 *Bokmål and Nynorsk to or from foreign languages*: This list includes 38 dictionaries, all published from 1970 on and all but three published from 1980 on. Almost all are published by (semi-)official bodies with government subsidies, chief among them being the Council for Technical Terminology, a state-supported branch institution. They cover a wide range of fields, mostly technical. The dominant pattern is that Bokmål is treated as the most “neutral” variety of Norwegian, while Nynorsk terms are given where they differ from Bokmål.

5 *Dictionaries of particular genres*: There are six of these: a thesaurus, a dictionary of foreign words, an etymological dictionary, a final-alphabetic dictionary, a frequency dictionary, and a rhyming dictionary.

6 *Nynorsk encyclopedias*: Contains four encyclopedias, the most comprehensive consisting of ten volumes (with the addition of an atlas volume) dating from the 1950s and 1960s. Two more recent ones (from 1979 and 1987) are brief, consisting of two volumes each and having parallels in Bokmål. At present, a brand-new electronic encyclopedia is in preparation.

Finally, the article gives a brief presentation of the most important institutions behind this body of Nynorsk LSP dictionaries.

Åse Wetås: Norsk Ordbok and the 2014 project

This article presents *Norsk Ordbok* ‘Norwegian Dictionary’, which has been mentioned above. The dictionary covers both written Nynorsk and the Norwegian dialects; it is scheduled to be completed in twelve volumes in 2014.

The plans for this national dictionary date back to 1930. The first fascicle appeared in 1950 and the first full volume in 1966. The first four volumes – up to the reorganization in 2002 – appeared in five fascicles which were afterwards joined together in book form, usually five fascicles in one 800-page volume.

When the 12. and last volume of the dictionary is finished in 2014, the dictionary will contain more than 300,000 word articles. From the 1990s onwards, the slip archive and other important parts of the Nynorsk collections at the University of Oslo have been digitized and later organized in a set of relational databases.

In 2002 the dictionary work was reorganized, the staff of editors was greatly expanded and the plan for finishing the work in 2014 was made. Most of the staff remained at the University of Oslo, as before, but a small group of editors were placed at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. In total, there are now 27 editors and an administrative staff of four persons. The author of the article, Åse Wetås, has been the Director of the Norsk Ordbok 2014 project since 2008.

From 2002 onwards, the dictionary has been produced on an electronic platform, and four new volumes have been issued. In the autumn of 2010, volume 9, covering most of R and the first part of S, is in preparation, to appear in early 2011. Besides, an electronic version of the dictionary is developed which will be made public within a short time.

The article first describes the work in the early days – the collection of dialect samples and literary excerpts, and the building up of huge lexicographical resources, including a slip archive of more than 3 mill. paper slips. After that, the development since 2002 is described, both the modern dictionary organization, the editing methods and the main sources (which are further elaborated in the next article). A couple of articles are also cited and commented upon as examples of the procedures followed.

***Tor Erik Jenstad: The source material of Norsk Ordbok,
particularly from Trøndelag***

This article gives an outline of the source material which is used in Norsk Ordbok, emphasizing data on the spoken language (dialects). The examples given are chosen mainly from the dialects of the

Trøndelag region. Entries for traditional dialect words in Norsk Ordbok are usually built upon the dictionaries of the nineteenth-century scholars Ivar Aasen (1873) and Hans Ross (1895). There are also older lexical sources, some dating back to the seventeenth century. From the 1930s until the 1990s dialect material was collected by a comprehensive network of dialect users from all over the country (with the notable exception of the far north, Finnmark county, and the urban dialects), amounting to about half a million slips with information on the morphology, meaning and usage of traditional dialect words. A parallel project, *Trønderordboka* ‘The Trøndelag dictionary’ during the 1980s and 1990s collected the same sort of material from this region. All this material has since been digitized and made publicly accessible. The collection is still growing, since new words and usages are constantly added from web sites and radio programs. A noticeable collecting effort in the last 25-30 years has secured that the dialects of the Trøndelag region are not underrepresented in Norsk Ordbok compared to those of rural Southern Norway, the areas which have been most in the focus of traditional dialectology. Today, Northern Norway is the most imperfectly represented region, and work is going on to improve this situation.

