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Dialect acquisition and migration in Norway – questions of authenticity, belonging and legitimacy

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ABSTRACT

Norway is known for its dialect diversity and also for the fact that dialects, on the whole, are cherished and used within all social domains and by people in all social strata. Previous studies indicate that also immigrants to Norway tend to acquire and use local speech, and that this generally is positively perceived. However, language alone may not always be enough to be accepted as someone who belongs and claims of local identity may be rejected. This article reports on a study of attitudes towards immigrants' use of dialect by a large number of high school students from six different urban and rural places in Eastern and Western Norway. In order to examine the extent to which adolescents with an immigrant background are seen as legitimate and entitled users of local speech, a visual-verbal-guise and an extensive online questionnaire were designed and focus group interviews were conducted. In the study we ask whether adolescents with an immigrant background are evaluated differently than their non-immigrant peers while speaking the same variety, and whether dialect has an impact on how 'foreign' or 'Norwegian' they are perceived to be.

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Dialect use; visual-verbal guise; attitudes; mixed identities; authenticity; legitimacy

Introduction

Some years ago, a popular singer-songwriter from a small town in Mid-Norway, well known for the use of local dialect in his lyrics, released the song 'Svarte Telt' (*Black Tents*) attacking Norwegian immigration policy, referring to refugees as fleas and lice.¹ In numerous later media interviews, he warned against immigration, claiming that Muslims contaminate Europe and that Muslim and European cultures cannot be combined. A young Iraqi refugee to the same small town in Mid-Norway spoke out in reply. To the National Broadcasting Company (NRK), she said the singer-songwriter is wrong when he fears that Muslim and European culture may never be combined or reconciled; she herself is a good example of someone who is both a good representative of the local community and a Muslim. Using a traditional variant of the same local dialect, she claims to be just as much a local citizen as he is.² Her statement received massive support but also evoked negative reactions – some of them questioning her claim to be a legitimate and entitled citizen of the local community. Even if she *sounds* local, she does not *look* local some claim.³ And this tends to confuse people – as the South African comedian Noah (2016) puts it 'your brain short-circuits'. In his award-winning

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*Jensen has conducted the statistical analyses.

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autobiography *Born a Crime*, Noah investigates issues of language, skin and identity in a country still marked by racist ideologies:

Racism teaches us that we are different because of the colour of our skin. Because racism is stupid, it's easily tricked. If you're a racist and you meet someone who doesn't look like you, the fact that he can't speak like you reinforces your racist preconceptions: he's different, less intelligent. ... However, *if the person who doesn't look like you speaks like you, your brain short-circuits* because your racism program has none of those instructions in the code. 'Wait, wait', your mind says, the racism code says if he doesn't look like me he isn't like me, but the language code says if he speaks like me he ... is like me? Something is off here. I can't figure this out'. (Noah 2016, 58–59, our italics)

In our study, we were interested in examining what connections Norwegian adolescents make between language, body and place, and how people with an immigrant background are evaluated depending on their speech. A central question is what notions young people have about dialectal identities, authenticity, and entitlement. Or in other words: What should you sound like to sound like you belong to a place – and what should you look like?

In order to investigate the extent to which Norwegian adolescents see immigrants as legitimate users of local Norwegian dialects and how they react when people with an appearance that differs from the traditional Norwegian speak a local dialect, a visual-verbal guise and an extensive questionnaire survey were designed. In addition, focus group interviews with a sub-group of the participants were conducted at each of the schools that took part in the study. In this article, the main focus will be on the results of the experimental part of the study and the questionnaire. Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005, 2016) work on identity and embodied sociolinguistics, Woolard's (2016) and Irvine and Gal's (2000) work on authenticity, authority and ideology, and Cresswell's (2015) work on space and place, we ask which 'faces' can inhabit which places, and which claims of identities and belonging are granted or rejected.

Background

Mobility within and across

Norwegian society has, like many others in Europe and beyond, undergone substantial social and linguistic complexification and restructuring over the last decades, due to increased spatial and symbolic mobility, urbanisation, globalisation, and labour- and refugee-driven immigration. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Norway has developed from a relatively homogeneous rural society with little immigration into a modern multicultural society where more than 80% of the population reside in urban areas (Statistics Norway 2018a, 3). Approximately 18% of the national population of 5.3 million now have an immigrant background, and in the capital, Oslo, one third of the population has either migrated to Norway or was born in Norway to foreign-born parents (Statistics Norway 2018b). The largest immigrant groups come from other European countries, particularly Poland, Lithuania and Sweden, but immigration to Norway has its origin in a large number of countries.⁴ The first group, however, came as labour immigrants from Pakistan in the 1960s, and hence the largest group of Norwegian-born with foreign born parents has Pakistani background.

Recent statistics show that Oslo has become a rather segregated city. In some traditionally working-class neighborhoods, as much as 70% of the residents have an immigrant background, whereas in upper middle-class areas only a small percentage of the residents do (Statistics Norway 2018c). Following a general trend, the proportion of people with an immigrant background in urban areas is much higher than in the rest of the country. This is particularly true for Oslo, where the proportion is 34% (Statistics Norway 2018a). However, refugees to Norway (approx. 30% of the total number of immigrants) are placed in reception centres all over the country, thus we find people with an immigrant background in all regions and also in more rural areas (Statistics Norway 2018a).

Although immigration to Norway – also from outside the northern hemisphere – goes back some 60 years, there is still a strong sense that being Norwegian means being white. A longitudinal study of more than 4000 adolescents from Oslo conducted over a four-year period (2006–2010) shows that

more than half of the adolescents with immigrant background ($N = 575\text{--}581$) do not feel Norwegian, largely because they don't feel that they are allowed to 'be Norwegian' due to the colour of their skin (Frøyland and Gjerustad 2012, 48). The numbers are particularly high among adolescents with a non-western background and one reason they cite is colour. They don't look Norwegian and hence feel they will never be accepted as Norwegian, since 'whiteness' is perceived to be an essential part of what it means to be Norwegian.

Languages and lects

Norwegian society has, as we have seen, changed profoundly as a result of accelerating globalisation and urbanisation, and both the language and dialect landscapes have changed accordingly. Not only has the linguistic diversity in the country increased immensely, but the degree of dialect and language contact has intensified substantially. As a consequence, we experience increasing dialect change and shift, alongside emergence of new lects, and changing norms (Opsahl 2009; Røyneland 2009, 2020; Svendsen and Røyneland 2008). Traditionally, Norway has had a number of regional minority languages all of which are now recognised either as official languages or as national minority languages. Globalisation has, moreover, introduced a number of new minority languages (200–300) and led to an increase in the use of English.

