

The Globalization of Language

How the Media Contribute to the Spread of English and the Emergence of Medialects

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When words have ceased to bear witness to what takes place
in the Realm of the Living, we shun them – with the
possible exception of the philologists, for they have
always had a weakness for words as cadavers.
Jeppe Aakjær (1916:118)

In the following analysis of the role of media in the metamorphosis of modern Danish I am particularly interested in the spread of English and the evolution of media-bound varieties of language. My *first* hypothesis is that the media both are vehicles of Anglo-Saxon culture and contribute to the anglicization of global culture (Hjarvard 2003a). The media are more than a neutral channel through which Anglo-American culture spreads; by virtue of their institutional structure and a strong dominance of English-speaking actors in the software industry in a broader sense (i.e., computers, television, music, etc.) they actively contribute to cementing the paramouncy of English over other languages.

The linguistic effects of the media are not limited to spreading English; the media themselves also give rise to new uses of the language. The media represent a material and social infrastructure for communication among people, and as a consequence, their characteristics quite naturally have an imprint on language. My *second* hypothesis is, therefore, that as human communication becomes mediatized (Hjarvard 2003b), media-bound varieties of language will arise. Whereas linguists have focused on linguistic traits relating to the user's geographical origin (dialect) and sociological traits relating to class or degree of formal education (sociolects), any analysis of an increasingly mediated society's use of language must also take into account the linguistic variants that arise out of specific media. These are what I have chosen to call *medialects*. Furthermore, there is an interplay between English and the medialects in that the media-specific varieties of language are strongly influenced by English.

Third, I posit that the linguistic effects of the media play a part in processes of social and cultural distinction in Danish society and that it is therefore not adequate to view these influences in national terms, as a question of Danish vs other languages. The question of English influences on Danish is often treated as though it were a choice between a pure danophone culture and a given foreign culture. Moreover, it is often

treated as a matter of taste and/or cultivation: English influences are often considered as a symptom of carelessness, as a bad habit that heightened linguistic sensitivity and discipline might cure. Although influences on the national linguistic culture do play a role, I should like to focus instead on the social and cultural aspects of the influences here. In extension of Bourdieu's (1984, 1992) theory of different kinds of capital in different fields of society, I conceive of language as a field in which cultural and social conflicts are articulated. Linguistic prowess (e.g., fluency in one or more foreign languages or the ability to switch between a local dialect and the standard language as the situation demands) constitutes capital that the individual may use to attain social status, an identity and/or power in relation to others. In Bourdieu's terminology, linguistic ability constitutes symbolic capital that may be converted to cultural capital (repute, social status, etc.) or economic capital (better-paid work, etc.) Thus, greater use of English in the media not only represents a foreign influence, but acts to reinforce or change social and cultural distinctions and power relationships within Danish society, as well.

English, the Language of Globalization

Over the past two or three decades, English has come to occupy a singular position among languages. Previously only one among several dominant European languages, on a par with French or Spanish, it is today a *world language*, the language people use whenever they wish to communicate with others outside their own linguistic community. English has become the lingua franca of the global network: where the TCP/IP protocol secures technical communication between computers via the internet, English is the "protocol" for oral and written communication across national frontiers.

As English has moved toward paramountcy, the status of the other principal languages has changed. Even though they are spoken by more people today than ever before, they have been demoted, degraded in relation to English. Today, French, Spanish, Arabic, German, Russian, etc., more or less have the status of regional languages, national languages that can be used beyond their national frontiers. But, they are losing their currency as the language of international communication, formal and informal: both in political and commercial contexts and in intercultural exchanges, as bridges between people who cross cultural frontiers or who like to enrich their lives with media products from abroad.

The different languages have also been affected by the challenge English poses, tending to a greater or lesser degree to absorb English words, pronunciation, word order, and so forth. At the same time, a growing number of languages and dialects are in danger of extinction. Linguists count approximately 6,800 different languages in the world today. The languages differ widely in terms of the number of people who use them. The eleven most widely used languages encompass nearly half the population of the planet. While not the most widely spoken language, English was spoken by about 341 million people as their first language in 1999. Roughly 500 million spoke English as their first or second language.

Some 417 languages are considered virtually extinct today; they are spoken by very few, elderly people. But many more languages have experienced decline in various respects (www.ethnologue.com). The trend is no new phenomenon, nor can it be attributed exclusively to the spread of English. In fact, the trend can be traced back centuries, during which time European imperialism over most of the planet contributed to the dominance of a handful of languages at the expense of a number of local languages and dia-

lects. *Linguistic imperialism* has frequently followed in the wake of economic and political imperialism (Phillipson 1992).

Linguistic homogenization is not only a consequence of global imperial domination; the process of *nation-building* has also contributed. Frequently, the creation of nation-states has involved the adoption of a single national language, whereupon education and cultural expressions in other dialects and languages within the national frontiers have ceased. Not infrequently, use of subordinate languages and dialects has been forbidden or subject to political sanctions. In a similar fashion, different dialects of the designated national language occupy different positions in a rank order, where one dialect is the prescribed norm (Milroy & Milroy 1999). Thus, globalization and the predominance of English at the expense of other languages is nothing new. It is rather a question of a radicalization and acceleration of a centuries-long trend, in which local varieties of language die out, and more universal varieties survive.

Some linguists and cultural historians speak of “linguistic genocide” and point accusing fingers at globalization. Rather than speaking of “extinction”, which connotes a natural and perhaps inevitable process, they use a term signifying “mass murder” to point out the societal and premeditated nature of the phenomenon. When languages die out, it is the consequence of the workings of specific institutions: “Among the principal perpetrators of this linguistic (and cultural) genocide are formal education and mass media, and behind them are economic and political actors on a macro-level” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 2001:33).

Globalization has not, however, acted solely to homogenize language and promote use of English. We also find examples of heightened political activity to gain recognition of, and to generally promote regional languages like Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Catalan and Kurdish. Most of these movements have not identified their adversary as globalization per se (or, for that matter, English when used as an international lingua franca), but rather the dominant language of the dominant national culture, like, for example, Turkish in Turkey. In some instances – in Norway, for example – the defense of dialects has been incorporated in national linguistic policy. There, mainstream media, too, are engaged in the effort to preserve both parochial dialects and the synthetic, dialect-based national language, New Norwegian (Vestad 2003). The political struggle for recognition of local and regional languages is part of a greater striving *for* cultural identity and recognition, and *against* the hegemony of the majority culture(s) of the nation-state. Viewed in this perspective, national linguistic cultures may be said to be under attack from without and within, which is very much in keeping with globalization theorists’ characterization of the process as being at once globalizing and localizing.

Danes Speak English – and Standard Danish

English has influenced the Danish language, as it has many other languages, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. The influence is noticeable in pronunciation, declensions and conjugations, as well as word order, but the most obvious influence is the number of new words having their roots in Anglo-American culture. In connection with a comprehensive inventory of new words in the Danish vocabulary in the period 1955-1998, Jarvad (1999:110) reports the following distribution in terms of the origin of the words:

Loans from languages other than English (e.g., tortilla)	5%
Names, words, phrases taken directly from English (e.g., death metal)	13%
Hybrids, with an English element (e.g., hårspray; hår = hair)	14%
Pseudo-English words (e.g., bigshopper)	2%
Conceptual loans from English (e.g., turbulens)	9%
Danish innovations (e.g., salgsbrev)	57%

As Jarvad points out, the categories may be combined and tallied in numerous ways, some of which support more or less alarming conclusions as to the influence of English. If we choose to stress how foreign words and phrases are “danified”, we find that only 13% of the new additions to the language are borrowed directly and intact from English, plus 5% from other languages. This means that 82% of all the new words in the Danish language are more or less Danish. If, however, we stress English influences of various kinds, we find that 38% of all the new words have an English connection. Irrespective of what we choose to emphasize, the influence of languages other than English is relatively weak.

