The Nordic linguistic situation
Some challenges and possibilities

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Uralic
- Finnish
- Sami languages
- Kven language
- Meänkieli
- Estonian

Eskaleut
- Greenlandic Inuit

Indoeuropean
- Norwegian
- Swedish
- Danish
- Icelandic
- Faroese
- Romani
- Romanes
- Yiddish
- Latvian
- German
- Lithuanian
«The Scandinavian semi-communication»

Notion coined by the american linguist Einar Haugen (1966): «[...] the trickle of messages through a rather high level of 'code noise'»

«Code noise»

Communicational friction
The Helsinki Treaty (1962)

The fundamental treaty of co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

Article 8

«Educational provision in the schools of each of the Nordic countries shall include an appropriate measure of instruction in the languages, cultures and general social conditions of the other Nordic countries, including the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.»
Inter-Nordic language comprehension in decline

• 2005: Nordic survey – *Håller språket ihop Norden?* [lit. *Is the language keeping the Nordic region together?]*

• Test of young people’s comprehension of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish (written and oral) and English (N = ca. 1850)

• The Faeroese participants did best all over!

• The Norwegians understand both Swedish and Danish rather well

• Spoken Danish is the major challenge for all (non-Danish) participants
Inter-Nordic language comprehension in decline

• Danes and Swedes are on the same level, but both understand Norwegian better than each other’s language.
• Almost all test groups understand (spoken) English better than the neighbouring languages.
• There is a substantial decrease of comprehension from the 1972 survey by Maurud (published 1976).
• The decrease is largest in Denmark. The Norwegians are the most stable group.
The predominant solution: USE ENGLISH!
Buy one, get three!

How to promote a language bargain?

By learning one of the Scandinavian languages, one can (in theory) use that everywhere from Esbjerg to Åbo to Tromsø.

(Assuming that all Scandinavians exhibit a high degree of communicative elasticity.)
The main objective

To teach the Scandinavians strategies for penetrating the code noise or communicational friction

Developing a neighbouring language competency

The receptive multilingualism will increase the domain of the individual mother tongue substantially
Focussing exclusively receptive skills

- leave the productive to the “real L2 learning”
The remedy – part I

Exposure to language

Input is crucial

Essential objective:
Facilitate exposure
- technically
- pedagogically
The remedy – part II

Motivation for language learning

*The Affective filter* hypothesis
(Dulay & Burt 1977, Krashen 1980)

Attitudes are highly influential
Ability and willingness

Increased comprehension presupposes a readiness and will to penetrate the code noise.

Teaching language comprehension also involves teaching *attitudes* to languages and language learning.
Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter – even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device.

(Krashen 1980: 31)
Attitudes in language learning

Awareness raising involves attitudes
- to language learning in general
- to the chosen language in particular
- to the users and the culture of the language in question
I'm gonna fucking learn Norwegian because of this show.
What does it take?

Political will to keep Nordic languages and culture a part of the general curricula

Increased awareness of the benefits of language learning within the educational sector

Understanding of the value of learning other languages
«Children exposed to different languages become more aware of different cultures, other people and other points of view. But they also tend to be better than monolinguals at ‘multitasking’ and focusing attention. They are often more precocious readers, and generally find it easier to learn other languages. Bilingualism gives children much more than two languages!»

www.bilingualism-matters.ppls.ed.ac.uk
http://site.uit.no/flerespraaktilflere/en/

"Flere språk til flere" information service at the universities of Tromsø and Trondheim (NTNU)
“L2 light”

Learning the neighboring languages is a “warm-up activity” compared to “real L2 learning”

Many of the same strategies and benefits, but less effort is needed

Linguistic awareness
Delsing & Åkeson (2005): *Håller språket i hop Norden?*  