Dialects in Norway differ considerably (at all linguistic levels) between regions. Unlike most other European countries, dialects are commonly used by people in all walks of life in both private and public settings and spoken diglossia is rare. On the contrary, people tend to keep their dialect also when moving out of the area of origin or when interacting with people from other dialect areas. There is no officially sanctioned oral standard proper in Norway (e.g. Sandøy 2011), although some scholars refer to the high prestige variety spoken in and around the capital, Oslo, as 'Standard Eastern Norwegian' (e.g. Jahr and Mæhlum 2009). Attitudes towards dialect have become increasingly positive since the 1960s, and the use of dialects in public contexts has increased substantially (Nesse 2015). Until 2007, news presenters in the national broadcasting channel (NRK) had to use one of the two written standards, Bokmål or Nynorsk, with regard to morphology (but with regional phonology), but now they may, upon request, use their local dialect also in these very formal areas of transmission (Språkrådet 2007).⁵ In addition, it has become common to use dialect in writing in social media (Røyneland 2018; Vangsnes 2019). The general acceptance of linguistic diversity does not, however, necessarily include all kinds of variation, but is basically restricted to variation within what is regarded to be 'Norwegian'. Both traditional and new minority languages, new hybrid (multiethno)lects, and foreign-accented Norwegian seem to be less accepted (Ims 2014; Kulbrandstad 2007; Lane 2009; Myklestu 2015).

Like in other urban European environments, new linguistic practices or styles have emerged in multilingual and multiethnic urban areas in Norway, particularly in the capital Oslo. These heteroglossic practices are characterised by the inclusion of linguistic features from many different varieties and used by people with several ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Opsahl 2009; Svendsen and Røyneland 2008).⁶ In the media, the speech style is commonly referred to as 'Kebab-Norwegian' and often framed in negative terms: as a threat to the Norwegian language, a hindrance to entering the job market, or an obstacle for social advancement more generally (Ims 2014; Svendsen and Marzo 2015). On the other hand, several artists, particularly rappers, strongly oppose the idea that this linguistic practice is something negative or problematic and use it in their artistic work (Cutler and Røyneland 2015). In line with this, a number of the most recent high school textbooks (from 2013 to 2016) have included linguistic and functional descriptions of the (multiethno)lectal speech styles in their chapters on dialects and language variation. They discuss the linguistic practices in an engaging, non-dismissive manner and juxtapose the emerging speech styles with dialects and sociolects (Opsahl and Røyneland 2016, 48). Including discussions of these practices in their textbooks and handling them as part of the Norwegian dialectscape serves to normalize and legitimize them, and contributes to the ongoing process of enregisterment. Samples of these speech practices were, however, not included in the study reported on here.

Although dialects in general enjoy high status, and there is no standard proper, some varieties are obviously more prestigious than others. Previous research has shown that dialects spoken in proximity to the larger cities tend to be less valued and may be exposed to stigmatisation (Hårstad and Opsahl 2013; Stjernholm 2017). In the current study, speech samples from both rural and urban dialects were used, but none of the samples were from areas whose dialects can still be met by prejudice and mocking.

Previous research

To date, there has been little research on dialect acquisition and use among people with immigrant background in Norway. Some notable exceptions are Jølbo (2007) and van Ommeren (2010). van Ommeren's study (2010), which is a qualitative study of language use among first generation immigrants to a local community in mid-Norway, shows that immigrants' linguistic choices range from more or less 'standard-like' speech to more dialectal speech, depending on their sociocultural orientation – that is, the extent to which they orient towards and identify with the local community. On the whole, people in the local community are very positive towards immigrants acquiring the local dialect, and tend to see immigrants as more integrated, accommodating and pleasant if they try to speak the local dialect – even if it is only a few dialect words. 'Standard-like second language speech' is not negatively evaluated, but van Ommeren's analysis clearly demonstrates that 'dialectal second language speech' has a much higher value at the local linguistic market. Jølbo (2007) also finds predominantly positive attitudes towards immigrants acquiring Norwegian dialects but adds that foreign accented dialect may be perceived as a bit cute or comical.

Another set of studies have focused on immigrants' difficulties in acquiring and understanding Norwegian in general and Norwegian dialects in particular (Garbacz 2014; Holmefjord 2013; Ilskava-Panevski 2012; Jasiulytė 2017; Strzyż 2013). All of them note that immigrants often find acquiring Norwegian demanding since Norwegians are 'not willing to speak standard Bokmål', but tend to use their dialect in all settings. As discussed by Garbacz (2014, 29), Polish immigrants to Norway may be reluctant to acquire a local dialect since dialects in Poland have very low status and are seen as an index of lacking education and sophistication. At the same time, other immigrants to Norway call for more training in Norwegian dialects since they see this as absolutely necessary to become part of Norwegian society (Heide 2017).

All of the above-mentioned studies focus on first-generation immigrants' acquisition of (or problems with acquiring) Norwegian. To our knowledge there are no studies of dialect acquisition and use among one and a half or second-generation immigrants. However, the general impression is that children with an immigrant background growing up in different parts of the country acquire local speech and speak just like other children in the area. An illustrative example of this is Fatima Almaña, who speaks the local dialect from the small town where she grew up. An analysis of her speech in a TV interview she gave because she was nominated for the recognition as 'this year's person of the region', reveals that she uses a quite traditional version of the local dialect (see example 1). Among the traditional features she uses throughout the interview is palatalisation of long alveolars and alveolar clusters. Due to ongoing dialect levelling, palatals tend to get substituted by retroflexes in her region (cf. Røynealand 2009, 22), but Fatima consistently uses palatals ([vi:ç:] (vil, want), [sajɲç] (sant, right), [çɛɲ:] (kjenne, know), [i:ç:] (ikke, not)). She also has a so-called 'split infinitive', that is, a traditional verb declination system with apocope in some infinitives and maintenance of the vowel in the second syllable in others: [çɛɲ:] (kjenne, know), versus [vɔ:ɔ:] (være, be). A recent development in the region is that all infinitives undergo apocope (Røynealand 2009, 24). Fatima also uses the local version of the personal pronouns /æ:/ (standard /jæi/, I), and /mæ:/ (standard /mæi/, me). She has vowel lowering – typical of the area (e>æ *vældi* (veldig, very)), and her noun inflexion is also the traditional one: She uses the plural indefinite marker *-a*, *auga* (øyne, eyes), and the plural definite marker *-an*, *omgivelsan* (omgivelsene, the surroundings). These plural morphemes are not found in either of the two official written standards of Norwegian or in 'Standard Eastern Norwegian'.

