



Høgskolen i **Hedmark**

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Bachelor thesis

# Is English linguistic imperialism threatening the Norwegian language?

Truer engelskspråklig imperialisme det norske språket?

Lektor Engelsk

2015

Samtykker til utlån hos høgskolebiblioteket

JA  NEI

Samtykker til tilgjengeliggjøring i digitalt arkiv Brage

JA  NEI

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## **Sammendrag:**

Denne bacheloroppgaven stiller spørsmålet om Engelskspråklig imperialisme truer det Norske språket. Oppgaven tar for seg hva Robert Phillipson lister opp som lingvistisk imperialisme og linker dette opp mot akademia domenet og implementerte engelske låneord i det norske språket. Diskusjonsdelen av oppgaven ser på disse og andre faktorer med fokus på fremtiden til det norske språket generelt i forhold til engelskspråklig imperialisme. Her blir norske lingvister med forskjellige synspunkter dratt inn for å legge grunnlaget for en relevant diskusjon. Oppgaven konkluderer med at akademia domenet er truet av engelsk, men generelt sett er det norske språket ikke truet nå eller i framtiden grunnen overbevisende fakta fra UNESCO og norske lingvisters meninger som støtter opp om at det norske språket er sikret.

## **Abstract:**

This bachelor thesis asks the question whether English linguistic imperialism is threatening the Norwegian language or not. The paper looks at what Robert Phillipson lists as linguistic imperialism and links it up towards the academia domain and implemented English loan words into the Norwegian language. The discussion part of this thesis debates these and other factors with the focus on the future sights of the Norwegian language in general in relation to English linguistic imperialism. Here, Norwegian linguists with different points of view are brought in to lay the foundations for a relevant discussion. The paper concludes that the academia domain is under threat from English, but in general, the Norwegian language is not threatened now or in the future due to the overwhelming evidence from UNESCO, as well as Norwegian linguist's opinions that support the claim that the Norwegian language is safe.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to thank Heidi Moen for guidance and counseling.

# 1. Introduction

The modern Norwegian language has been around since year 1525 (Venøs & Gundersen, 2015) and is the first language among most citizens. The Norwegian people with just over 5 million citizens are traditionally very proud of their language culture (Statistics Norway, 2015). With today's globalization/internationalization, the English language gains more and more power around the world. It is estimated that 1, 5 billion people know how to speak English, and only 375 million people are native speakers (Statista, 2015). The Norwegian language then becomes pretty small-scale compared to English.

Robert Phillipson is a retired language research professor (Copenhagen Business School, s.a.) who has studied and written many articles and a few books about the term "linguistic imperialism". In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, he quotes the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung to define what he means by "imperialism"; "a type of relationship where by one society can dominate another" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 52). Since Phillipson writes about this in a linguistic point of view with the focus on the English language, this then means the type of relationship where English is dominating other languages.

This thesis asks the question: Is English linguistic imperialism threatening the Norwegian language? The reason why I choose to write about this topic is because I live and study in Norway and I witness on an everyday basis how the English language is becoming more and more relevant for the people. People in general do not think of the consequences this might have on the Norwegian language in the future. Therefore I want to dig deeper into this topic to find out whether it is something to be concerned about or not.

The thesis consists of chapters that represent fact based material that later will be touched upon and further debated in a discussion part. The third chapter about Theory will introduce the reader to a broader understanding of the term "linguistic imperialism". The fourth chapter will focus on what impact the imperial spread of English has on Norwegian Academia at University level. The fifth chapter will focus on the implementation of English words into the Norwegian language. The sixth chapter represents United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) criteria about endangered languages with focus on Norway. The seventh chapter will be a discussion part about whether the Norwegian language in general is threatened or not by English linguistic

imperialism in the future. It will focus on the debate that is going on in the news media, and it will be a “pros and cons” discussion, which means finding arguments that supports both sides. A conclusion will be drawn at the end of the paper with backing from eligible sources.

## 2. Method

This bachelor thesis uses material from books, academic articles and news articles. No research has been done because of the limited amount of time available for writing the thesis. In order to conduct good research with proficient and reliable findings, a period of 3 months is not enough. The focus then has been on finding eligible sources to write an academic text about linguistic imperialism in Norway. Since the thesis looks into linguistic imperialism, it is natural to include Robert Phillipson's book named *Linguistic Imperialism* from 1992. This book is relevant in the topic of dominant language power, and in that way it can be connected to the spread of English in Norway. Phillipson does not mention Norway in his book, but it has a general focus on the imperialistic spread of English and works well for every country English is spreading to. As mentioned in the introduction, Robert Phillipson has spent a large part of his career studying the negative effects of the spread of English.

