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Can parallelingualism save Norwegian from extinction?

ANDREW R. LINN

Abstract

Language extinction is one of the most pressing issues in linguistics today, and the literature is full of discussion about how to combat it. Statements that Norwegian is amongst the languages that are already extinct are merely examples of a widespread tendency in the literature towards erroneous information about Norwegian. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence that Norwegian is undergoing a process of 'domain loss', and policies to address this form of language shift lie at the heart of the most recent developments in the history of language planning in Norway. A policy of parallelingualism is widely advocated, but without proper sanctions in higher education and in the business world for infringements of the parallelingual strategy, it is unlikely to have much effect.

Keywords: Norwegian; domain loss; parallelingualism, reversing language shift; language extinction; language policy; language planning

1. Extinction

According to an authoritative recent publication on the languages of the world, Norwegian is already extinct. The final volume of the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* includes a *List of languages* (Brown 2006: 143–487), and on page 373 of this list we learn that there are four varieties of Norwegian: Norwegian Sign Language with 4000 users; Bokmål which is 'extinct'; Nynorsk, 'extinct'; and Traveller Norwegian, also 'extinct'. Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) is in robust health. According to the 2008 government paper on the language situation in Norway (*Mål og mening* = Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet 2008) there are in fact more like 16,500 NSL users, and indeed Sign Language has been one of the principal beneficiaries of *Mål og mening* which recognises NSL as an official language and enshrines its status in

law (Schröder 2008). Traveller Norwegian is more correctly known as Rodi and is/was spoken by indigenous traveller people in Norway. *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) reports its status as “active” as of 1997, but its current status is less sure, and it is not unreasonable for the encyclopedia to list it as extinct (in the absence of available evidence to the contrary), a casualty of the ongoing process of language extinction in the teeth of social and economic pressures on small language communities. The suggestion that Bokmål and Nynorsk are extinct is however plainly absurd. Bokmål is the majority written language of Norway, and even the less-used Nynorsk has around 600,000 users (Grepstad 2005).

The data behind the *List of languages* in Brown (2006) is taken from *Ethnologue*. The *Ethnologue* entry for Norwegian is slightly misleading as it treats the language as existing in two dialects, Bokmål and Nynorsk, when in fact these are written varieties used alongside the numerous spoken dialects. However, there is no evidence that Norwegian is extinct in *any* of its modern varieties, and in fact *Ethnologue* records the population of Norway as 4,640,000 and describes the language as ‘fully developed’. Not all residents of Norway are users of the Norwegian language, but the population continues to grow. According to *Statistics Norway* (<http://www.ssb.no>) the population stood at 4,858,200 on 1 January 2010 and by 1 April it had grown by a further 15,000, many of whom will acquire Norwegian as a first or second language. On the statistical evidence (and indeed on the evidence of common sense), there is no reason to believe that the key varieties of Norwegian are extinct or heading in that direction, and we have to assume that the statements in Brown (2006) are an unfortunate consequence of the reporting system used by *Ethnologue*. Whatever the reason, they are a striking example of the point made in detail by Engh (2006) that references to Norwegian (and by extension, one assumes, other less widely known languages) in the international linguistics literature are invariably wrong. The scant regard apparently paid to correct data by professional linguists does not give much hope to their ability to champion, support and protect those languages in an informed way.

Languages do die (or become extinct), of course, and the phenomenon is widely reported and discussed. I would go so far as to suggest that this is *the* key issue in linguistics today. Linguistics is a plastic discipline. Language is everywhere, so linguistics can go everywhere. Where it goes is dictated by what other disciplines are currently fashionable, which in turn is dictated by whatever issues are currently at the top of the agenda in society in general. It is no surprise therefore that linguistics is currently coloured by ecological debates. On 4 February 2010 *The Guardian* newspaper reported the death of Boa Sr, the last surviving fluent speaker of Aka-Bo, a language of the Northern group of the Great Andamanese