The influence of English on the Danish language is only one facet of Anglo-Saxon influence. Today, increasingly, there are settings in Denmark in which English has supplanted Danish. Some large corporations having extensive operations and contacts abroad have introduced English as the company language; some fields of science, where Danish and/or several foreign languages were once used, have converted to English. Information technology, music and music publishing, and advertising are other branches where English is rapidly gaining ground, in some instances to the exclusion of Danish. Linguists characterize the situation as a “loss of domain”, and it is precisely losses of domain that worry some Danish researchers most. Danish as such will surely survive, but losses of domain may reduce Danish in terms of both extent and status. If Danish is on the ebb in key areas of life in Denmark – not least in fields having to do with new technologies and so-called growth sectors – its vitality and versatility may be at risk (Davidson-Nielsen & Herslund 1999, Jarvad 1999).

If Danish is becoming more and more receptive to influences from English, it is at the same time becoming less receptive to local varieties of Danish. Danish dialects have receded steadily throughout the period of Denmark’s modernization, starting in the nineteenth century, and today we find hardly any true dialects left. Only among extremely aged Danes do we find usage that is specific to a given locality. In their place we find a handful of more or less diluted *regional* dialects like those spoken on the islands of Funen and Bornholm and in Southern Jutland. These, too, are in decline, however. Generally speaking, regional dialects are spoken mostly by elderly people and people with less formal education, whereas young people and more highly educated individuals tend to speak standard Danish (Lund 2001). Meanwhile, new linguistic varieties that are specific to uses of new media – chatrooms, text messages, e-mail etc. – have emerged. These are characterized by a mixture of formal and informal styles and new combinations of spoken and written forms (Crystal 2001).

Mass media are often singled out as the most important factors behind the increasing influence of English on Danish. Davidson-Nielsen & Herslund (1999:11) speak of the influence of “the whole American Star Wars arsenal of audiovisual media,” and Preisler (1999a, 1999b) focuses on the influence of English in subcultures, where use of mediated cultural expressions like rock music and computer games mold fans’ and players’ identity. In a similar vein, Phillipson (1992:59) cites film, video and television as vehicles of

English linguistic imperialism. But few have specified the role the media play to any greater extent.

Generally, the frequency of English in media content is simply taken as a sort of index of the degree of influence without any further discussion of the role of the media in the process. Preisler (1999a, 1999b) has probed deepest into the relationship between English and Danish in conjunction with his study of mediated subcultures. He tends toward the view that the media themselves are not responsible for the influence. According to Preisler, the prime factors are to be found in overall changes in Danish culture. Danish society is undergoing a general Anglo-Americanization, and it is here we find the causes of linguistic influences. In Preisler's view, the media mirror culture rather than create it.

But the issue of media influences on Danish hardly originated with the advent of globalization. Media have played a role in linguistic rivalries and power struggles for centuries, and when we consider linguistic influences in a historical perspective, it becomes clear that they are social and cultural phenomena and not simply a question of establishing a common national language with standardized diction. Standard Danish, the norm now challenged by English and miscellaneous medialects, is no natural or even impartial version of the Danish language; it is the dialect that emerged victorious out of a cultural and social power struggle. A historical perspective also reveals the roles foreign influences on Danish have played in the articulation of social and cultural hierarchies in the country. There have been periods when losses of domain to one or another foreign language were much more far-reaching than either the situation today or what is likely to obtain in the foreseeable future.

Thus, "standard Danish," the language virtually all Danes speak today, is the product of a very long social and cultural process, the aim of which has been the establishment of a unified national culture. Standard Danish is the linguistic result of a nation-building project, whereby nation-state and society were to be forged into one, where state, people, culture and language were linked together through the construction of a common Danish identity. In the course of the process, elites had to relinquish their ties with other linguistic cultures, while commoners were made to sacrifice their local idiom. Standard Danish became the common denominator, the basis for the homogenization of Danish society within the framework of the welfare state. It is the language in which all Danes could feel at home in a modern, industrialized and urbanized Denmark.

Given globalization, the bond between nation-state and people is no longer fully so unequivocal. In an increasing number of contexts, "Danishness" is neither self-evident nor adequate as a framework for social interaction and identity-formation. Whether in the business world, in politics, or the Arts, Danishness is under stress. Danishness can no longer serve as the common denominator of state and society when both state and society have been globalized.

Language by Class, Class by Language

The Danish language has not always been the universal language in Denmark. For long periods, different classes and occupations spoke other languages. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the kingdom was ruled by Divine Right, class distinctions were not primarily marked by differences in the Danish one spoke. Foreign languages were used widely, particularly in the capital. German, the language of skilled craftsmen, was very important. Many craftsmen were immigrants from German-speaking territory, and German was more generally the language of the Crafts. Many Danish crafts-

men had learned German through travel and apprenticeships abroad. German was also the language of the military and remained the official language of command until 1773. Parts of the state administration and Court both wrote and spoke German, both Low and High varieties. Some Danish kings never wrote a word of Danish, expressing themselves in German instead. Starting in the mid-seventeenth century, French began to gain currency. Knowledge of French conferred prestige at Court and in the Arts. French was also the language of diplomacy throughout Western Europe. Correspondence between Danish emissaries abroad and the Ministry in Copenhagen was in French, as was correspondence addressed to foreign powers and their legations in the Danish capital. Latin was the language of the Church and Academia. Academic lectures were commonly held in Latin up to 1835 (Petersen, forthcoming).

The simultaneous currency of several languages in the capital mirrored both its diverse composition – not least the presence of a good number of immigrants from German-speaking areas – and the social and cultural orientations of the upper classes of the city, irrespective of their origins. French, German and Latin were languages of high status in different fields; Danish was a sign of low status, the language of the peasantry and the uneducated. In most cases members of the social and cultural elite were at least bilingual, so that members of the upper classes were able to use different languages, depending on factors in the social setting and situation, e.g., the purpose of their communication, what etiquette required, and the ability of the receiver to understand. That is to say, most members of the elite could speak at least a modicum of Danish, but for many it was an actively acquired second or third language. As Skautrup (1947) points out in his history of the Danish language, non-knowledge of Danish could confer status. He cites the report of the British emissary Molesworth who, in 1692, commented that he “had heard many a Dane in high positions boast of not knowing how to speak Danish!” (Skautrup 1947:305f).

The media of that day, principally print media, addressed elite audiences. Consequently, a good number of them were published in German, French or Latin. That many printers and newspaper publishers in Copenhagen were of German origin naturally contributed. In the late 1600s and the first half of the 1700s, the wealthy classes of Copenhagen read newspapers imported from Germany, Holland and France. In the 1670s, book printer Daniel Paulli, hailed as “the leading personality of Danish journalism of the seventeenth century” (Stolpe 1879:II,97), started newspaper publishing in Danish on a regular basis. Paulli was followed in the next century by, among others, Joachim Wielandt and Ernst Heinrich Berling. In all three cases, newspapers in Danish represented only a part of the titles they published. For the most part, they offered papers in three languages: German, French and Danish. Papers in the respective languages differed somewhat in content and character, inasmuch as they addressed different readerships. Jørgen Paulli published, for example, a German weekly and a Danish monthly. Press historian P M Stolpe offers a concise characterization of the relationships between language, content and readership:

The superficial difference, that the weekly paper is in German and the monthly is in Danish, grows out of this underlying difference; for it is in the order of things that the organ for affairs of state, war and commerce should be written in German in a country where German is the language of the Court and the Military, whereas the Danish language is the obvious choice in a paper whose principal purpose it is to convey domestic news and which, with an assortment of amusing miscellany and rudimentary excerpts from current politics, would satisfy the news interests of that part of the population that was not equipped to read German (Stolpe 1879:II,167).