Example 1: Traditional dialect, Fatima Almanea, TV-interview (NRK 17.12.2015)

- (1) Æ e vældi opptatt av å utvid det norske begrepe (...) æ [vi:ɫ:] at fleir ska vedkjæ[n:]
I'm very concerned with expanding the concept of Norwegian (...) I want that more people shall acknowledge
- (2) sæ ved det å [vɔ:r:ɔ] norsk og fleir ska [çɛ:n:] sæ igjen i det å [vɔ:r:ɔ] norsk [sɑ:nç]
being Norwegian and that more people shall recognise themselves in being Norwegian right
- (3) (...) at at at man ikke (.) at at norma[n:] [ic:] e [bɾ:ɔ:n:] med [bɾ:ɔ] auga, men men
(...) that that that you don't (.) that that Norwegian is not blond with blue eyes, but but
- (4) at han kan [vɔ:r:ɔ] ei muslimsk [jɛ:nçɔ] med hijab
that he can be a Muslim girl with hijab

Data and methodology

The data for this study was collected during spring/autumn 2015 and was part of the larger project *Dialectal identities in late modern Norway*.⁷ The investigation included a total of 584 high school students at eleven different high schools in six different urban and rural municipalities in Eastern and Western Norway. The students were 17–19 years of age, half of them were girls and half boys. About 31% (179 of 584) of the respondents reported to have one or two parents with another first language than Norwegian, about 23% (132 of 584) speak another language at home, and about 26% (149 of 584) have another mother tongue, possibly in addition to Norwegian. Hence, quite a high number of the respondents have mixed or immigrant backgrounds. 60% of the respondents come from the greater Oslo area.

An extensive online questionnaire and a visual-verbal guise were designed. In addition, focus group interviews with a sub-group of the participants were conducted at each of the schools that took part in the study. The online questionnaire contained a number of background variables like where the respondents grew up and live, their family background, which languages and dialect(s) they speak, their linguistic practices at home and with friends and so on. In addition, the questionnaire contained a number of (more or less) provocative statements about language diversity and immigration that the respondents were asked to react to on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'fully agree' to 'fully disagree'. Furthermore, they could fill in comments to the questions and statements. The visual-verbal guise test was developed in order to assess the extent to which the adolescents would react differently to different combinations of faces and voices. We used the experimental matched/verbal guise methodology developed within language attitude studies (e.g. Garrett 2010; Lambert et al. 1960; Stewart, Ryan, and Giles 1985; Zahn and Hopper 1985), but added another layer, namely faces. The matched/verbal guise methodology has over the years become the 'bedrock of social psychological "language attitude" research' (Soukup 2013b, 267), and it is still very much in use. The huge majority of these studies, however, only use voice samples in their experiment, while only a few also add still pictures or videos.⁸ The idea of the visual-verbal guise is to match each voice up with two different faces, and to use similar voices speaking two or more different varieties. In the current study, four different experiments were developed – one testing male faces and voices, one testing female faces and voices and two testing voices only, male and female respectively. In all cases distractors of the opposite sex were used. The speech samples used were very carefully selected. Two voice samples from each of the four dialects that were part of the study (two urban and two rural) were used. In order to get good quality, spontaneous-sounding, natural speech samples, a large number of samples were collected. Young people were solicited to perform a scripted phone call dialogue where they asked a friend to go to the cinema. The script was made in order to elicit central dialect features (like first person pronouns, negation marker, noun declination and verb conjugation), and we made sure to select samples that were representative of young speech in the area (not very conservative and not very levelled). For the cities, we selected samples that did not contain

any social class shibboleths (i.e. neither very ‘posh’ nor very working class). Also, the photos were very carefully selected and paired. A large number of face models were elicited in order to be able to choose from a large pool of photos. It was imperative to pair photos that were similar with regard to appearance, style, smile, gaze and so forth. All the adolescents were normally good looking without any idiosyncratic features. All the faces were photo-shopped (to get rid of pimples, nose-rings, earrings etc.), and placed on top of the same neutral background. A total of 17 faces were used in each of the tests. Importantly, each speech sample was played twice – once with a traditionally Norwegian-looking face and once with a foreign-looking face. As already mentioned, immigrants to Norway come from a wide range of countries (mostly from Europe), but the first large group came from Pakistan, and hence the largest group of Norwegian born to foreign born parents have Pakistani background. They are found in all layers of society and in many different occupations and have become part of the country’s basic fabric. We therefore chose to use Pakistani-looking faces in the experiment.

Each of the experiments contained 12 faces paired with 6 voices, and 5 faces and voices were used as distractors. The four urban voice samples (from Oslo and Bergen) were used at all the schools whereas the rural voice samples that were used varied depending on location – rural eastern voices (Valdres) were used at the schools in Eastern Norway, whereas rural western samples (Hardanger) were used at the schools in Western Norway. The participants did not get to know anything about the experiment beforehand, but we discussed it with them afterwards. Each of the voice samples took approx. 30 s and they got another 30–40 s to fill in the form consisting of five-point bipolar semantic differential scales with nine antonyms.⁹ Following previous research, the nine different scales of evaluation were supposed to belong to three different dimensions (status, attractiveness and dynamism) (e.g. Garrett 2010; Kristiansen 2001; Maegaard 2005; Zahn and Hopper 1985). The idea behind the semantic differential scale is to try to tap into people’s attitudes towards a social object of some kind through an analysis of their evaluative responses. The underlying assumption is that an attitude is ‘a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects’ (Sarnoff 1970, 279), and that ‘as a “disposition”, an attitude can be seen as having a *degree of stability* that allows it to be identified’ (Garrett 2010, 20).¹⁰ In addition to the nine antonyms, the form also included scales regarding how Norwegian and how foreign the different guises were perceived to be (‘Norwegian’ – ‘not Norwegian’, ‘foreign’ – ‘not foreign’). Finally, the respondents were also asked to write down their immediate impression of the person/voice and also to guess where the person might be from. It was deliberately left open and up to them whether the questions indicated a specific place in Norway or some other place in the world.

Theoretical orientation

Authenticity and anonymity

Linguistic *authority* may, according to Woolard (2016), be found either in a variety’s *authenticity* or in its *anonymity*. According to the ideology of authenticity, the value and legitimacy of a variety lie in its social and geographical *rootedness* and are tied to specific speakers and their individual voices. Dialects and their speakers – not the least in Norway – are often evaluated according to their degree of authenticity. To be considered as authentic, a variety must be ‘from somewhere’ in the consciousness of speakers, and thus its meaning is profoundly local. According to Woolard (2016), the pragmatic function of social *indexicality* is of paramount importance within the ideology of authenticity. In many cases, not the least in Norway, one’s dialect is not only an index of social belonging but is popularly even taken as an iconic representation of the essence of who you are. Within this logic, acquiring and using a new variety, be it a new dialect or a spoken standard, could seriously jeopardise one’s integrity and local identity. This could explain why it is so difficult for Norwegians to switch to a standard-like variety in communication with new speakers of Norwegian, and why they would prefer to switch to English rather than switching to a standard (e.g. Jasiulytė 2017).