family (Watts 2010). The *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* reported this language in 2006, like Norwegian, as extinct, and now *Ethnologue* concurs. It is an emotive story, and the *Guardian* report is accompanied by a large photograph of Boa Sr under the heading ‘Ancient tribal language becomes extinct as last speaker dies: Death of Boa Sr, last person fluent in the Bo language of the Andaman Islands, breaks link with 65,000-year-old culture’. K. David Harrison’s 2007 book *When languages die* also contains pictures of some of the last speakers of languages from across the world, haunting pictures bringing life to human tragedies, where the disappearance of the languages is a side-effect of much more serious issues. Nettle & Romaine (2000) take the same approach: they look back and lament that ‘about half the known languages of the world have vanished in the last five hundred years’ (2000: 2). Harrison looks forward and predicts that ‘at the current pace, we stand to lose a language about every 10 days for the foreseeable future’ (Harrison 2007: 5). Readers of *Multilingua* do not need to be reminded of the statistics which form the backdrop to so much work in theoretical and applied language work at the moment. What may surprise readers, however, is the serious suggestion by Norway’s most high-profile linguist that Norwegian may be on track to join Aka-Bo and that policies are required to prevent the inevitable. Indeed, it may seem arrogant and insensitive to suggest that the plight of Norwegian and its speakers might be comparable with that of Aka-Bo and Boa Sr, but there are genuine anxieties in Norway, and it has been politically expedient to marshal these anxieties under an ecological banner, as we shall see in the next section.

2. Language planning in Norway

Norwegian is literally the *textbook case* of a planned language, a language whose development has been deliberately directed by the authorities. The textbook in question is Haugen (1966), and Haugen invented the term *language planning* to describe the Norwegian situation (Haugen 1959), although the theory and practice of language planning have burgeoned exponentially over the past half century, and language planning is now felt to be more of an issue for developing countries than a European concern (but see the case studies in Kaplan & Baldauf 2005–2007). I have summarised the history of language planning in Norway elsewhere (e.g. Linn & Oakes 2007: 72–85), but there are two reasons for presenting some historical context here. Firstly, as Engh (2006: 3) writes:

Most astonishing ... is the *extent* of the deficient documentation of Norwegian. No sophisticated statistics is needed to detect a clear tendency: Of all the papers with Norwegian material written by foreign

theoretical linguists, more than two thirds contained errors. In most cases many errors. This inevitably raises the question as to the validity of the argumentation that the examples are meant to support ...

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ensure that facts are reported as correctly as possible. Given the amount of (presumably unintentional) misinformation about Norwegian out there in the literature, there is an imperative for more accurate information to be spread more widely. The second reason for providing historical context to current debates around the projected extinction of Norwegian and the development of a policy to counteract this is that policy-making involves planning for the future based on past experiences. Policy-making is fundamentally retrospective, and to understand what is going on now we need to understand the past on which it builds.

After independence from Denmark in 1814, the continued use of the written language of the former colonial power was no longer politically desirable, and a number of proposals to remedy the situation were advanced. In 1885 parliament resolved that *Det norske Folkesprog* [the Norwegian folk language or *Landsmaal*], the variety associated with Ivar Aasen's dialect-based norm (Linn 1997), should be placed on an equal footing with *vort almindelige Skrift- og Bogsprog* [our common written and book language or *Dano-Norwegian*]. At this stage neither variety possessed an agreed standard, and what followed, i.e. the stuff of Haugen (1966), was an attempt to make sense of the 1885 resolution in practice.

In 1901 a modified version of Aasen's standard was agreed as the norm for *Landsmaal*, and a standard for *Dano-Norwegian* followed in 1907 (Haugen 1966: ch. 2). A status quo was consequently arrived at, whereby two written varieties existed side-by-side as a result of political and social developments in the previous century. The two written varieties were genetically and culturally discrete. *Dano-Norwegian* (renamed *Bokmål* in 1929) was derived from Danish and was associated with the towns and with the social elite. *Landsmaal* (now *Nynorsk*) on the other hand was derived from the dialects and from Old Norwegian and was associated with the rural western and central regions of the country, with the peasant classes and those politically opposed to the social elite. The next major reform came in 1917, and this is the point at which language planning can be said to have begun in earnest. From here onwards there is a new purpose in the development of the written language, namely the desire to 'put right' the historical problem generated by the politics of the past and bring the two written varieties together into one written form by gradually making the existing written varieties more and more

like each other. The plan, that of one day achieving a Common Norwegian [*Sammorsk*], was strengthened with the reform of 1938 (Haugen 1966: ch. 4), and a Language Commission [*språknemnd*] was established in 1952, which, amongst other things, was charged with continuing the rapprochement between the two varieties.