Ernst Heinrich Berling, who began publishing *Kjøbenhavnnske Danske Post-Tidender* (*Berlingske Tidende* today) in 1749, also published *Københavnener Deutsche Post-Zeitungen* and *Gazette de Copenhague*. As noted earlier, French was a prestige-conferring language, spoken among the nobility; Berling's *Gazette* addressed a well-to-do readership who wished to polish their language skills and keep abreast of French cultural life.

The publishing of newspapers in different languages in Denmark was motivated by a wish to crowd imported newspapers, read by the upper classes, off the domestic market. This goal was largely achieved over the span of the latter half of the 1700s in Copenhagen; in Jutland and Funen, however, foreign papers continued to dominate the markets the century out. Use of foreign languages among the upper classes was widespread, but not total, nor was the custom universally accepted. The comedies of Danish playwright Ludvig Holberg, which playfully ridiculed the snobbery of using Latin and French, bear witness to a danophone self-awareness among the Copenhagen bourgeoisie in the latter 1700s.

The use of foreign languages among the upper classes gradually declined over the course of the nineteenth century, in part due to a wave of nationalism and National Romanticism¹ that swept over European politics and cultural life. Even if the National Romantic currents had welled up outside Denmark's borders, in Denmark they gave rise to a renewed orientation toward the Danish language and a sense of a special relationship between the Danish people and the nation. The media played a central role in this re-orientation toward the nation and things Danish. With the advance of the ideas of the Enlightenment and liberal ideals in the wake of the bourgeois revolutions of 1789 newspapers acquired a more important role than had been envisaged in the era of absolute monarchy. The press became an agent of publicity, first for the opposition to absolute rule and later the movement for democracy. As the press evolved into a pro-democratic medium, the various social classes and groups found it necessary to legitimate their policies and arouse "public opinion", and this could only be done via the publicity the media offered. The democratization of political discourse, possible in great measure thanks to print media, in itself contributed to the danification of the discourse and a greater orientation toward, and use of the Danish language.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, we find that varieties of spoken Danish began to assume importance as indicators of social position. Above all, there arose a distinction between what the elite considered "cultivated parlance"—i.e., a virtually dialect-free and placeless national language spoken by the rather small upper class of Copenhagen and the natives of a few villages on the island of Sealand, near the capital—and other parochial dialects, which were considered rustic and vulgar (Skautrup 1953:213ff). As Danish gained status and currency even among the upper classes, foreign languages lost ground. French and German continued to exert considerable influence throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, albeit no longer in daily use, but in the form of loan words.

The Media as Instruments of Standardization

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Danish language underwent a process of gradual homogenization through the steady advance of "standard Danish" at the expense of local and regional varieties. Today, standard Danish sets the norm, but standard Danish, too, continues to evolve. One of the strongest influences comes from the Copenhagen working-class vernacular, "low Copenhagenish". As a con-

sequence, more elderly members of the population feel that Danish is being vulgarized: a once higher norm is sinking toward the vernacular.

One of the factors behind the demise of local dialects is greater mobility. For every new rail line, airport or highway built, a bouquet of local varieties withers and dies. Urbanization is another homogenizing factor. But material factors like these are not the only hoes at work in the garden. Social institutions like the schools and mass media, too, have done their part to weed out local varieties and to promote the national standard. Here, I should like briefly to outline the media's roles in this regard.

Jeppe Aakjær was an unflinching champion of local dialects and an early critic of the verbal "uniforming of the Danish people" practiced by the schools, and by the press, which he decried as "a giant grindstone bearing down across the land".

It hones and scours us all, not just in the man of the capital, whom it polishes so he gleams, but even the most remote peasant, sitting there between board and bench, spitting between his clogs as he reads his daily paper (Aakjær 1907:109)

[...] Alas, the country has been roughly treated, and now the turn seems to have come to the language, judging from the outcries in the press these days when we, pastoral writers – as they call us – come along, toting our books (Aakjær 1907:111).

Newspapers, both their form and their content, helped standardize the Danish language. Literature written in dialect was not well received by the critics, and the papers themselves clove to an urban patois, and, not least, the language of the capital. As a consequence, the people of the provinces gradually discarded their dialects. Or, as Aakjær so colorfully puts it: "*And if the peasant himself has become a bit dry and calculating, so has his language, which now and again has the flavour of printer's ink, fresh off the pages of Folketidenden*" (Aakjær 1916: 122).

Homogenization means not only that dialects are suppressed, but also that the written language takes a step or two toward the vernacular and away from the academic. Viggo Hørup, who as Editor-in-chief of *Politiken* and political speaker was known to be a fierce and fearless critic of social wrongs, saw a danger in all too liberal use of foreign words and academic phraseology in newspaper copy. The purpose of the paper was to speak to the people, therefore, it should use the language people use. Thus, Viggo Hørup warned his writers: "*Just as it is bad form to whisper when in company, it is bad form to exclude people from a discussion through the use of foreign, unfamiliar words. Anyone who wishes to be read by the public should take care not to leave his readers by the wayside through sheer snobbery or carelessness*" (17th January 1883, as quoted in Skautrup 1968:180f).

As newspaper readership extended further among the ranks of the general public, the press became more and more of a "grindstone", on the one hand culling dialects, on the other, bringing written Danish closer to the vernacular. Over the course of the 1900s, journalistic Danish grew more and more accessible to the common man. The commercial and amusement-oriented press of the capital around the turn of the century, followed by general interest news dailies, which in turn were followed by the sensational tabloids, each contributed to bring the written language more in line with the spoken, which also meant a bringing together of the Danish spoken by the elites and that spoken by the people.

Non-commercial public radio and television have also been significant homogenizing agents. Whereas the influence of print media could only be indirect, radio and television

could exert a direct influence on spoken Danish. As a consequence of the educational mandate of public broadcasting, particularly in its first decades, correct Danish, i.e., usage in keeping with the norm of standard Danish, was a prime feature of programming. The privilege of addressing the Danish public was entrusted to speakers who had been chosen for, among other things, their diction, that is, their ability to speak standard Danish. The role of radio in homogenizing Danish usage can hardly be exaggerated. With the advent of radio, Danes all over the country were able to listen to spoken messages from all over the country, but in practice, most of radio content was uttered by professionally trained speakers in Copenhagen. Usage in the broadcast media precipitated many a debate as to the correctness of diction and grammar on the air waves; time and again the media found themselves under attack.

The following general comment on the role of the language used in radio newscasts gives an indication of public expectations in this regard:

The radio news clearly has a great – not to say enormous! – potential to come to the aid of our native tongue, and that would be no little service, were it to do so... A single radio news editor-journalist puts the entire transmission together, that is, reads it aloud, and thus he is in a much better position to correct grammatical errors, and it is of utmost importance to the language and to public edification that he do that. The news reader has in his hand the mighty power to influence hundreds of thousands of Danes – and with it a not insignificant responsibility (Kolding Avis, 11 April 1930, quoted in Christiansen et al. 1950:408f).