Unlike dialects, hegemonic standard languages in modern societies receive their authority from a conception of *anonymity* (Woolard 2016). A spoken standard variety supposedly includes everyone, it is socially and geographically neutral and accessible, and can be acquired by anyone. Hence, it represents a general, neutral voice from nowhere – the choice that needs no explanation. At the same time, and by the same token, it does not have the power of tying people to specific places.

Language, race and place

Although dialects have a strong potential for indexing authenticity and local belonging, speaking local in order to be accepted as a local may not always be enough. Whenever an identity violates ideological expectations, like an unexpected combination of language and skin colour, claims of identity may be rejected as inauthentic (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Speaking a local, rural dialect while having a body that places you in quite a different place may cause dissonance and confusion. As noted by Bucholtz and Hall (2016, 173) ‘bodies and embodiment are central to the production, perception, and social interpretation of language’. Our sociocultural beliefs about the connections between body and language rely on indexical iconization, that is, an ideological process that naturalises and rationalises certain linguistic practices as inherent essence, often by pointing to and placing these practices within specific bodies (Bucholtz and Hall 2016, 178). Particular bodies are expected to speak in particular ways, and any violation of such expectations may cause reactions of various kinds, such as surprise, amusement, sympathy, solidarity, uncertainty, or even anger. The ideological expectation in Norway would be that people with an immigrant background would speak either L2 accented Norwegian, multiethnolectal Norwegian, or ‘Standard Eastern Norwegian’, but not a rural Norwegian dialect. Most immigrants to Norway are taught written Bokmål and ‘Standard Eastern Norwegian’ at language courses, and the largest percentage of immigrants to the country live in the greater Oslo-area.

The assumption that specific languages, varieties or styles ought to have a distinct territory and/or specific ethnic group or race associated with it is quite prevalent among both lay persons and scholars. As pointed out by Irvine and Gal (2000, 53), other kinds of language distributions and ‘mixtures’ are often viewed as departures from some original linguistic and territorial purity, and one might add to this ethnic or racial purity. The rather simplistic and trivial assumption that certain ways of speaking and certain bodies belong to specific places while others do not, has become increasingly problematic and is challenged in modern societies marked by migration, urbanisation and globalisation (cf. Auer 2013; Blommaert 2010; Quist 2010). With migration, both languages and bodies may travel great distances and get transplanted into new environments – new spaces that they, by their presence, transform into new places. As pointed out by Cresswell (2015, 34), place is not just an object in the world, but a way of understanding the world. The sense of a place can be understood as a dynamic product of the social relationships – both historically and performed over time – that unfold in a space. The social meaning of a place is continuously negotiated between social actors, and socially meaningful places derive their significance from the activities that unfold in them, and the values ascribed to them (Auer 2013, 15).

Analysis

Questionnaire

The questionnaire survey contained a number of statements about language diversity and immigration to which the respondents were asked to react. Two of the statements had to do with dialect acquisition among the immigrant population: ‘Immigrants should not learn dialect’ and ‘Immigrants should not speak dialect’. Most of the respondents disagreed (fully or partly) that immigrants should *not learn* a Norwegian dialect (57%), whereas only 9% agreed, and 34% were indifferent. Even more

respondents disagreed (fully or partly) that immigrants should *not speak* dialect (63%), whereas only 5% agreed, and 32% were indifferent (see [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) below).

These results confirm the general impression that immigrants are seen as entitled and legitimate users of local dialects, but need not entail that they are seen as legitimate locals and that claims of belonging are accepted.

It is, however, not entirely clear what the respondents understand by ‘dialect’. What does it mean to speak ‘dialect’ and who is seen as speaking ‘dialect’? 50% ($N = 584$) of the adolescents in the study report that they speak ‘close to Bokmål’, that is, they do not perceive their own speech as ‘dialect’. Almost all (90%) of these adolescents live in the greater Oslo-area. At the same time, a fair amount (37%, $N = 356$) of the Oslo-area respondents report that they speak some version of the local dialect. On the west coast of Norway, however, as many as 85% ($N = 102$) report the same. From this we can see that there is quite a lot of variation in what the adolescents conceive of as ‘dialect’. But there is a clear tendency that the Oslo-speakers perceive their speech as ‘non-dialect’, whereas the west coast speakers perceive their speech as ‘dialect’. Hence, for many of the respondents, learning and speaking a ‘dialect’ seems to mean learning something *other* than Oslo-speech. As discussed in section 2, there is no standard proper in Norway. However, the Oslo-variety is highly prestigious and has arguably some of the properties of a standard.

Visual-verbal guise test (VVGt)

Based on the assumption that Oslo-speech is regarded to be more ‘normal’, ‘neutral’, but maybe also less ‘national’ than other Norwegian varieties (since it has been seen as ‘contaminated’ by Danish e.g. Mæhlum and Røyneland 2011), we formulated two hypotheses that we wanted to test in the visual-verbal guise experiment:

- A person with an immigrant background will be evaluated more positively if he/she speaks another dialect than the Oslo variety
- A person with an immigrant background will be evaluated as more ‘Norwegian’ if he/she speaks another dialect than the Oslo variety

As we will see in the following sections, the analyses support the second, but not the first hypothesis.