Conservative Bokmål users reacted very forcefully to the perceived threat to their language variety from these top-down interventions. The language-conservative pressure group, *Riksmålsforbundet* [the Riksmål association], had been founded in 1907 to lobby initially against Landsmaal/Nynorsk and later against the Common Norwegian policy, but its 'crowning years' [*kronårene*] were 1955–1960 (Langslet 1999: 251), when the battle against language planning was waged most aggressively. One founder member of the Language Commission reported to me that he was the victim of personal abuse at social events in the leafy suburbs of Oslo West because of his membership of the much despised *språknemnd*. Passions ran high. *Riksmålsforbundet* wasn't the only pressure group objecting to language policy, and, as Haugen notes (1966: 206), 'so far from quieting controversy, the creation of the Language Commission was a signal for intensified efforts on all sides'. The *Norwegian lesson* is clear: in a democracy, language users will not accept policy-driven changes to their language or how they use it if such changes are not in step with their preferred practices. There was no question in the 1950s any more than today that Norwegian was in danger of extinction. What Norwegians, Bokmål and Nynorsk users alike, were afraid of losing, however, was their traditional forms for written expression.

Following the unhappiness of the 1950s, policy began to change. Haugen's concluding words are:

The dilemma remains unresolved as to whether the values which are attributed to the two languages can in fact be preserved in some kind of intermediate language which will be the scion of both. So far all such mediating forms have won little support, since they seem to both sides a dilution and vulgarization of the traditional languages.

(Haugen 1966: 307)

To address the impasse a 'committee to evaluate the language situation' was established in January 1964. The committee, sometimes referred to as the 'Language Peace' Committee, reported in March 1966, and its findings resulted in two highly significant developments in terms of developing and implementing language policies. First of all, its sixth and final recommendation was:

The setting up of a council for language protection and language development with a free mandate and with representatives nominated by organizations and institutions ...

(*Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet* 1966: 53)

This resulted in the Language Commission being disbanded and replaced by the Norwegian Language Council [*norsk språkråd*] from 1972. This was more than just a name change, it was a symbolic rejection of what the Language Commission had come to stand for. The second development which signalled a sea change in policy was the Bokmål reform of 1981. Under this reform certain traditional spellings (such as *frem* ['forward'], *bro* ['bridge'] and *sen* ['late']) which had been out of the standard since 1938, in the service of rendering Bokmål more like Nynorsk, were readmitted. Certain key morphological forms were also reintroduced as options, essentially admitting defeat for the Samnorsk agenda.

From here things began to unravel pretty quickly for traditional language planning (see Linn & Oakes 2007: 76–77 for more detail). The 1997 report on language use in public service formally proposed that the two written varieties should be left to develop autonomously. In the wake of this in 2002, the paragraph of the 1971 legislation concerning the Language Council stating that one of its roles was to work to bring the two varieties closer together was removed from the statute books. As 20 years previously, a new language-political era was heralded by a new language authority. Thus, in a process beginning in 2004 and culminating in 2006, the Norwegian Language Council mutated. It took on a new name, simply The Language Council [*språkrådet*]; it took occupancy of new premises, symbolically away from Oslo's government quarter and now abutting the National Library; it adopted new internal structures, a new logo, and a new director.

The new-look Language Council needed to be associated with the needs of ordinary language users rather than with the wishes of language policy-makers. Partly as a political move, therefore, the new director of the Language Council, Sylfest Lomheim, took up office with a rallying cry to all Norwegians to get behind the language. The battleground was no longer to be seen as a language-internal one, of Bokmål vs Nynorsk or of the established written standards versus the planners' dream of Samnorsk. The battleground was now one where Norwegian was fighting for its life against the threat from English. Statistics showing how Norwegian is increasingly squeezed out by English in certain key 'domains' are compelling. There have been surveys of language use in academic writing (e.g. Simonsen 2004) which demonstrate unambiguously that English has become the preferred language in this 'domain', and the expression 'domain loss' [*domenetap*] has become widespread in both

academic and popular writing to describe this shift. Shifts in language use in the business community are equally striking. In April 2010 the chief procurement officer for the Norwegian-owned multinational Statoil wrote to all the company's providers to inform them that from now on all contracts and invoices must be written in Norwegian only:

In order to reduce the costs of maintaining the use of two parallel languages in Norway, Statoil has an ambition to increase the use of English language. (<http://images.bt.no/btno/multimedia/archive/00642/Brev-fra-Statoil-an-642458a.pdf>)