Both the telephone and the cinema have contributed to the homogenization of the Danish language, as well. Telephones, like radio, put Danes on speaking terms, no matter the distance between them. To carry on a conversation from one end of the country to the other meant that the parties had to strive to find a mutually functional idiom. In the case of films, standard Danish predominated (Brink 2003). This was not so much the result of a selection on the basis of the individual's usage, as in the case of radio announcers, but more a consequence of the fact that the actors were professionals who had learned standard Danish in drama school and only now and then let a hint of their native dialects be heard. In films from the 'forties, 'fifties and 'sixties even children, farmers and servants speak astonishingly correct Danish; dialects are spoken only by the elderly, by bumpkins and buffoons, or by gangsters in the Copenhagen underworld.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, we note a change in attitude regarding the language spoken in mass media. Dialects have not necessarily assumed greater prominence, but there is generally a much greater tolerance of the vernacular, of everyday language, not least of expressions once branded as vulgar. The most recent broadcasting legislation and guidelines make explicit reference to the duties of radio and television with regard to the Danish language. Today, there is a greater general emphasis on cultural diversity, which radio and television should mirror. This includes linguistic variants, so that dialects and the various accents of recent immigrants to Denmark should be represented. Such ambitions are also clearly stated in Danmarks Radio's policy on language.

Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is that there are not awfully many dialects left. It is truly ironic that the very media which, during most of the past century, actively worked to standardize the Danish language, to the exclusion of local variants, are now charged to resurrect them. More realistically it is a question not of re-creating the diversity of Danish once spoken, but rather of securing the dialects a place in our collective

memory of “days of auld lang syne”. For, Moving Day is here: our dialects are leaving the realm of living language, life that may be boisterous, harsh, intimate or loving, for the rest-home serenity of institutional sound archives.

Even if the overall trend is as it is, now and again one or another dialect finds itself in the limelight. Not because we are paying our last respects, nor is it the critical attention dialects used to get for their various idiosyncrasies. No, today, dialects attract interest because they are *kitsch*. They have such low status and are considered in such “bad taste” that they have become “hip” and good-natured fun. Consider, for example, an advertising campaign for multinational Sonofon in 2001: The characters in a series of TV spots, “Polle from Snave”, are from the island of Funen. Polle and his friends gained “cult” status because they are vulgar, dumb, lazy – and proud of it. In short, they are low status, and one of the principal signals of their low status is their broad Funish dialect. The banter that issued from their mouths leaves no doubt of their yokeldom. In the campaign, Sonofon’s customers were given the opportunity to make the language their own by downloading greetings, some of them fairly outrageous, recorded by Polle & Co., to their cell phones. It is an odd twist that a transnational company like Sonofon should choose the yokel Polle and his friends, who sound more like their grandparents’ generation, to attract young consumers to a new, global lifestyle phenomenon, viz., mobile telephony. It is a case of using low-status “old-timer” bait – dialect-as-kitsch – to market a new medium and a new language that afford new possibilities to signal high status.

Another instance of dialect-as-kitsch on television is a Christmas feuilleton (originally aired in 1992 on nationally distributed TV2, but repeated in 2001) that starred De Nattergales, a comedy trio from Jutland. The serial, under the Anglo-Danish title, *The Julekalender*, revolves around the comical communication problems that arise in the meeting of a rural couple, potato-growers, from Jutland, a fellow called Benny from Copenhagen, and Christmas elves, who speak a kind of English, highly seasoned with Danish words and phrases. *The Julekalender* poked fun at some Danes’ Malaprop penchant for dropping English words, but what made it really funny were the characters’ raving renditions of a Jutland dialect and the Copenhagen vernacular. The series put the Jutlandic dialect in vogue nationwide, but only as kitsch, as a sort of “exception that proves the rule” – “the rule”, of course, being standard Danish. Dialects cannot be taken seriously; they are used with a wink or, as one might say, even in Danish: “tongue in cheek”.

Continuity in Linguistic Hierarchies

When asked about dialects, Danes express favourable opinions of them. Most find them quaint and pleasant-to-the-ear; it would be a pity if they died out (Maegaard 2002). But if we instead consider Danes’ perceptions of people who speak dialects, the picture changes. We find that there is a definite rank-order among the varieties of spoken Danish: after standard Danish come the dialects of Funen and Jutland, whereas the dialects of rural Sjælland and the Copenhagen vernacular come in last place. The reasons given for this ranking are generally put in terms of aesthetics: Funish sounds better, it is more melodious, whereas the Copenhagen vernacular sounds mean and hard, even vulgar.

But these aesthetic characterizations actually reflect respondents’ perceptions of a social hierarchy. Estimations of a given dialect involve an estimation of those who speak it. Ladegaard (2002) has examined how different pronunciations of Danish are linked with assumptions about the speaker’s personality traits, character and social competence. Those who have a Funish accent are commonly assumed to be friendly and humoristic,

but not particularly intelligent or well-educated. Similarly, people who have a Jutlandic accent are considered reliable, but not particularly shrewd.

Lowest on the social ranking is the Copenhagen vernacular; it is not associated with either favourable human traits or social competence. The only dimension it scores high on is “self-confidence” – which shows that the traditional stereotype of the shrewd, but culturally benighted Copenhagen “city slicker” is still going strong. The upper-class Copenhagen accent, common to the northern suburbs of the capital is associated with considerable professional competence, but not much in the way of “friendliness”. In other words, people with that accent may be capable and clever, but they are not awfully pleasant. Interestingly, standard Danish appears to stand over and above this fundamental contradiction between social competence and friendliness; speakers of standard Danish are perceived to be well-educated, *and* they inspire confidence. In other words, standard Danish is a thoroughly agreeable norm; it casts no shadow on those who speak it. Ladegaard (2002) conducted his study in the early ‘nineties, but a recent study by Maegaard (2002) among young people in southern Jutland confirms the pattern and also shows how standard Danish signals a modern outlook. “The more [of the dialect] you speak, the more you sound like a hayseed,” said a student at Tønder Gymnasium in Maegaard’s survey. And, it should be noted, she was a native of the region, not an outsider; she is rejecting the language of her place and people. Speaking standard Danish is better in two ways: it sounds better, and it boosts one’s identity.

In his study of attitudes among the Danes toward English as a language Preisler (1999a) finds overwhelmingly positive valuations of the language in both its British and North American variants. By and large, Danes consider English important as a world language, as a vehicle for their contacts with the rest of the world, and an agent that broadens their cultural horizons. There is little support for the notion that the presence of English in everyday life in Denmark might pose a threat to Danish. Nearly three Danes in four (73%) disagree, either somewhat or strongly, with the proposition that English is a threat to the Danish language, and fully 80 per cent disagree, somewhat or strongly, with the proposition that English threatens Danish culture. Only 8 per cent of Preisler’s respondents expressed wholehearted agreement with the proposition that English poses a threat to Danish (Preisler 1999a:68).

Danish views on the English language exhibit some variation, however, particularly according to respondents’ age and level of formal education. Generally speaking, younger, better educated Danes are more accepting of use of English in everyday life, whereas the elder generation with less formal education and less contact with working life tend to be more skeptical. The respondents’ language abilities play in here; the better one’s command of English, the more positive one’s attitude. Preisler (1999a) points out that “functional illiteracy” in English is beginning to be perceived as a handicap in some quarters as English becomes increasingly prevalent. That is to say, Danes who do not know English more frequently encounter practical difficulties in daily life, including their use of mass media, and consequently find their non-knowledge a disability. Preisler (1999a) calculates that up to 20 per cent of the population may experience such frustration.

Interestingly, the groups who are most accepting of English and who have fewer problems with the presence of English in their daily lives are also those who speak dialects least. By the same token, it is among those who speak dialects most, viz., the elderly and less educated (Lund 2001), that we find least acceptance of English and more frustration due to the intrusion of English into their daily lives. This suggests that there is a sort of continuum, a progression from dialect to standard Danish, and on to English.

Older, less educated Danes are less willing to abandon their dialects for standard Danish, and they are correspondingly less positively disposed toward the English language. Younger and well educated Danes are more willing to switch over to both standard Danish and English. Their orientation toward English may in a sense be seen as an extension of the choice of standard Danish over the local dialect.