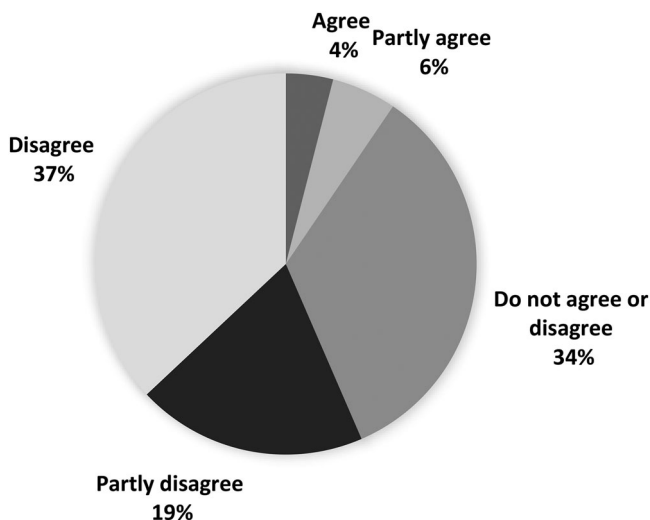


Figure 1. Reactions to the statement ‘Immigrants should not learn dialect’.¹¹

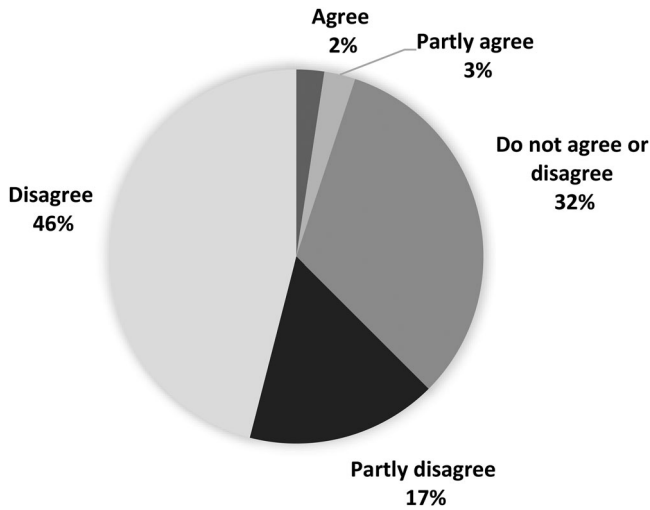


Figure 2. Reactions to the statement 'Immigrants should not speak dialect'.

Evaluations of superiority and dynamism

A bit over half (58%) ($n = 341$) of the total number of respondents ($N = 584$) took part in the non-foreign-accented visual-verbal guise. As mentioned in the methodology section above (section 3), we used nine different scales of evaluation on three different dimensions: *status*, *attractiveness* and *dynamism*. We assessed the internal consistencies of these three dimensions using Cronbach's alpha and Pearson's correlation coefficients and found that some of them were not solid. We therefore used a factor analysis on the nine measures to enable potential alternative dimensions to emerge, resulting in only two salient dimensions made up of just six of the original nine measures: factor 1 *Dynamism* (self-confident, social, cool) and factor 2 *Superiority* (intelligent, independent, purposeful).¹² In the following analyses, only these two dimensions and six measures were used. We tested the two dimensions separately.

When comparing all the different voices and voice + face combinations, with regard to the categories 'Norwegian-looking', 'Pakistani-looking' and 'No picture', we found a significant effect for dynamism, but not for superiority (see Figure 3).¹³ The results show that 'Norwegian-looking' faces are evaluated to be slightly more 'self-confident, social and cool' than the other categories.

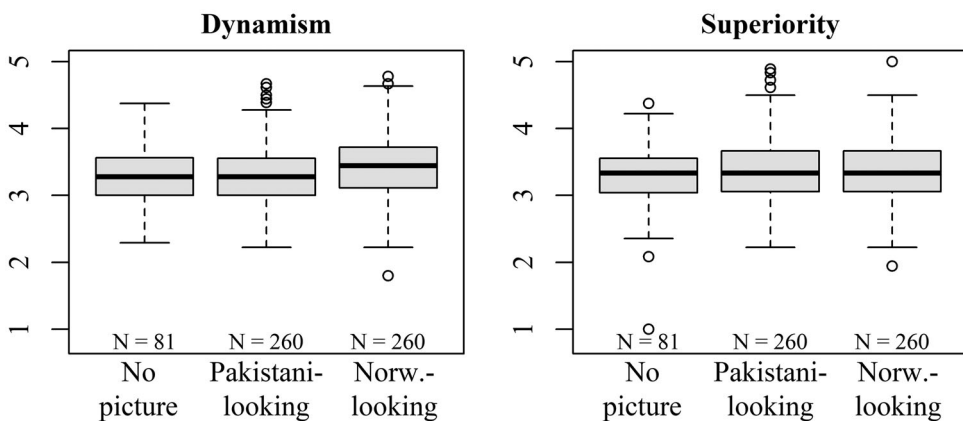


Figure 3. *Dynamism* and *superiority*, both male and female voices and faces.

However, there is no difference between the categories when it comes to how ‘intelligent, independent or purposeful’ they are perceived to be.

The first question, then, is whether dialect has any impact on how persons with an immigrant background are evaluated. We tested the two dimensions separately, and for the Pakistani-looking faces only. Because we wanted to include gender in this analysis, it was restricted to the data collected among Oslo respondents, since these were the only data involving female faces and voices. For *Dynamism*, the analysis shows that both gender, dialect and the interaction between gender and dialect are significant.¹⁴ It is, however, clear from Figure 4 that the dialect effect only applies to the boys. In other words, Pakistani-looking boys using the Oslo-variety come across as significantly cooler than Pakistani-looking boys using other dialects (be it urban Bergen, or rural Hardanger or Valdres). The right-hand diagram in Figure 4 shows that the same effect holds for Norwegian-looking boys. The effect is found in all regions, that is, respondents from both cities and rural areas in both eastern and Western Norway give high scores on dynamism for boys with the Oslo-variety, and it is similar for both male and female respondents, as well as respondents with both minority¹⁵ and majority backgrounds. We do not find this effect for the girls.

When it comes to the evaluation of superiority, dialect does not matter, neither for the boys nor for the girls.¹⁶ This lack of effect is found irrespective of the respondents’ gender and minority/majority background. There is, however, a slight tendency that respondents in Western Norway perceive Pakistani-looking boys as more superior if they speak with the Oslo-variety rather than another variety. Figure 5 demonstrates, however, that Pakistani-looking girls are perceived as higher on a superiority-scale than the boys. The same general pattern is visible also for the Norwegian-looking boys and girls, but the tendencies are weaker.

As we can see, the hypothesis that a person with an immigrant background will be evaluated more positively if he/she speaks *another* dialect than the Oslo-variety, is not supported by the analysis. On the contrary, Oslo-speech scores higher when it comes to dynamism for both foreign and Norwegian-looking faces – for the boys but not for girls. When it comes to evaluations of superiority, there are no general differences between Oslo and other dialects, but there seems to be a difference between the foreign-looking girls and boys, in so far as the girls are evaluated higher on superiority than the boys.