Mål og mening describes domain loss as 'a weaker variant of language death' (*Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet* 2008: 96), and it is here that fears about extinction arise. If Norwegian fails to thrive in certain limbs, is the whole body under threat? If Norwegians are happy to hand over the language in certain contexts, is this just the top of the slippery slope? The whole issue is a complex one, and there are too many factors to go into here (can a language be said to 'possess' discrete domains? How realistic is it that a decrease in academic writing in Norwegian could ultimately result in the loss of a language used by a major world economic power? Is it true that these domains are lost – do they not just mutate? etc.). But the fact remains that the threat of extinction has been raised as a serious issue by the most influential linguist in the land. For example, on taking up his new post in 2004, language director Lomheim wrote, as I have quoted elsewhere:

... the future of our mother tongue is not safe. ... There is no law of nature which states that written Norwegian will be going strong in 100 years. ... Does Norwegian have a chance? No. Not if the apathy demonstrated by some groups is the shape of things to come.
(*Dagbladet*, 10 March 2004)

This is dramatic, rabble-rousing rhetoric. Historically, Norwegians have on the whole taken an unusually active interest in language questions, no doubt as a result of long exposure to language planning and the resulting reforms. It is striking that in more recent years contributions to the language-political debate in the media have tended to come from those professionally involved in those debates – academics, journalists, etc. – rather than from 'normal' people with impassioned views about their language, a fact which has not gone unnoticed:

A generation ago language was a key topic in political conflict, something other cultivated countries of Europe envied us. There are various

opinions about language conflict. Many longed for language peace in the 1960s and they got it. But peace also draped the cultivation of language with a cloak of indifference. (Forr 2005)

If the Language Council is to reposition itself as a plausible and relevant institution, this 'cloak of indifference' has to be thrown off, and Lomheim's rhetoric was a very effective means to an end. His prognosis certainly generated debate, mostly from other academics disputing it (e.g. Mæhlum 2002; Kristoffersen 2005).

Mål og mening is quite clear that the 'overarching goal' for language politics in Norway 'must be to secure the position of the Norwegian language' vis-à-vis English (*Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet* 2008: 14). In the rest of this paper we ask: 1) to what extent this is an example of *Reversing Language Shift* (RLS) (Fishman 1991); 2) what is the policy to deal with domain loss; 3) how are the key sectors (higher education and business) responding?; and finally, to address the question of the title, 4) 'Can Parallelingualism save Norwegian from extinction?'

3. Reversing Language Shift (RLS) and parallelingualism

Domain loss is an example of language shift, of the changing function of languages and language varieties with the passing of time. Language extinction is the most extreme form of language shift, a process which has been going on throughout linguistic history. As Fishman (2001a: 1) puts it:

... language illness and even language death *per se* [are] just examples of varying degrees of severity of hitherto uncontrolled (largely because misunderstood) changes in the number and kinds of social function for which particular languages are utilised at particular historical junctures.

Language shift is particularly painful in the wealthier, literate and more culturally protectionist countries of the world which have 'had a love affair' (Fishman 2001a: 2) with their own languages for over two hundred years. Fishman states that this love affair means that it is tempting 'to overstate the importance of language in human social and cultural affairs' (Fishman 2001a: 2). Thus, it may be regrettable that Norwegian is not the language of choice amongst Norwegian business people plying their trade in an international context, but those business people are able to engage with their international markets because they *have* a choice. They are able to choose another language when they wish to do a particular sort of activity. The lesson from the history of language planning

in Norway is precisely that policies begin to falter in a democracy when the right to choose becomes constrained. The proverb exists in various forms, but no matter which form you prefer, there is no point closing the barn door after the horse has bolted. English is here to stay.

The response in Norway has been more about minimising or ‘pondering before doing’ language shift, but even questioning the desirability of a shift towards English can be seen as reactionary and short-sighted, as evidenced by some of the blogging on Norwegian sites. Few in Norway would be so naïve as to think that the clock can be turned back completely, of course, and in Fishman’s analysis, RLSers

... are committed to pursuing the goals of strengthening their own particular threatened language, culture and identity via peaceful political persuasion, advocacy of democratic cultural autonomy and self-initiated efforts to foster their own intergenerational continuity.