Thus, in a sense English may be seen to extend the social hierarchy articulated in the relationship between standard Danish and the dialects. With the demise of the dialects an older, Early Modern linguistic hierarchy dissolved in the standardized national language, and in its place arises a new system of stratification based on the lingua franca of High Modernity, English. The contest between dialects and standard Danish, which included the conflicts between town and country, between agrarian production and its lifestyle and industrial production and urban living, articulated the social hierarchies of the industrial revolution. The contest between standard Danish and English influence articulates new axes of conflict belonging to the “network society,” the economic and cultural premium attached to mobility and interaction across national frontiers (Bauman 1998, Castells 1996) among them.

English in the Media

In the following we shall consider the use of English in the media and examine more closely the extent and character of English influences as well as when they began to make an impact in a serious fashion. Before going any further, it should be made clear that Danish predominates in most Danish media; it is used much more than any other language. Danish is totally dominant in newspapers, radio and magazines, it also predominates in cinema film and television, particularly in prime time on the major public service channels. Much of television output and a majority of cinema titles are of Anglo-American origin, however, and even if the content is “danified” via subtitles and dubbing (for very young audiences), these translations often bear traces of English (Gottlieb 2002, 2003). Some media were anglicized quite early on; in popular music and the recording industry, for example, we may speak of a “loss of domain” for the Danish language. Today, English is the norm for lyrics and song titles, and it is frequently used in the technical and commercial areas of the recording industry, as well. English has become the rule in the music industry, indeed, to the extent that it has become something of a “statement” to choose to produce a CD with the lyrics in Danish.

The World Wide Web, “www”, is another realm in which English predominates. A tally of the languages used on the web in 2000 found that 68.4 per cent of all websites were in English. English, the most frequent language, was followed by Japanese, German and Chinese (<http://global-reach.biz/globstats>). This, of course, affords no more than a rough estimate and should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt. But, seen in relation to the fact that only 8.3 per cent of the people on the globe speak English as their native or second language, the overrepresentation of English – and, by the same token, the relative lack of linguistic diversity – on the web is quite striking. The skew may be attributed in part to the fact that the “www” is still much more prevalent in the English-speaking parts of the world, and we can expect that the number of websites in languages other than English on the web will grow as the web becomes more accessible in other linguistic cultures. In 1997, a similar inventory found that 82.3 per cent of all websites were in English, which lends some support to the assumption. In the space of only a few years other languages than English have taken their places on the web. Still, however, there is little doubt that English will continue

to be the global lingua franca on the World Wide Web. Other languages will be used “locally”, among people within the linguistic culture, whereas English will be used by most of us whenever we cross linguistic frontiers. Thus, we find that the vast majority of bilingual websites are in the “local” language, plus “global” English.

Returning to Danish media, we find the influence of English in many places, even in media where Danish still predominates. In these contexts English has gained currency largely as a signal of a more attractive lifestyle and identity. The English language articulates a high ranking on various social hierarchies and is therefore effective in marketing and advertising. By way of illustration, let us take a closer look at some situations where English is used for marketing purposes. We find, for example, English in the titles of many films and computer games and in advertising for popular magazines. Inasmuch as the title of a film or computer game is believed to be an important factor in consumers’ decision to buy, growing use of English must be assumed to reflect higher status ascribed to the language per se.

The use of English in film titles shows an unequivocal trend: Whereas most foreign films were once given Danish titles, today only about half are re-named (Figure 1). In the ‘eighties and into the early ‘nineties, the share of translated titles was about 80 per cent, but in the mid-nineties policy changed. We should also note that use of other languages than English in film titles remains rare – which has to do with the fact that the great majority of foreign films that play Danish cinemas are American.

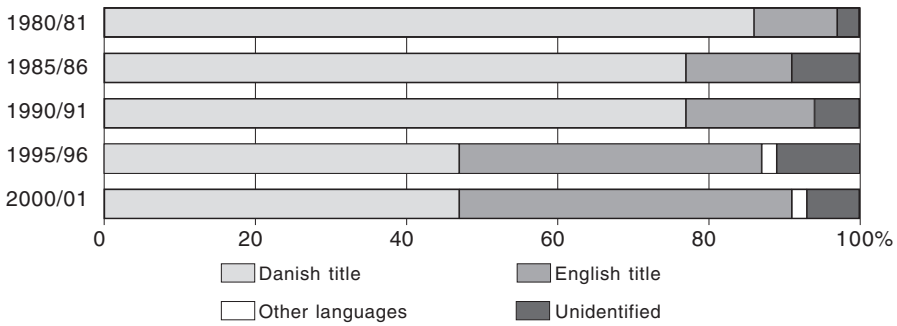
In the case of computer games, it is not meaningful to look for changes over time inasmuch as computer games have only become common in Danish households in the past decade. As for the titles, foreign languages are very common. As indicated in Figure 2, no less than 84 per cent of the computer games on the Danish market have English titles. Of the computer games having Danish titles, the lion’s share are games intended for young children. In these cases, the games themselves are in Danish, as well, since the children have not learned English, nor can they read. In most of the games intended for older consumers, not only the titles, but the games themselves are in English. That is, they presume that the player can read and understand English, and often on a high level of proficiency. Thus, alongside popular music, computer games are an anglophone domain.

Now, to consider the use of English in magazine advertising. In order to gain something of an overview, we selected four titles having contrasting readership profiles in terms of gender, age, education, and income. *Familie Journalen* is read primarily by middle-aged and older women in low-income groups. (Earlier on, the magazine had a somewhat higher-status appeal.) *Alt for Damerne* is a women’s magazine that appeals to younger, better-educated women than *Familie Journalen*; *Vi Unge* addresses young people; *Euroman* is read by younger men in above-average income brackets.

When we look at the use of English in advertising in *Familie Journalen* (Figure 3), we find little change over the years. At no point over the past thirty years has English been used to any greater extent. If anything, English is used less today than it was some years ago. There is hardly any advertisement in which English dominates in *Familie Journalen*.

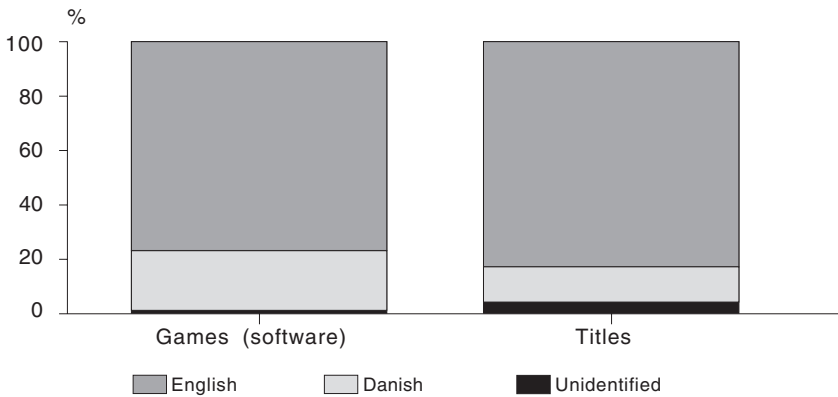
We find a different trend in *Alt for Damerne* (Figure 4). Here, the frequency of English in advertisements in 1970 was about the same as that in *Familie Journalen*. That has changed. Use of English has increased markedly since the ‘nineties, and in 2001 more than half the advertisements contain English expressions. Starting in the ‘nineties, we also find a steady growth in the number of chiefly English-language advertisements. Other foreign languages, it should be noted, are extremely scarce.