Norwegian or foreign or both? Evaluations of belonging

A well-known computer entrepreneur and social commentator began his talk at a big national conference by stating the following: ‘As you can see I’m from Pakistan, but as you can hear I’m from the

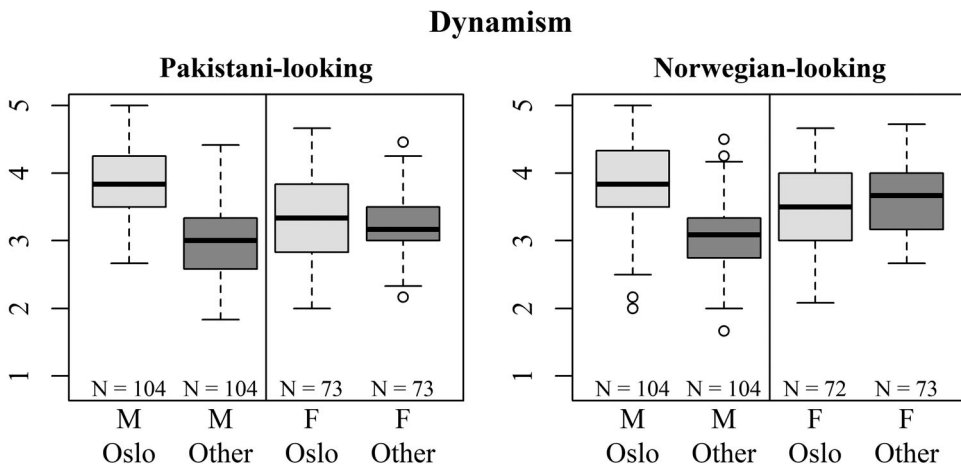


Figure 4. *Dynamism*, effect of dialect. Both male and female voices and faces, Oslo respondents only.

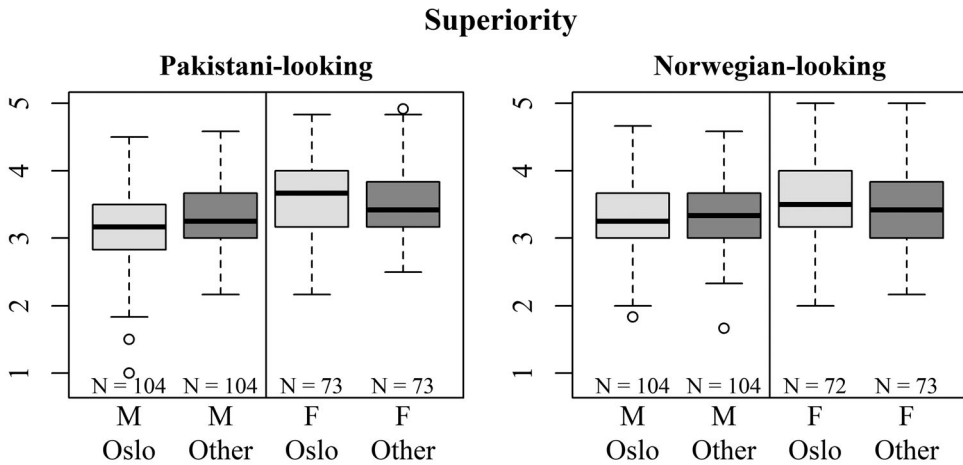


Figure 5. Superiority, effect of dialect. Both male and female voices and faces, Oslo respondents only.

west coast of Norway, and I'm really pleased that I don't speak the Oslo dialect, because in that case you would have thought that I was a foreigner'. The entire audience laughed, nodding approvingly. The idea that a non-Oslo-variety has a stronger potential for indexing Norwegianness and authenticity is the background for the hypothesis that 'a person with an immigrant background will be evaluated as more "Norwegian" if he/she speaks another dialect than the Oslo dialect'. The results from the VVGT-experiment clearly support this hypothesis. The box diagram in Figure 6 shows a combination of the two evaluative scales: Norwegian – not Norwegian and foreign – not foreign. The analyses show that the Pakistani-looking persons with non-Oslo speaking voices are perceived as clearly more 'Norwegian'. A closer look at the data reveals that this effect pertains to the boys only. The same tendency is found both for voices without pictures and for the Norwegian-looking faces, but the effect is strongest for the Pakistani-looking faces.¹⁷

The tendencies are the same for all groups of respondents, but in Valdres (rural area in Eastern Norway), dialect seems to be even more important than in the other areas. We also assessed whether there was an Eastern versus Western Norway, or urban versus rural difference in evaluations, but the big difference turned out to be between Oslo speech and other dialects, regardless of whether they

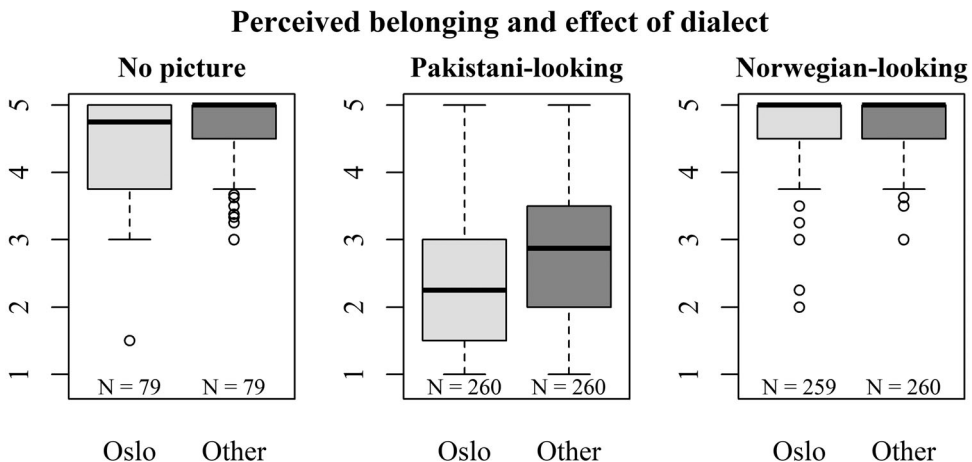


Figure 6. Evaluation of belonging relative to variety (voice only and face + voice). Both male and female voices.

were urban or rural. Hence, the dialect effect was just as high for urban Bergen voices as for the rural dialect speaking voices. Nevertheless, the Norwegian-looking faces are perceived as substantially more ‘Norwegian’ than the Pakistani-looking faces – even if the latter speak a rural Norwegian dialect. Hence, face seems to matter more than voice. It is, however, also worth noting that there is an extreme dispersion in the Pakistani-looking category, with values ranging from 5 to 1. Different respondents obviously evaluate these instances quite differently.

If we look at the answers the respondents give when asked directly to guess where the test persons might be from, the respondents seem to be less inclined to place the Pakistani-looking test persons in the category ‘foreign’ than they are in the more indirect scale evaluations. This may indicate that there is a certain discrepancy between the respondents’ immediate responses and what they think they ‘ought’ to answer (or put differently, a certain difference between overt and more covert attitudes).