Kaja Borthen: How many det are there in Norwegian? A study based on Norsk Ordbok

The grammatical function word *det* has a multitude of functions in Norwegian. The article raises the question of how many lexemes *det* corresponds to. The author suggests that there are 7 lexemes *det* in Norwegian. These are: a) the neuter definite article *det* ‘the’ in noun phrases: *det røde huset* ‘the red house’, b) the neuter demonstrative determiner *det* ‘that’: *det landet* ‘that country’, c) the expletive pronoun *det* ‘it’: *det regner* ‘it is raining’, d) the unaccented neuter personal pronoun *det* ‘it’: *ta det bort* ‘take it away’ (e.g. an insect); e) the accented neuter demonstrative pronoun *det* ‘that (one)’: *se på dét!* ‘look at that (one)!', f) *det* used as subject in identity statements: *så kom den tredje ormen, og det var den største* ‘then the third snake came, and that was the biggest one’, and g) *det* used in reference to predicates: *jenta er vrang, det er ho* ‘the girl is difficult, that she is’. The article compares this analysis with the way *det* is being

presented in *Norsk Ordbok*, the comprehensive dictionary described in Åse Wetås' article. Both similarities and differences are found between *Norsk Ordbok*'s presentation of *det* and the proposed analysis. It is argued that differences between dictionaries and theoretical models of people's mental lexicon are to be expected, because dictionaries have to take account of practical problems concerning the presentation of linguistic usage data for non-linguists.

Endre Brunstad: Archaisms in Nynorsk

An "archaism" in this context means a word deemed obsolete or typical of an older period in language history, while being out of tune in present-day usage.

Nynorsk has, as mentioned above, a tradition of purism, especially directed against words of Danish and German stock which are dominant in Bokmål and also common in dialectal speech, even the speech of many Nynorsk users. They are often (attempted) replaced with alternative coinages of genuine Nynorsk stock, sometimes with success, sometimes not. Purism has in the most recent decades been controversial among Nynorsk users, and it has been lessened to a considerable degree. As a result, many of the words formerly coined to replace Dano-German loanwords, have themselves been branded as "archaisms", a result of a purism which is now by many regarded as exaggerated. Such words may still, however, be used to obtain particular stylistic effects.

This article purports to discuss archaisms in Nynorsk in a general linguistic background, and to show some of the stylistic functions archaisms may have. The general phenomenon of archaisms is placed in a style-historical perspective, and lines are drawn back to Roman and Greek antiquity. The question of how one can define and delimit archaisms in Nynorsk is discussed, and the function and scope of archaization in Nynorsk is treated (Nynorsk was after all codified as a means to bridge the historical gap between Old Norse and modern Norwegian dialectal speech). The article, thus, is intended to clarify some linguistic concepts based on examples from Nynorsk.

The article also discusses various views among Nynorsk users concerning archaization, and what relations there are between these views and the minority position Nynorsk has in relation to Bokmål.

Based on this, the article gives some consequences for the teaching in Nynorsk in schools.

The empirical basis of the article is of various kinds: expressions of opinions by different Nynorsk users, and some literary texts: Jon Fosse's novel *Andvake* (2007), Eilev Groven Myhren's Nynorsk translation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (2006), and Liv Hatle's translation of short stories by the Finnish-Estonian author Aino Kallas (2001).

Jan Olav Fretland: On the choice of terminology in student texts in Nynorsk

Formally, Nynorsk is one of two legally equal official written standards of Norwegian, as already stated. In practise, Bokmål is dominant, especially in trade and industry, and also in all big national newspapers; often it is the only kind of Norwegian in practical use. As a consequence of this, the Norwegian terminology taught in most subjects at the universities, is Bokmål (which, of course, has increasing difficulties in asserting itself in relation to English).