(Fishman 2001a: 6–7)

It is not an approach which is in step with the dominant current intellectual models in the West, and Fishman notes, referring back to Fishman (1972), that ‘the RLS ethos is still very much a child of the age of ethno-nationalism ... it has pretty much run its course in the view of influential intellectuals in most European polities’ (Fishman 2001a: 17–18).

He goes on to propose a formula for RLS, namely ‘the *elevation of Th from n-P to P functions*’ (2001a: 11), where *Th* = the threatened language, *P* = powerful functions (such as academic writing and business language) and *n-P* = non-powerful functions (e.g. family, neighbourhood, etc.) We have dwelt on Fishman’s analysis of RLS in some detail because, on the basis of his detailed examination of a range of case studies from across the world, he seeks to answer a very similar question to the one we are asking in this article: can threatened languages be saved? His general conclusion, against which we will now measure Norwegian efforts in combating language shift, is this:

The complexity of human motives and identities is rarely better illustrated than via the RLS scene, where neither total triumph nor total resignation, neither total reason nor total irrationality are in the offing and where particularism and globalisation cohabit in a sometime [sic] antagonistic as well as in a sometime cooperative marriage. Human societies will just have to make room for both and, indeed, will have to do so increasingly, as migration and globalisation (‘the free movement of populations and goods’) both continue to advance during the next century

(Fishman 2001b: 480)

In Norway, the marriage guidance (to continue Fishman's metaphor) has been the development of the notion of *parallelingualism*.

Parallelingualism has become a key word in the rhetoric of current language planning. It first came to prominence in the early 2000s in Swedish language debates (Linn & Oakes 2007: 65) to describe the principle of using two languages in parallel with each other rather than automatically selecting one over the other. Attempts to define it in practice have proved rather slippery. In 2005 the Language Council in Norway defined it thus:

We will use the notion of domains where two or more languages are in use, and where one language, in our case Norwegian, will always be the preferred language choice when it is not necessary to use a foreign language. (Språkrådet 2005: 15)

In this definition it is a matter of positive discrimination in favour of Norwegian *in practice*. In Jahr *et al.* (2006) *parallellspråklegheit* is presented much more as a *principle*, indeed it is described as an 'overarching strategy' (23) which can then be put into practice in a range of different contexts, thus the existence of parallelingualism is determined by its realisation. The term remains a key one in the big government paper *Mål og meining*, and the more it becomes a mantra, the more one has to be anxious that the repetition of the term is somehow a substitute for action. In *Mål og meining* the term is in fact slightly different, now *parallellspråksbruk*, the parallel *use* of languages, emphasising the practice again (n.b. the work of the Copenhagen Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use, established in 2009). How is the strategy or practice or set of practices or idea to be implemented as a policy, and more importantly how is it going to be embedded and enforced?

4. The response of higher education

The problem of the relationship between English and Norwegian is particularly challenging in the higher education (HE) sector. On the one hand English represents an opportunity. By offering courses in English Norway can attract greater numbers of overseas students than might otherwise be the case. Overseas students are important for the economy, both the economy of the institutions where they register and also the economy of the towns and cities where they live and spend their time and money. Courses delivered in English help prepare Norwegian-speaking students for employment in an international market, and they also allow university teachers with other language backgrounds to work in Norway. Skjersli Brandt & Schwach (2005: 63) offer a detailed study of the use

of English in Norwegian higher education, and their somewhat cautious conclusion is that ‘to undergo an education in English doesn’t seem unproblematic as a matter of course either for academic staff or students’. *Mål og mening* is less concerned about the anglicisation of teaching as that of research and publication, noting that it is ‘particularly in the primary publication of scientific research that the Norwegian language has a weak position in respect to English’ (ibid.: 119). Statistics on academic publication are striking, and the extent to which research is published in English is set out in Heid (2004): in 2002 it was reported that over 94 percent of theses in Norway for the degrees of Doctor of Engineering, Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Dentistry were written in English (Heid 2004: 194). *Mål og mening* concludes:

If we are going to realise our language-political goal of ensuring that Norwegian continues as a complete language, supporting society in Norway, work to counteract domain loss in the academic world must consequently stand at the forefront of national language politics. English can be used when it serves an end ... but we must avoid thoughtless and automatic use of English and letting the positive symbolic function English enjoys serve to displace the use of Norwegian even when this is the most natural and appropriate language choice.