Taking a look at the indirect scale evaluation it is interesting to see how often mixed identities were chosen – that is if the test-person is evaluated as *both* ‘Norwegian’ and ‘foreign’ at the same time. As we can see from the analysis (Figure 7), the Pakistani-looking test-persons are ranked 4 or 5 on both the ‘Norwegian’-scale and the ‘foreign’-scale in only 11% of the instances (165 of a total of 1560 instances). No obvious dialect effect is found. In 36% (564) of the instances the Pakistani-looking test-persons were ranked as ‘foreign’ (4 or 5) and not ‘Norwegian’. This applies particularly to the Oslo-speaking voices. Conversely, the Pakistani-looking faces were ranked as ‘Norwegian’ and not ‘foreign’ in 18% (280) of the instances. Here we find a clear effect of dialect, that is in most of these instances the test-person speaks a non-Oslo dialect. Hence, there is a clear tendency that the test-persons are attributed *either* a ‘foreign’ *or* a ‘Norwegian’ identity, and few get attributed a mixed identity. Although this may be a consequence of the experiment design, it is more likely evidence for Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) finding that mixed or hybrid identities are hard to negotiate and easily get rejected. There still seems to be a tendency to think of identity and belonging in singular and essential terms, and not as something potentially multiple and dynamic. Other recent studies on language and identity negotiations using non-experimental methods, point in the same direction (e.g. Cutler and Røyneland 2015; Ims 2014; Opsahl 2009; Røyneland 2018; Svendsen 2014).

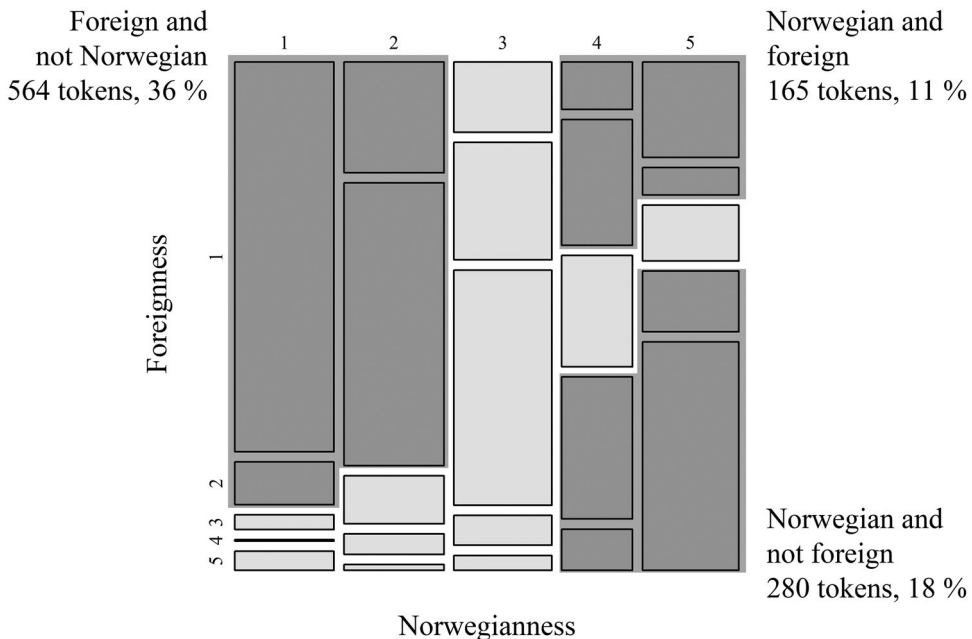


Figure 7. Evaluation of Norwegianianness and foreignness, Pakistani-looking faces + voices (1560 instances, $N = 260$).

Conclusion

To date there are not many studies of dialect acquisition by first generation migrants to Norway. There are also few studies on what immigrants are taught at Norwegian courses, except that most acquire written Bokmål, and that many complain that they are not able to understand the local speech of the area where they live (or complain that Norwegians do not accommodate to new speakers by switching to a ‘standard’).

The present study, as well as others, show that immigrants to Norway are seen as entitled and legitimate users of local dialects, unlike what is the case for instance in the Netherlands (see Cornips this issue). Acquiring local speech is not only positively evaluated but is also seen as an index of integration and ‘Norwegianness’. The extent to which adult immigrants *want* to acquire local dialects, however, depends on a number of factors, like the dialect-standard-ideology in their country of origin, and also their sociocultural orientation, that is, whether they orient towards and identify with the local community.

When it comes to children who are born in or come to Norway at a young age, the general tendency seems to be that they acquire the local speech where they live. In the bigger cities where we find tendencies of ghettoisation (particularly in Oslo), acquiring local features may not happen that easily, since access to local repertoires may be more limited. Instead we find emergence of multiethnolectal speech styles in these urban multilingual areas (thoroughly documented for Oslo, but only sparsely for Bergen and Trondheim).

The present study shows that there is a strong dialect effect in the respondents’ evaluation of ‘Norwegianness’. The foreign-looking boys are perceived as significantly more Norwegian when speaking a non-Oslo variety. Several factors may explain this: One may be the general potential dialects have in indexing localness, rootedness and authenticity (and ‘Norwegianness’ due to the 19th and twentieth century language struggle where dialects were perceived as more authentic and pure whereas urban varieties, especially the speech of the upper classes in the capital, were seen as contaminated by Danish). Another explanation may have to do with a perception of dialects as more charming, cosy and disarming than the more distant, anonymous and neutral speech of the capital – and definitely less threatening than multiethnolectal speech styles, which tend to have a strong association with the notion of the ‘dangerous’ male immigrant (e.g. Hårstad 2010).

Overall the respondents in the current study gave an equally positive evaluation of ‘Norwegian-’ and ‘foreign-’ looking faces when speaking the same dialect. However, the hypothesis that a person with an immigrant background would be evaluated more positively if he/she speaks *another* dialect than the Oslo-variety, is not supported by the analysis. On the contrary, both the ‘Norwegian-’ and ‘foreign-’ looking boys are evaluated as more *dynamic* when speaking the Oslo-dialect. When it comes to evaluations of *superiority*, there are no differences between the Oslo-variety and other dialects, and no differences between ‘foreign’ and ‘Norwegian’-looking faces, but there appears to be a gender difference in so far as the girls are judged as more *intelligent, purposeful, independent* than the boys – particularly when speaking the Oslo variety. However, boys with a dialect do not seem to be judged as less competent than girls with a dialect, so the gender effect seems only to apply to Oslo-speech. This may be tied to a quite robust (e.g. Labov 2001), although debated (e.g. Eckert 2000), finding in sociolinguistics, that girls may benefit more than boys from using high status features. The fact that there is no difference in evaluations between the different varieties is, however, quite remarkable and stands in contrast to how dialects tend to be perceived in most parts of Europe and beyond, where low scores on *status* and, at best, high scores on *solidarity* seem to be the trend.