Figure 1. Use of Foreign Languages in the Titles of Imported Films (per cent)



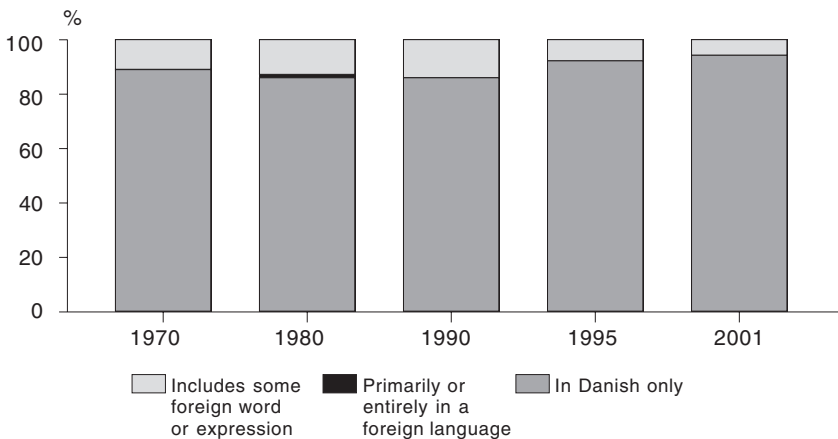
Base: Total samples of imported feature films in cinema distribution i Denmark

Figure 2. Language of Computer Games on the Danish Market in 2001 (per cent)

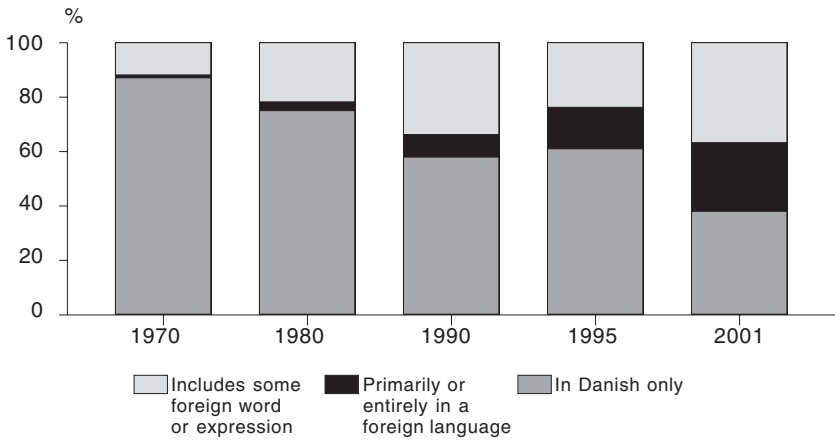


Base: The 261 computer games released onto the Danish market in 2001 according to data supplied by distributors (CMN Group, Vision Park, Nordic Softsales, K. E. Mathiassen (K.E. Media), UbiSoft, Infogrames Nordic and Boston Distribution. Language of games as specified by the distributors.

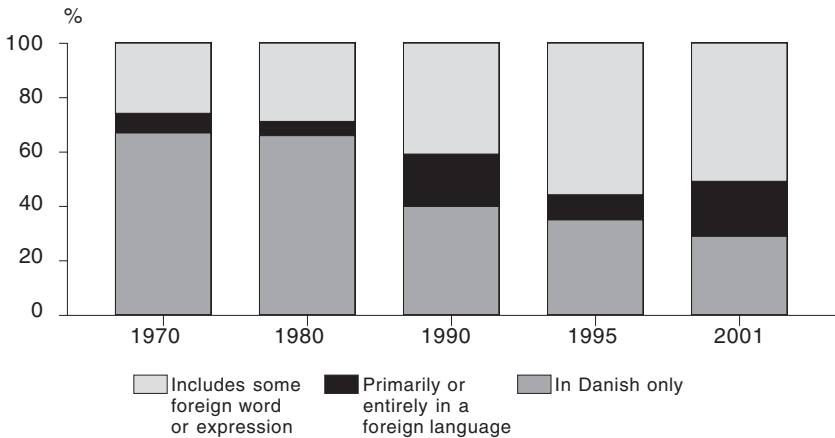
Figure 3. Language in Advertisements: Familie Journalen (per cent)



Note: The material analyzed comprises all advertisements, one-quarter page or larger, in 12 randomly selected issues of each year.

Figure 4. *Language in Advertisements: Alt for Damerne (per cent)*

Note: The material analyzed comprises all advertisements, one-quarter page or larger, in 12 randomly selected issues of each year.

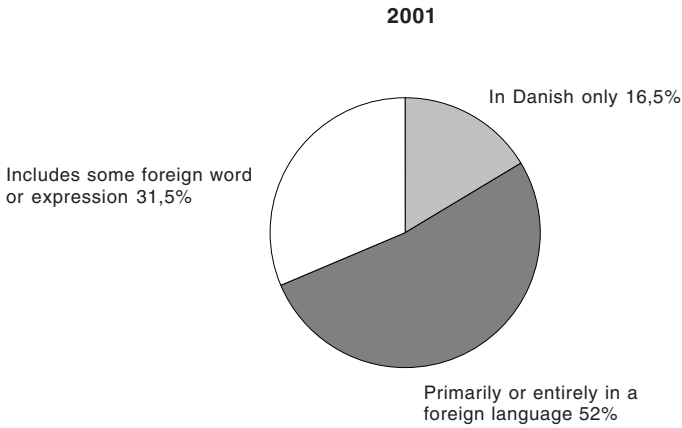
Figure 5. *Language in Advertisements: Vi Unge (per cent)*

Note: The material analyzed comprises all advertisements, one-quarter page or larger, in 12 randomly selected issues of each year.

The young people's magazine *Vi Unge* shows a trend similar to that of *Alt for Damerne*. The chief difference is that even as early as 1970, *Vi Unge* showed a slightly more frequent use of English in advertisements, and observations in 1995 and 2001 indicate that the frequency has continued to rise (Figure 5). Thus, generally speaking, *Vi Unge* appears to be even more accepting of the English language than *Alt for Damerne*.

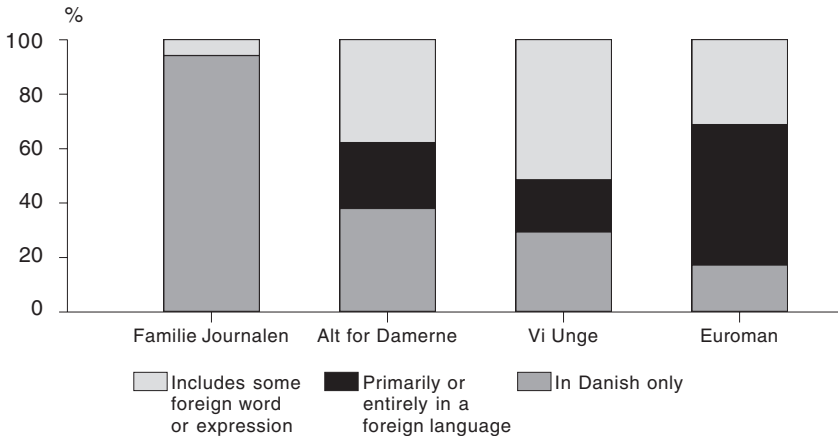
Euroman, a lifestyle magazine, is new; there is no longitudinal trend to speak of. As the title suggests, *Euroman* addresses readers (male) who see themselves as "Europeans". This international orientation is clearly reflected in the advertising the magazine carries. Here we find much more frequent use of English expressions. In 2001, only 16.5 per cent of the advertisements in *Euroman* had a strictly Danish text. 31.5 per cent, contained some element of another language, in by far the most cases English; 52 per cent of the advertisements were primarily or wholly in English (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Language in Advertisements: *Euroman* (per cent)



Note: The material analyzed comprises all advertisements, one-quarter page or larger, in 12 randomly selected issues of each year.