In the second chapter about academia, research articles from Ragnild Ljosland, a PhD candidate in philology in Nordic studies, and Birgit Brock-Utne, a professor of education and development are central. They have great knowledge of English in academia, and one of Ljosland's papers include eligible research that are essential for the bachelor thesis when own research has not been conducted. I wanted to include the academia domain in this paper because it is heavily influenced by the spread of English, and it is a domain that is often brought up in the discussion about the future of the Norwegian language, making it relevant for this paper.

In the chapter about English loan words, Associate Professor in English language, Anne-Line Graedler's articles are central. She has years of experience researching loan words and has also written a dictionary called *Anglismeordboka* that covers over 4000 words that have been implemented into the Norwegian language from English. When discussing the increase of English influence in the Norwegian language, loan words are often brought up to prove that English is taking over. Implemented loan words are also visible in the society making it useful to look at exactly how much influence these words have on everyday speech.



UNESCOs criteria have been added to show the status of the Norwegian language today by listing several criteria. Linguists Guro Fløgstad and Anders Vaa reflect upon these criteria to show the situation of the Norwegian language.

In the discussion part, Norwegian linguists are brought in to create an academic discussion about the future sights of the Norwegian language. Linguist Sylfest Lomheim is central in this debate because he is controversial in the way that his opinions stand out from the other Norwegian linguists. He, like Phillipson works like a spokesman in that he warns people about the negative effects of the English spread, and this makes him relevant for the discussion about the future of the Norwegian language.

The discussion could have had more voices speaking their opinions, for instance politicians. On the other hand, the people chosen for the debate are the ones that have been talking in the media and put the spotlight on the Norwegian language. Generally for this bachelor thesis, the topic about linguistic imperialism spreading to Norway is little discussed, but the voices that have spoken out in the media or written research papers are highly qualified people with great knowledge of the Norwegian language. I chose to write a chapter about academia and loan words because I wanted to put good effort into two known elements instead of writing brief about many. It would have strengthened the paper to have fact based material on other domains like business which is debated in the discussion part, but there is a limit frame of words in a bachelor thesis.

### 3. Theory

“Linguistic Imperialism” was originally coined back in the 1930s as a critique to “Basic English”; a simple version of English, using only 850 words and cutting down on rules to the smallest number necessary, with the intention of creating a medium for international communication (Nordquist, s.a.). The term was reintroduced by Robert Phillipson in 1992 and who has worked with it for most of his career. He gives the term the following working definition: “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). By “structural”, he means material properties like institutions and financial allocations, and with “cultural” he means immaterial properties like attitudes and pedagogical principles (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). In the book *Introducing Global Englishes* by Nicola Galloway and Heath Rose, Phillipson’s view on linguistic imperialism was further stated. He sees it as a form of linguicism which manifests in favoring the dominant language over another, along similar lines as racism and sexism (Galloway, N & Rose, H, 2015, p. 60-61). It is ideological in that it encourages beliefs that the dominant language form is superior to others, and is thus more prestigious (Galloway, N & Rose, H, 2015, p. 60-61). He further states that linguistic imperialism has an exploitative essence that causes injustice and inequality between those who use the dominant language and those who do not (Galloway, N & Rose, H, 2015, p. 60-61). Lastly, he views linguistic imperialism as having a subtractive influence on other languages, in that learning the dominant language is at the expense of others (Galloway, N & Rose, H, 2015, p. 60-61).

It is very important to note that this is Robert Phillipson’s views on the spread of English and it does not mean that he is necessarily correct in everything he says, but since this thesis is about linguistic imperialism threatening Norway, his views are important because he sets the standard for what the term means. There is though important to note that there are several linguists that see that spread of English as a positive trend rather than “imperialism”. There is a debate regarding whether the inequality created by English is the result of intentional or incidental spread (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 62). Phillipson’s viewpoint is a **top-down perspective**, meaning that English was spread with the intent to create social and economic

inequality between ENL (English as a Native Language) nations and the rest of the world (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 62). Other scholars have viewpoints that agree with a **bottom-up perspective**, arguing that the spread of English was a consequence of the spread of British and American power which started with the colonization and then later globalization. Bernard Spolsky says in his book *Language Policy* that the development of English as a global language “reflects local and individual language acquisition decisions, responding to changes in the complex ecology of the world’s language system” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 90). There are evidences that supports Spolsky’s viewpoint; unlike colonization of territories by nations like Japan of Taiwan, the USSR of Ukraine where the colonizers went for an aggressive approach to promote their language through education, politics and society, English was not always promoted in regions where British presence existed for exploitative reasons (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 62). British colonial powers tended to leave out language education to local populations because it was thought that English language acquisition could lead to organized resistance to colonial rule (Galloway & Rose, p. 62).