(*Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet* 2008: 121)

This goal is what Fishman referred to above as the cohabitation of ‘particularism and globalisation’. *Mål og mening* rather neatly sidesteps the practical implementation of the parallel use of Norwegian and English in HE by handing it over to the institutions themselves to work out, and we will look now very briefly at one of these institutional policies, that produced by the University of Oslo (Hveem *et al.* 2006). Other institutions have produced their own policies, and there is an overarching policy produced by *Universitets- og høyskolerådet* [Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions], and interestingly these predate *Mål og mening*, so while the government survey charts the landscape, it is not setting the agenda in all respects, a fact which reinforces our earlier point about language policy being retrospective.

The first recommendation of the Oslo report is that ‘Norwegian is the primary language at the University, and that the University has a responsibility to foster Norwegian as a language of science and scholarship’ (5; italics in the original text). At the same time the committee recommends ‘“parallel-lingualism” as an important principle’ (5). We have already established that parallelingualism is a notion in flux, one which is defined differently in different documents. At this point it is defined as ‘encouraging staff and students to attain high levels of profi-

ciency in foreign languages, while preserving Norwegian as the primary language' (5), so it is about competence rather than performance and is not seen as a straight bipolar English–Norwegian issue. Later on in the report it is defined rather differently, as denoting 'domains where two or more languages are in general use, and where one language, in this document Norwegian, will be the preferred language choice when it is not more appropriate to use a foreign language' (Hveem *et al.* 2006: 9, fn. 3). It is further recommended that researchers at the University be able to communicate in 'good English' and also that the University provide measures to support staff and students in 'basic proficiency in at least one other foreign language'.

This is all to be applauded, but the challenge remains the implementation of the policy. Realistically, the Oslo committee 'has determined that the research language, for publication and communication within the discipline, should be up to the individual' (5). In a 'pick-and-mix culture' and one aware of the *Norwegian lesson*, i.e. that language choice cannot be enforced in a democracy, this is a pragmatic solution, but it does not serve the goals which would later be articulated by *Mål og mening*. It is not a policy which will ensure the future robustness of the language across all domains. We will return to this in our final section below. For now, the remaining principles listed in the *Summary* of Hveem *et al.* (2006: 5–6) are:

- that the funding system and other incentive schemes must give equal status to publication in Norwegian and English or other foreign languages;
- that an obligation be introduced to prepare thorough and well written thesis summaries in Norwegian if the text of a thesis is in English or another foreign language, and vice versa, if the text is in Norwegian;
- that all specialities must take responsibility for helping to preserve and develop Norwegian specialist terminology in their fields;
- that, as a rule, there must be introductory textbooks or the equivalent teaching materials in Norwegian for use in the curriculum in all academic subjects;
- that the language used for disseminating research results and in administrative and information activities at the University is primarily Norwegian.

The text of the report goes into these issues in much more detail, and indeed the recommendations are all very welcome and very positive, but they remain recommendations, and without sanctions attached to them it is doubtful at the moment that they are going to make much of a

difference. As Jahr *et al.* (2006: 23) conclude in their proposal for a sector-wide policy:

The most important stage in the work on language-political strategy does not however lie in this report, but in the next stage: how the individual institutions and disciplines seize and work with the language-political challenges in practice.

5. The response of business

The Language Council's 2005 report on the language, which formed the starting point of the process which led to *Mål og mening* in 2008, notes that 'business is, alongside education and research, that domain which is most susceptible to pressure from English'. The statistics here are striking too. 95 percent of import and export companies in Norway use English, and English is used in these companies' business when other languages would have been more natural and more economically beneficial (Hellekjær 2007: 6). English has traditionally been one of the keys to international trade in countries like Norway, but the tide is turning on attitudes towards English in language politics if not in the linguistic practices of the companies involved. Here again the challenge is to persuade companies to change their practice. In the absence of sanctions, this is very difficult.