Figure 7. Languages in Magazine Advertisements: 4 titles in 2001 (per cent)



Note: The material analyzed comprises all advertisements, one-quarter page or larger, in 12 randomly selected issues of each year.

When we compare the four titles, we find distinct differences between them as to the degree of English influence in the advertising they carry (Figure 7). *Familie Journalen* and *Euroman* constitute the poles of a continuum in this regard. *Alt for Damerne* and *Vi Unge* are intermediate in the frequency of English – more moderate than *Euroman*, but closer to *Euroman* than to *Familie Journalen*. If we take these differences as an index of the status English has among the titles’ respective readerships, we find a pattern: English enjoys high status among the young, well-educated and well-paid labor force, whereas Danish suffices in all respects in communication with older and less highly educated Danes. Modern lifestyles, of which English has become an integral part and “insignia”, remain largely outside the pale of *Familie Journalen*’s readers’ daily lives. Not only are these women out of touch with modern lifestyles, but as a consequence of

deliberate choices on the part of the advertising industry to “sell” lifestyle to specific target groups, they are also *barred from* them.

Media in the Language

Preisler (1999a, 1999b) argues that the influence of the English language should be seen as a result of a broader Anglo-Americanization of the Danish culture and society. If we understand Preisler to mean that linguistic influence should always be considered in a broader social and cultural context in order to understand popular acceptance and use of the language, his argument is convincing. But Preisler goes further:

Therefore, the language may be seen as a *symptom* of the cultural trend. /.../ If anyone is worried about the Danish language, it is not the language itself – the symptom – they should try to do something about, but rather *the* cultural developments that are *the cause* of the change in the language – that is to say in essence, the overall Anglo-Americanization of Danish society (Preisler 1999b:62; original emphasis).

Viewed in this light, the increasing frequency of English in Danish media content is but a symptom of a societal and cultural reality; it is not in itself a cause. Or, as Preisler puts it: “When the media of the dominant culture use young people’s language to reach them, this is primarily a case of youth influencing *the media*, not the other way around” (Preisler 1999a:233; original emphasis).

This way of looking at things seems to me to be unnecessarily mechanistic, and it makes it difficult to explain, to identify the factors behind the change in attitudes toward Anglo-American culture. It is as though overall cultural change is put before influences on the individual level, the result before the cause. To my way of thinking, the broader Anglo-Americanization of Danish culture has to be seen as the product of the influences any number of concrete social actors – mass media among them – have exerted. Thus, the media actively contribute to changes in the structure, spread and status of languages; hardly alone, of course, but among many other actors. Out of the sum of all these influences a broader linguistic influence emerges, along with other influences bearing such labels as “anglicization”, “Americanization” and so forth.

In this context we might also consider the proposition of some theorists (Bourdieu 1977, Giddens 1984) that social praxis consists of both a passive and an active component. All personal interaction involves existing institutionally sanctioned norms as well as active use of these norms in new situations. When, for example, media advertisements make more frequent use of English copy, words and expressions, it reflects the prestige Anglo-American culture already enjoys, but the media, too, through their communicative acts, contribute actively to reproducing and reinforcing the status English enjoys and, what is more, extend it to new social fields like marketing and lifestyles. Communicative acts, whether mediated or face-to-face, not only reflect broader social realities, they also contribute actively to reinforcing and spreading them further – and changing them in the process.

Preisler (1999a, 1999b), too, offers a model for how language is influenced in that he describes the influence of English on Danish as coming both *from above* and *from below*. Influence “from above” is exerted by virtue of the status English is accorded in official and institutionalized quarters, i.e., education, business, international politics and diplomacy, etc. Influence “from below” arises out of the status English has in various popular subcultures such as heavy metal music and hip hop. English is both the language of sta-

tus and a source of identity and meaning for individual adherents to the subculture. Subcultures serve as Trojan horses for the English language; influences from subcultures filter slowly but surely upwards and into mainstream usage. As English exerts influence from both above and below, mainstream culture is subtly, yet inexorably changed.

It seems reasonable enough to recognize the importance of, on the one hand, the official culture that is cultivated in the schools, etc., – that is to say, the sphere Habermas (1987) assigns to “the system” – and, on the other hand, the lesser subcultures, which Habermas (1987) considers a (small) part of the “lifeworld”. To my way of thinking, however, the importance of subcultures seems somewhat exaggerated, and – more crucially – there is no specification of either the interaction between Danish and Anglo-American culture or any understanding of the internal dynamics of dominant cultures. Preisler envisages the dominant Danish culture as a passive victim of influences from above and below, not as an active field having a developmental dynamics of its own.

Specific subcultures can most assuredly over extended spans of time play a role that far exceeds the size or substantive significance of the subculture in question, but pointing to influences exerted by subcultures hardly strikes me as an adequate explanation of changes in the Danish culture’s relationship with English. If we consider the influence of English in broad popular culture, e.g., cinema film, television and advertising, to which the vast majority of Danes are exposed, it seems more likely that these media are directly influenced by the central role Anglo-American culture plays in the media industry – in terms of economics, production format and stylistics, genre, concept development and so forth. The international success of Danish serial fiction in television, such as *Nicolaj and Julie* and *Unit One*, has been attributed to the writers’ and producers’ assimilation of the dramaturgy and production methods that predominate in American television fiction (Skovmark & Christiansen 2003).

In other words, broad, mainstream Danish culture has been directly influenced by Anglo-American mainstream culture. When Danish mainstream media make ever greater use of English material when they address young audiences, it is not necessarily an adaptation to the linguistic codes young people develop within subcultures like heavy metal, but equally much an adaptation to the cultural experience and preferences they have developed through their use of mainstream Danish media, through watching series like *Beverly Hills* and pop music on MTV. Thus, it is a question of interaction, of mutual influences: the media speak young people’s language, yes, but increasingly, young people speak the language of the media. To extend Preisler’s metaphor, I propose that in addition to influences from above and from below, there occurs a significant *lateral* – or frontal, if you will – influence. English exerts a massive influence on Danish because it is used in the schools and in business, in specific subcultures, *and* in mainstream popular culture.

Medialects

Media influence the Danish language in several ways. In addition to overall anglicization, there are usages that are specific to activities and situations where different media are involved. These media-specific usages, *medialects*, are a consequence of the circumstance that a steadily growing share of human communication takes place via media. New media are constantly appearing on the scene, and they influence all kinds of communication, from the strictly private to the totally public: cell-phones, text messages, e-mail, chatrooms, and

so forth. Media are increasingly present *in* the language as an infrastructure, through which we communicate with one another. This observation raises at least two points that have bearing on the influence English exerts. First, English is the linguistic vehicle for meta-communication about mediated communication. Second, the increasing mediatization of communication affords considerable leeway for linguistic innovation and creativity. While the media contribute to a narrowing of the spectrum of foreign languages to English, they also provide the preconditions for linguistic differentiation and innovation.

Hutchby (2001) provides a theoretical vantage point for an understanding of how media serve as structuring forces with regard to language. His approach to the ways media technology affects the structure and content of conversations is inspired by the ecological perception psychology of J J Gibson and his concept of “affordances”. By *affordances* Gibson means the options that a given material object offers or affords different actors. The leaves of a plant may afford one animal shade and shelter; to another they make a good meal. But the shape and character of the leaves also limit the options available to each. In a similar fashion a given communicative appliance will invite multiple uses within the range of what its material features permit. These options may be more or less dependent on the concrete situation and the specific actors and their intentions; that is to say, the technology is open to the user’s interpretation and intent. In short, the technology represents a material reality, the features of which do not allow all kinds of communicative interaction with the user, but both define a set of more or less prescribed uses and give structure to the communication they make possible. The communicative affordances of any given technology at once facilitate, limit and structure the interaction. Hutchby (2001) goes on to demonstrate and analyze how a range of media, from the telephone to chatrooms on the net, intrude on and structure the user’s use of language: the taking of turns, linguistic markers of time, space and actors, sentence structure, and so forth.

