Challenges Faced by Danish as a Medium-Sized Language

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5-6 million people speak Danish

The vast majority of these are citizens of Denmark

Danish is a second language in
- Greenland
- The Faroe Islands
- Iceland
- Germany

Danish is taught as a foreign language at universities, particularly in Europe
Danish is a North Germanic language (Norwegian, Faroese, Icelandic, Swedish)

Minorities:
German (cultural minority)
Sign Language
Norwegian, Swedish
Turkish, Punjabi, Arabic, Somali, etc.
Danish has a tradition of borrowing

- Low German
- French
- English (British, American)
- Latin
- Classical Greek
Danish is the only language which is accepted in all public functions

- in parliament
- in the media
- in the armed forces
- in public administration
- in the educational system
In the school system some foreign languages are taught

English mandatory from grade 3
German or French from grade 7
Spanish, Russian, and a few others in high school

In some parts of the educational system English is a medium of instruction

Some high schools entirely in English
Some university educations entirely in English
Some university educations partly in English
Movies, including TV movies, and news interviews, etc. are subtitled

- many English-spoken movies and broadcasts
- some German and French
- even Swedish and Norwegian will be subtitled
By 1900

- classical dialects documented
- peak of socially correlated differences in standard Danish

By 2000

- classical dialects all but disappeared
- socially correlated differences decreasing
Challenge

Danes are not used to linguistic variation
> (young) Danes do not understand Swedish or Norwegian
> Danish is on its way out of the Scandinavian community
Challenge

Danes are not used to linguistic variation

>

Danes are intolerant of variation

>

Danish society is subjected to hegemonic uniformity – high and low
1659: Defeat by Sweden

1660: Coup d’etat: Absolute monarchy
- supported by Copenhagen bourgeoisie

1801: Defeat by England

1800’s: Copenhagen population growth

1849: Constitution

1857: Copenhagen ramparts annulled

1864: Defeat by Prussia

1920’s: Equality

1960’s: Labor Immigration
Government language policy: Parallel languages

To protect the Danish language against English while at the same time ”globalizing”:

Danish and English
- in science and research
- in business
- in a range of public functions
The teaching of other languages begins late
- English at 9 years
- French or German at 13 years

High school students with 3 languages 40 % in 2006, 8 % in 2009

The Copenhagen Business School planning to cancel language educations in several non-English languages
Challenge

The language skills of Danes are decreasing >

gradual isolation from non-English speaking people without serious support of English-teaching
2002: Abolition of mother tongue teaching of non-EU languages in the public school system

Increasing pressure on minorities to substitute their mother tongues with Danish

Increasing economic and cultural polarization
Challenge

Danes are encouraged by government policy to
- learn (one particular type of) Danish
- unlearn minority languages such as Chinese and Arabic
- learn English, although beginning rather late
- deselect other languages in the educational system

> isolation and uniformity
Grade 5 students in group conversation

ALI: <nej shit mand>[<] Jackpot hele verden
eng: no shit man Jackpot all over the world
ESEN: Jackpot takes you there dadadadidu [synger]
SELMA: hele verden
eng: all the world
EROL: are you finish
ALI: Jackpot hele verden
eng: Jackpot all over the world
SELMA: <no I am Danish>[>] 
EROL: <no I am Danish>[<] reklâmda
eng: no I am Danish in the ad
SELMA: he
eng: yes
ALI: no I am Finnish
ESEN: <Morocco>[>]
EROL: <Ingilizce>[<] hello
eng: English hello
SELMA: hello I would like a squash
ALI: hello I would like a squash # I am Danish
LE KAPITAL
C'EST
FO
LE COMMUNISME
C'EST NU
Maimuna 13:45

har købt the equipment, skal bare finde tid til at lave en spektakulær én kun tje dig
morok, den skal være speciel med ekstra spice :P, sorry tar mig sammen denne
weekend! insAllah

[have bought the equipment, just need time to make a spectacular one for you, you old geezer, it
must be special with extra spice :P, sorry pull myself together this weekend! insAllah]

Ayhan 15:20

gracias muchas gracias !!
jeg wenter shpæændt gardash ;-))
love youuu...
[thank you very much thank you!! I am waiting anxiously mate ;-) love youuu…]

İlknur 23:37

Ohhh Maimuna, Du havde også lovet mig en skitse... Og du sagde, at det ville være
efter eksamener, men ??? Still waiting like Ayhan, and a promise is a promise :D :D:D

[Ohhh Maimuna. You promised me a sketch, too…And you said that it would be after exams,
but??? Still waiting like Ayhan and a promise is a promise :D :D :D]