The Language Council has collaborated with the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, resulting in a set of language guidelines for the business community. These guidelines, like the recommendations produced by the HE sector, are entirely admirable. The title is *Use Norwegian when you can, and English when you have to*, shorthand for the parallelingualism principle, and the specific guidelines are clustered under three categories: 1) Norwegian is natural for Norwegian business; 2) different languages for different purposes; 3) language common sense is important for the company and for society. Some guidelines are idealistic, such as, 'Use Norwegian technical terms. That way you contribute to the development and maintenance of Norwegian technical language'. Others are entirely practical, such as 'Safety is best ensured in the language the employees best master'. This last observation should be enshrined in law, as effective communication self-evidently has an important role to play in ensuring the health and safety of employees at work. However, no matter how much we might admire this initiative and applaud the proposals, they are only intended to raise awareness. When they were launched on 13 July 2009, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise boss, Finn Bergesen Jr, was quoted as saying that 'this is not a reprimand, but consciousness-raising' [*dette er ikke en korreks, men en*

bevisstgjøring], and in case this wasn't clear enough, he went on to reinforce the point that 'this isn't being done with a pointing finger or as an order' [*dette gjøres ikke med en pekefinger eller som et pålegg*] (<http://www.nho.no/forsiden/naeringslivets-spraakplakat-article21002-9.html>), which sounds like a pretty clear invitation to regard it as a bit of window-dressing and then ignore it.

6. The verdict

After nearly a century of painful top-down language planning, it became clear that there was little point in continuing to pursue a language policy which did not have the support of the people. The policy had been one of Reversing Language Shift, albeit a shift in the written language which government had itself created. The failure of the Samnorsk enterprise demonstrates that planning for the future based on the past rather than the present is highly problematic. Since the time of Haugen's pioneering treatment of language planning in Norway, language policy has moved away from *language-internal* planning to *language-external* planning, managing the position of Norwegian in regard to other languages, specifically English. The repositioning of language politics has in itself been a politically astute tactic by the Language Council in order to rehabilitate the whole issue of intervention in the development of the language. There are very real and well-founded concerns about the continued effectiveness of Norwegian in all 'domains', and the principle of *parallelingualism* has been enthusiastically embraced, if not adequately interrogated and understood, as a policy response to the issue of domain loss.

So, *can parallelingualism save Norwegian from extinction?* Well, as Mark Twain, although oft misquoted, famously wrote in May of 1897, 'the report of my death was an exaggeration'. Norwegian isn't extinct and nor is it likely to become extinct. Suggestions that this might be a possibility, although meant for rhetorical effect, do a disservice to those communities whose languages are truly dying or dead. Can parallelingualism do anything at all? The *Norwegian lesson* is that you can't force people to use forms other than those they wish to use, and this would be true of perhaps the majority of European citizens beyond school-age. This is even truer now than it was at the time of the so-called Language Peace Committee half a century ago. Norwegian sms language is a delirious mixture of the standard written varieties, new spellings and dialect, so can business or higher education, sectors made up of powerful, independent and ambitious people, really be forced to adopt a parallelingual approach to their use of language?

Yes, and they should. Researchers and business people already accept tight constraints on their professional practices. If we publish a journal

article, it is expected that we will conform with the practices of the journal to which we are submitting our article in terms of lay-out, referencing conventions and so on. There are well established research ethical codes to which we sign up when we accept research funding. We would be sanctioned if we failed to respect the integrity and dignity of our research subjects or if we falsified data or damaged historical artefacts. We university teachers and researchers are part of a profession with a code of conduct. We are paid for what we do, and the receipt of payment brings with it certain expectations on the part of the funder. If domain loss is truly something which higher education takes seriously, and Jahr *et al.* (2006: 5) write that 'it is reasonable that universities and colleges have a duty to be involved in securing national political and cultural entities', then there must be sanctions for failing to pursue the principles of parallelingualism. Responsible language use must be ranked alongside responsible research conduct of other sorts, and there must be penalties for failure to pursue it. If language use in research and teaching remains optional, the message is that it is not a serious matter, and domain loss and parallelingualism default to being just another irrelevant obsession of the language planners who, by association, are once again seen to be out of touch with reality.

The same is true of language use within business ethics. Business Ethics is a well-established theoretical and applied field (see such publications as the *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Business Ethics Quarterly* and the survey of the field in Henn 2009), and in their 2005 report on Norwegian in an age of globalisation, the Language Council (*Språkrådet* 2005: 107) takes precisely this view that language use is a matter of ethical and cultural responsibility for the business sector. The distancing rhetoric adopted by the Director General of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise doesn't provide much cause for hope that parallelingualism is going to be deeply embedded in the business culture any time soon, by which time it might just be too late for Norwegian as a viable language of business and commerce. It must be emphasised that this is not like the Samnorsk ideal. This is an issue of professional practice.

The blunt message then has to be, either we take domain loss seriously and require professionals to act, or we simply accept the inevitability of Language Shift.

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