As new forms of mediated communication continue to arise, a meta-language attached to each medium develops that users of the medium use to steer the conduct of the communication. It may consist of technical terms that describe specific choices of operating systems, web addresses, browser types, etc.; verbs and nouns that denote actions and situations that are part of the communication; use of abbreviations that arise because of the verbal limitations of the medium, and, finally, popular expressions/slang for the activity itself, e.g., to text, to chat, to mail, etc. Inasmuch as nearly all new media in the twentieth century were developed and first launched in Anglo-American settings, and since the software industry, too, is dominated by Anglo-American companies, these meta-languages generally have English roots. In time, domestic equivalents may develop. In many countries, however, only some of the words will be translated; in Denmark translations are few and far between. Thus, every new medium has been and will likely continue to be accompanied by a wave or ripple of English influence. English has become the meta-language that enables the conduct of communication.

At the same time, new media constitute a material resource for new forms of communication, and thanks to them we can note a good deal of linguistic innovation and creativity in connection with their emergence. Crystal (2001) discusses the influence of the internet on usage. Congruent with Hutchby (2001), he shows how new usage is generated in different media of communication. Thus, we cannot speak of a single new use of language on the internet, but rather different usages, depending on whether we are talking about, for example, e-mail, online chatting or offline chatting. This is in agreement with analyses performed by Rasmussen (2002, 2003) and Audon and Poulsen (2001),

which show how specific material features of sms and chat technology, respectively, and the cultural contexts in which the media use takes place exert decisive influences on the language used. Even though there are differences, there are also some characteristics that are common to all uses of the internet. The most salient of these is the tendency to mix the conventions of written and oral forms of expression. According to Crystal (2001) it is not only a question of a new mixture of the conventions of writing and speech, but, in linguistic terms, “a genuine ‘third medium’” that is best described by the formula: “speech + writing + electronically mediated properties” (Crystal 2001:48).

Another principal linguistic characteristic that is common to media old and new is the change in the relationship between formal and informal forms of expression. This is not to say that the media simply allow less and less formality; rather, new styles of informal expression are born, which contribute to a successive differentiation of styles of expression, both formal and informal:

There is no indication, in any of the areas I have examined, of Netspeak replacing or threatening already existing varieties. On the contrary, the arrival of new, informal, even bizarre forms of language extends the range of our sensitivity to linguistic contrasts. Formal language, and informal language, are seen in a new light, by virtue of the existence of Netspeak (Crystal 2001: 241f).

With a view to tracing the evolution and identifying linguistic characteristics of these media-specific varieties, Crystal (2001:60) proposes research into internet dialects and related sociolects. It is doubtful, however, that the existing concepts of “dialect” and “sociolect” are up to the task. To date, research in linguistics has focused either on the immanent structures of linguistic systems or on the actual usage of individuals. In the latter case, the variables applied include geographical origin (the study of dialects) or sociological characteristics such as class and level of formal education (the study of sociolects). Little interest has been accorded to the medium by which the communication takes place – even though linguistic analyses in many cases are highly dependent on media-borne records: written language in books, periodicals and letters, or spoken language as “captured” by microphones and tape-recorders. It is, for example, something of a paradox that although the material used in conversation analysis frequently derives from telephone conversations – a convenient, unobtrusive means to observe spontaneous speech production (Hutchby 2001:55) – the analysts appear not to have given much thought to how their material may have been affected by the medium.

There is a need, as I see it, for a concept that includes the medium, its characteristics and constraints. I propose the term, “medialect”. Unlike dialects, medialects have no geographical province; in contrast to the case of sociolects, the users’ social position, etc., is indifferent. Instead, the focus rests on the channel of communication. Individuals may use many different medialects, depending on the number of media they use. This, too, poses a contrast to dialects and sociolects, which are considered relatively immutable in relation to the individual. Indeed, they are often used to identify a person’s origins, whether or not the individual in question wishes them to be revealed. People use medialects – consciously or unconsciously – in specific situations, according to what they consider appropriate. Thus, any given individual may be expected to command several medialects. The static nature of dialects and sociolects is, however, undergoing change as a consequence of urbanization and globalization. As noted earlier, the past century has witnessed major changes in both. Furthermore, it appears that dialects and sociolects are the object of increasing reflexivity as a consequence of globalization (Hjar-

vard 2003a). As, for example, Maegaard (2002) shows, young Danish speakers of dialect are keenly aware of the social status attached to their dialect and are able to shift between different “degrees” of dialect and standard Danish, depending on the situation; dialects may also be used as a form of verbal “kitsch”.

Like dialects and sociolects, medialects are assigned ranking in social and cultural status hierarchies, and they are inclusive and exclusive, defining social groupings, large and small. Mastery of a given medialect confers status in the act of communication, just as those who lack a command of the medialect either feel excluded or are repulsed by the particular mode of communication. Medialects influence each other; just as the Copenhagen vernacular has influenced standard Danish, there are indications that linguistic traits from one medialect spread to other medialects as well as to traditional written and spoken communication. The use of abbreviations or smiley faces, for example, has spread to many forms of mediated communication, and they are occasionally used in speech.

The New Localities of Globalization

We may conclude that the media, under the influence of globalization, contribute in some ways to standardization of the Danish language, and to linguistic variety and creativity in others. On the one hand, the media spread English, often at the expense of other languages. In this sense the media are a homogenizing factor. On the other hand, the media have considerable potential for a new kind of linguistic diversity that transcends the various national languages in that innovation is attached to use of the media, not the individual user. In this sense, the media are a differentiating factor.

Globalization may be seen as a new epoch in linguistic history. The “golden age” of dialects was associated with an essentially rural society, where agricultural production was the norm and industrial production was still in its cradle, a society where the local community was central and permanence the rule, where mobility across geographical and other boundaries was the exception. With the advent of industrial production, urbanization and national consciousness, dialects were forced to retreat before the onslaught of a standardized national language. In Denmark, the battles between the dialects and standard Danish reflected conflicts between town and country, between province and capital, between the farm and the factory. The global network society, finally, impacts on the social hierarchies of national industrial society. Not least its valuation of mobility means that a command of English and modern communications technologies confers status.

As Castells (1996) points out, the network society gives rise to a “culture of real virtuality”. The global society is a mediated society, where communication via electronic networks constitutes a new reality. The ability to take part in these networks has more than symbolic importance; increasingly it has implications for individuals’ economic standing, job opportunities and success on the marketplace, cultural identity and sense of belonging in society. The media are the places where people now meet, trade, provide services, converse and present themselves to one another. English and the medialects may thus be seen as the dialects of globalization. Geographical place is losing its importance, being supplanted by electronic, virtual localities – and, as this occurs, local varieties of language are supplanted by global varieties of language like English and the medialects.

Note

1. National Romanticism was a movement in Northern European countries, especially in architecture, to return to the nation's cultural fundamentals or "roots". Other currents in the general "wave" are Pan-Slavism (in its early years) and the Arts and Crafts movement in England.

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Translation: Charly Hultén

Thanks to Professor Frans Gregersen, Associate Professor Henrik Gottlieb and Professor Bent Preisler for their constructive comments on the draft of this article. Thanks, too, to Lecturer Anne Jespersen and research assistants Anne Keiding and Louise Juul-Hansen for their assistance in the coding of cinema film, advertisements, and computer games, respectively.