## 4. The English language in Norwegian academia.

The globalization of English is without a doubt affecting the language used in higher education and research in Norway. From the early 1980s to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the percentage of research published in English has increased from 62 to 71 percent (Ljosland, 2005, p. 396). Different subject fields differ in percentage of English publications though. Already in the early 1980s, the fields of technology, medicine and natural sciences had a very high percentage of publications written in English. In social science though, the percentage of English publications increased from 30 to 51 percent (Ljosland, 2005, p. 396). In other words: 7 out of 10 research papers are being published in English. In 2002, around 80 percent of teachers and researchers contributed with at least one academic paper written in a foreign language, meaning English, German or French. This is 15 percent up from year 1979 (Simonsen, 2004, p. 51).

The increase of English in Norwegian academia is substantial, and people like Birgit Brock-Utne, a Norwegian professor in pedagogy calls it “a threat” (Ljosland, 2005, p. 395). Three factors have been pointed out that are substantial to the contributing of English in Norwegian academia.

- English academic literature increases in sale, while Norwegian literature stagnates.

Statistics show that from 1992 to 1997, the sale in Norway of imported English-written academic literature rose from 150 million to 200 million Norwegian kroner (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 228). Most of this literature was required and recommended reading at Norwegian universities and colleges (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 228). The statistics also show that the sale of Norwegian-written literature stagnated completely at the same time period (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 228).

- The recruitment of teaching staff and researchers who do not speak Norwegian

In the late 1990s, Norway witnessed a new practice towards recruiting academic personnel to teach in universities and colleges (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 229). Norwegian academic teaching positions are now being advertised on the internet, which means that everybody that feel qualified has the opportunity to apply. The Bologna-process has a big part to do with this; it is collaboration between 46 countries, including Norway where the goal is to create a common region for higher education (Universitets- og Høgskolerådet, s.a.). This had led to internationalization as one of the important aims (Ljosland, 2005, p. 398). The ratio of foreign researchers have jumped from 15 percent in year 2007 to 20 percent in 2012, and one third of the population in Norway that took a PhD was from a foreign country (Øistad, 2014).

- The financial rewards being given to academic staff publishing in an international language.

This is perhaps the most evident proof that English is getting a big foothold in Norwegian academia. In year 1997, the philosophical institute at the University of Oslo gave the following bonuses to academic staff that published material: 15.000 kroner for books published in English, while 7.000 for books published in Norwegian. 5.000 kroner for book editing in English, while 2.000 kroner for book editing in Norwegian. 15.000 kroner for PhD's written in English, while 7.000 for PhDs written in Norwegian. 7.000 kroner for journal articles written in English, while 2.000 kroner for journal articles written in Norwegian (Brock-Utne, 2001). In other words, publishing in English gives twice the money, which makes it much more lucrative.

## 4.1. Is English linguistic imperialism threatening the Norwegian language in academia?

The findings above clearly shows that the English language is expanding in Norwegian academia and that it most likely will continue to do so. There are several similarities between what is happening in Norwegian universities and what Phillipson lists as linguistic imperialism. One can say that English is the preferred language in academia when looking at the increased sale of English academic literature, while Norwegian academic literature stagnates. The fact that you are rewarded more greatly for publishing research material in English connects well with the exploitative essence that causes inequality and injustice towards those who do not speak or write English well. This can be seen a signal of the English language taking over in the academia sector.

Ragnild Ljosland has conducted a case study at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU). The study focused on how a “Master of Science programme in Industrial Ecology” class dealt with the new instruction that all teaching were to be held in English. The case study was done in 2005 during the first term of all English-medium instruction (Ljosland, 2010). The results showed how 4 different groups of people positioned themselves towards the change to English: The department management’s position, the lecturers’ position, the researchers’ positions and the students’ positions (Ljosland, 2010, p. 996).

The main motivating factor for the department management was to attract more students from abroad. (Ljosland, 2010, p.996) The management also hoped that making the study “international” would earn them a reputation for quality (Ljosland, 2010, p. 996). Lastly, the management meant that making English the only language of instruction would be “natural”, clearly stating that the management is not concerned, but rather excited about the increasing use of English in academia (Ljosland, 2010, p. 996).