Although the analyses show that adolescents with an immigrant background are perceived as more ‘Norwegian’ when speaking a local dialect, they are still most often viewed as ‘foreign’. They are seldom attributed an identity as *both* local and foreign, but rather as either or. Hence, more essentialist ideas of belonging and identity seem to be quite prevalent.

At a more general level, we may ask whether the main finding of this study regarding how dialect acquisition and use among the migrant population is evaluated is specific to the Norwegian context –

or if it points to something more general? We would argue, in line with the ideology of authenticity, that the potential of local speech for indexing localness, rootedness, and maybe also integration, is quite general, regardless of the status this local speech otherwise may have. The fact that Fatima Almanea, the young Iraqi refugee to Norway, was nominated for the recognition as ‘this year’s person of the region’ most certainly depended on her speaking a local dialect of the region. This connection is surely not specific to Norway, thus indicating a more general recognition of the ideology of authenticity.

Notes

1. ‘Asylsøkeran kryr som lopp og lus’ (*Asylum seekers swarm like fleas and lice*) (NRK 21.01.2014). The title of the song, *Black Tents*, by Hans Rotmo, refers to the use of niqab.
2. Fatima Almanea came as a refugee to Norway from the war in Iraq when she was 8 years old and has since lived in the same local community as Rotmo (NRK 17.12.2015).
3. On the wall of a Facebook page in support of Rotmo a picture of Almanea wearing a hijab was posted. The following text was written on top of her portrait: ‘Ånei du lille muslimfjolle. Ingen verdølinger går med uniformen til terrorister’ (*Oh no, you little Muslim fool. No one from Verdøl would wear the uniform of terrorists.*). (Accessed August 2016, the page has since been closed). (Dagbladet 04.06.2015).
4. 48.7% come from Europe, 33.2% from Asia, 13.9% from Africa, and 4% from North and South America (Statistics Norway 2018a).
5. Until late nineteenth century Danish was the exoglossic written standard in Norway and also the spoken ideal for the upper classes in the cities. *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk* were only recognised as endoglossic written norms in 1885 after a long-lasting language struggle. Whereas *Bokmål* was the result of a gradual Norwegianisation of written Danish, based on the speech of the urban elites, *Nynorsk* was based on a wide range of Norwegian rural dialects, as these were seen as the most authentic, unspoiled and true representation of the Norwegian language (Røyneland 2016). The effort to establish a written language on the basis of the rural Norwegian dialects has no doubt contributed to giving rural dialects a relatively high status. Urban dialects, on the other hand, were for a long time viewed with more skepticism and almost regarded as ‘un-national’, since they were seen to be contaminated by Danish (cf. Jahr 2013; Mæhlum and Røyneland 2011).
6. The multiethnolectal speech style is characterised by a wide range of co-occurring linguistic features including an association of these features with certain social practices. For comprehensive descriptions of the different linguistic features that are found across Scandinavia see articles in Nortier and Svendsen 2015. See also Skovse and Quist this issue.
7. The team, led by Røyneland, consisted of Kristin Myklestu (MA-student and research assistant), Ragni Vik Johnsen (MA-student) and Bård Uri Jensen (statistician). The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with both of the MA-students, whereas the visual-verbal guise was developed together with Myklestu.
8. Some previous studies include Holmes, Murachver, and Bayard 2001; Jensen and Rosenfeld 1974; Rödin and Özcan 2013; Rubin and Smith 1990; Williams, Whitehead, and Miller 1972. Many of these studies look at attitudes towards accented speech in educational settings or at ethnic stereotyping and discrimination.
9. The bipolar antonyms used were: *Intelligent – not intelligent, purposeful – not purposeful, independent – not independent* (status dimension), *nice – not nice, social – not social, honest – not honest* (attractiveness dimension), *cool – not cool, not boring – boring, self-confident – not self-confident* (dynamism dimension).
10. Matched/verbal guise studies have, however, received a fair amount of criticism, not least from social-constructivist scholars who claim that these experimental methods generate ‘only a poor image of people’s contextually situated, differentiated, and variable evaluative practices’ and that ‘the very search for stable, measurable, incorporated “attitudes” is essentially unwarranted’ (Soukup 2013a, 252, see further discussion in Soukup *ibid.*).
11. Due to an error, only approximately half of the respondents gave their response to these two statements. However, we received reactions from all of the four main areas, that is, urban and rural Eastern and Western Norway.
12. We used varimax rotation and restricted the factor fitting to 3 factors. After factor loadings <0.5 were excluded, this resulted in factor 1 with factor loadings 0.79, 0.73, and 0.70 on *Social, Self-confident* and *Cool*, factor 2 with factor loadings 0.74, 0.66, and 0.61 on *Purposeful, Intelligent*, and *Independent*, and factor 3 with factor loadings 0.71 and 0.55 on *Nice* and *Honest*. We then decided to ignore factor 3 on account of its low number of variables and low Cronbach alpha score (0.64, compared to 0.80 and 0.76 for factor 1 and 2, respectively).
13. Some of these distributions are skewed and hence not normally distributed, so we used a non-parametric approach to the analysis. A Kruskal-Wallis-test for *Dynamism* yields an overall significant result, $\chi^2 \approx 14.879$, $df = 2$, $p \approx 0.00059$ (<0.05). A post-hoc pairwise Wilcoxon rank-sum test with Holm correction

reveals significant differences between ‘Norwegian-looking’ and both the other categories ($p < 0.05$), but the effect sizes are relatively small, Cohen’s $d \approx 0.29$ in both cases. For *Superiority*, the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant effects: $X^2 \approx 1.133$, $df = 2$, $p \approx 0.57$.

14. All samples are normally distributed, and we hence used an anova analysis ($F \approx 40.9$, $df = (3, 350)$) with Tukey’s HSD as post-test. The difference between the Oslo-variety and Other-dialect for boys is Cohen’s $d \approx 1.50$, which is an extraordinarily strong effect.
15. In this context, minority background is operationalised as having at least one parent with a different mother tongue than Norwegian.
16. As these distributions were not normally distributed, we used two Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, one for each gender, with Bonferroni correction for familywise error rate. Both tests yielded negative results: $V = 2078$, $p \approx 0.12$ and $V = 1569$, $p \approx 0.056$, respectively, $\alpha = 0.025$.
17. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test gave a significant result for the Pakistani-looking ($V = 6005.5$, $N = 79$, $p < 0.05$, effect size Cohen’s $d \approx 0.45$). For the Norwegian-looking cases the sample effect is $d \approx 0.27$, whereas for the no pictures-cases, the sample effect is $d \approx 0.42$. This illustrates that box diagrams are not always the best way to visualise this kind of non-continuous data, as the diagram for the Norwegian-looking cases seems to indicate identical distributions.

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