This inequality between Bokmål and Nynorsk in many LSP is the departing point of this article. The main goal was to find out if students writing Nynorsk were able to use an independent Nynorsk terminology or rather chose a terminology heavily dependent on Bokmål. The research material was bachelor examination papers delivered by students using Nynorsk as their main language. The subjects were Pedagogy in Teachers' Training Education and Micro and Macro Economy in the Economy and Administration course. Furthermore, a document analysis has been made, both on the task texts given by the University College and of rules and advice given on Nynorsk terminology by the Norwegian Language Council (Språkrådet). In addition the lecturers of the studies under examination were interviewed on their attitudes to a specific Nynorsk terminology.

The main conclusions can be summed up like this:

Within economy (88 papers), both students and teachers seem to behave very freely in relation to prescriptions and rules for Nynorsk from the Language Council. Some features in the study indicate that internal Bokmål standards of terminology within economy are chosen rather than recommended Nynorsk standards. Where Nynorsk

and Bokmål have different suffixes or different terms, the Bokmål version is to be found in many cases. Even further: In many specialized economy terms we find that the plural of masculine nouns are written *-er*, which corresponds with Bokmål, while the Nynorsk morpheme is *-ar* (in words like *skatter* ‘taxes’, *sedler* ‘bank notes’, *reserver* ‘reserves’ etc. where the correct Nynorsk forms are *skattar*, *setlar*, *reservar*).

Pedagogy (50 papers) differs to some extent. The main terminology has more of the recommended Nynorsk choices. We do not, either, find *-er* in masculine nouns where the correct Nynorsk morpheme is *-ar*. But also in these texts there are clear tendencies to choose Bokmål-related forms and spellings instead of more specific Nynorsk variants.

A general conclusion for the whole material is that there is a lot of uncertainty, both in selection of morphosemantic form and in spelling. *Arbeids-løyse*, the Nynorsk word for ‘unemployment’, has 7 different forms in the students’ texts.

A small questionnaire shows that the choice of language and terminology carry little weight among the lecturers.

The findings in this survey show very clearly the problems of handling Nynorsk terminology in specialized areas. There is a significant need for a specific Nynorsk glossary in many of these fields. The present paper also claims that there is an obvious need for greater attention on a specific Nynorsk terminology among lecturers and textbook writers.

Edit Bugge: Some methodical challenges related to the study of word death

This paper discusses some methodical challenges attached to traditional sociolinguistic word death surveys, in which informants’ knowledge and reported use of dialect vocabulary have been measured through word recognition interviews. In these interviews informants have been given lists of contextually detached dialect words from historical sources, which the informants are asked to give appropriate definitions of. The social stratification in the variation of the informants’ test scores, and particularly the synchronic age variation, has been assumed to indicate diachronic change in the local vocabulary.

The paper discusses a possible model for intergenerational vocabulary transmission in traditional word death surveys. This underlying model may have influenced both the methodical choices in data collection and the interpretation of the collected data. Examples from word recognition surveys from Shetland and the Faroe Islands are given to illustrate the discursive aspect of word recognition surveys and the possible distance between linguists' and folk linguists' approach to the nature of a 'good definition'.

Ålov Runde: Norwegian, particularly Nynorsk, documentary lexicography in the future

Documentary lexicography (Norwegian: *dokumentasjonsleksikografi*) is a term denoting lexicography as a means to document linguistic data in a scientific way (as opposed to utility lexicography (*bruksleksikografi*), dictionaries which are pragmatically designed to cater for certain practical needs of users). Norwegian documentary lexicography is part of a larger field, the documentation of the Norwegian languages through corpora and other types of collections of Norwegian language data. Such documentation is seen as an important element in the ongoing struggle for continuous vitality of Norwegian and resistance to domain loss. The article gives a survey of existing resources in the field, covering Bokmål and Nynorsk, but with the main stress on Nynorsk. The project Norsk Ordbok 2014, presented by Wetås and others in this volume, is described as a pivotal element in Nynorsk documentary lexicography, and its impact on the more general linguistic documentation activities in Norway is described and discussed. Finally, some future perspectives are offered, the foremost among them being the need to develop the comprehensive electronic databases into a full-fledged set of electronic dictionaries and bases.