There were mixed opinions between the lecturers on having to teach everything in English. However, there was a general positive attitude towards becoming an international program (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998). The only concern for many of the lecturers was that they did not feel they could provide the same quality when having to lecture in English instead of Norwegian. Thus, English being a bigger part of the Norwegian academia does not seem to concern most lecturers, as long as they feel comfortable in speaking the language.

The researchers, consisting of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers were positive to the new English only policy in teaching. This has to do with their attention towards the international research community in Industrial Ecology, as seen in the fact that 85 percent of the department's publishing was written in English in year 2005 (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998). The researchers said that when speaking to each other, English could very well be the language of discourse, especially when speaking about research (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998).

The students like the lecturers had mixed opinions on the course being all English instructed. Some were positive, meaning that learning the subject while getting better at English was a bonus because increasing English language skills always comes in as a great tool in future working situations (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998). Others were neutral, saying that most of the instructions on post graduate level in engineering departments usually would be in English anyway (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998). There were students though that saw the English only system as negative because they were afraid that having to write in English would affect their grades on the exam in a negative way because of the lack of terminology in English (Ljosland, 2010, p. 998).

It is crucial to note that even though all teaching was held in English, both the staff and the students still used Norwegian in informal situations, like in the lunch break, or in oral interactions in the classroom when divided into small groups (Ljosland, 2010, p. 999). Thus, English is the only language used in formal situations, while Norwegian is used together with English in informal situations. The results of the case study are not surprising, and it seems to reflect what is happening in Norwegian academia. English is becoming the "working" language because it brings more status to the universities in the fact that they are becoming "internationalized". Pierre Bourdieu theories about "linguistic capital", a subcategory of "cultural capital" is relevant in this case. His theories about language conclude that in order to gain access into the academic world, you need to know the correct linguistic code, which means the language that helps the person achieve credibility (Ljosland, 2010, p. 1002). There exists no doubt that today, that the language of academic power is English, and that Norway is affected by it. The statistics shown in the beginning of chapter 4.0 indicates that academia is probably the field where English has made the biggest foothold so far in the Norwegian language. Therefore it is no doubt that Norwegian as an academic language is under threat from English linguistic imperialism. How much impact the increasing use of English in academia has to say for the Norwegian language in general

will be further debated in the discussion part in chapter 7 of this thesis, which focuses on the future of the Norwegian language in relation to English linguistic imperialism.



## **5. Implementation of English loan words into the Norwegian language.**

In the period just before the Second World War, the English philologist Aasta Stene collected and described 530 English loan words that were used in the Norwegian language (Graedler, 2002). Dictionaries that focus on foreign words have shown a great increase in the amount of loan words from English. Berulfsen and Gundersen's dictionary on foreign words have been issued 16 times since 1940. Statistics show that in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue from 1953, there were collected a little over 400 words from English, while in the 15<sup>th</sup> issue from year 2000, around 800 words have been collected from English (Graedler, 2002). The amount of English words in each book also rose in this time period, from 6, 5 percent in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue, to 9 percent in the 2000 issue (Graedler, 2002). Of words with foreign origin, 10 percent were English in the 2000 "Bokmål" dictionary.

English words are used in many contexts, but we can separate them into 2 categories: Words that explains stuff or phenomenon's that we do not have a Norwegian word for. For instance words like "smoothie and "podcasting" (Andersen, 2006). This category usually deals with new inventions within culture and technology, where the language users use the English words for a subject-specific description (Andersen, 2006). The other category is words where there already exists a Norwegian word. For instance words like "oppbacking" (støtte) and "loser" (taper) are often used often used from the English language to reflect that the person belongs to a group that wants to be trendier (Andersen, 2006). For instance, if an employer in a business announces that they need a new "project manager" instead of "prosjektleder", the reason is usually that the business wants to give an impression that it is international oriented and thus more prestigious (Andersen, 2006).

## **5.1. Is the implementation of English loan words threatening the Norwegian language?**

Debates in the media often tend to make the impression that English words are just swarming into the Norwegian language and taking over. However, research shows that even though English words enter the Norwegian language in a hurry, the amount of usage is surprisingly low in everyday speech. Linguist Eli-Marie Danbolt Drange based her PhD in 2009 on researching how many English words a group of teenagers from Oslo implemented in everyday speech. The teenagers ranged from the age of thirteen to eighteen (Røli, 2009). The results were surprising in that out of 100.000 words, only 1 percent of the words were English (Røli, 2009). Her research also showed that when the teenagers used English words, it was mainly adjectives to describe someone or something. This clearly shows that as of right now, words implemented from English do not threaten the Norwegian language. People are still concerned about implemented words from English even though research shows that the usage is low. English words bring a visibility factor when it is implemented in Norwegian texts. Because the English words stand out, they are easier to notice (Graedler, 1997). Even though there are few English words in the text, it looks as if there is more because of the visibility factor (Graedler, 1997). There is no secret though that the Norwegian people have a history of being sensible to changes. When something new comes along, the alarm bells start ringing even though there is no real threat. An example of this is from a reporter in the Norwegian newspaper "Dagbladet" that stated in 1960 that if nothing were to be done to stop the increase of English in the Norwegian language, everyone would read English pocketbooks and nothing else in 1990 (Graedler, 1997). That was obviously an overstatement, but as seen in academia, English is on the rise and is gaining more influence in the society than before.

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## 6. UNESCOs criteria of endangered languages.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) has created an atlas over the world's languages in danger in order to raise awareness about language endangerment (Moseley, 2010). The atlas rates the degree of endangerment in the following order: safe, vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, extinct. The atlas latest edition from 2010 lists 2500 languages as endangered, which is close to the generally accepted number of 3000. Norway is considered one of the "safe" languages and is therefore not included in the atlas (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 131). What makes a language endangered? UNESCO lists several criteria and the most important ones will be mentioned.

- The transmission degree between generations.

It is naturally important that the language is transmitted from generation to generation in order for it to survive. When parents give up learning their mother tongue to their children, the language is considered endangered (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 132).

- The amount of people speaking the language

Languages with few speakers are generally more exposed to pressure from bigger languages like English. How many speakers that are required to keep a language alive has no answer, but if for instance 500 speakers of a language are gathered outside a quickly growing urban downtown with a majority language, the chance of keeping it alive will in most cases be tough. On the other hand, on an island in the pacific sea, a language of 500 speakers will be seen upon as a relatively big language with a bright future (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, pp. 132-133).

- What domains the language are used in

What domains the language is used in tells a lot about its condition. Examples of domains are home, work life, church, school, kindergarten etc. (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, pp. 136-137).

## **6.1. Fløgstad & Vaa's reflections around UNESCO's criteria.**

According to both UNESCO and linguists Fløgstad & Vaa, the Norwegian language meets all the criteria to be considered safe. There is nothing today that indicates that Norwegian parents will stop learning the mother tongue to their children (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 132). Even though Norway is a little country, the language is not. With its approximately 5 million speakers, it ranks at 114<sup>th</sup> place out of over 6000 (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 135). English has strengthened in certain domains in Norway, like business and academia. An example of this is the corporation Hydro that established English as the official working language in year 1999 (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 137). Academia is mentioned by referring to the amount of research being published in English. They state though that this is natural because researchers want to reach an international audience where English rules as the leading language, further stating that it would be unthinkable to write their book in English because they want to reach out to a Norwegian audience (Fløgstad & Vaa, p. 138).

## **7. Introducing Sylfest Lomheim's notions.**

Sylfest Lomheim is a Norwegian philologist and the former leader of the Language Council of Norway. As a Norwegian, he is controversial in the way that he is one of few linguists that believes the Norwegian language is threatened by English in a relative short period of time because of globalization. It is uncertain whether Lomheim has a top down or bottom up perspective of English linguistic imperialism, but because of his negative views towards the spread of English that will be shown, it is natural to place him under a top down perspective, agreeing with many of Phillipson's viewpoints.

In year 2000, he predicted that the Norwegian language will die in the future (Folgerø, 2000). He further stated that already in a period of 100 years, Norway will find itself in a twofold situation where we speak English in professional contexts like work, while we still speak Norwegian at home, but in a longer period of time, English will have full influence also in spoken context (Folgerø, 2000). Lomheim stated in year 2008 that in a period of 100 years, half of the around 6000 languages in the world will be wiped out. He further states that Norwegian is by far one of the 300 largest languages in the world spoken by 95 percent of the world's population (Lomheim, 2008). He draws parallels between language death and the climate issues, saying that climate change is a common cause that politicians around the world have become aware of, while few seems to care about languages dying (Lomheim, 2008). Politics is the correct way of solving language issues according to Lomheim, and he asks the question whether or not it is strategically progressive to keep a strong Norwegian language. He is clearly focused on the importance of culture and says there are only 2 possible outcomes for the Norwegian language. Either let English go on without restrictions, causing the Norwegian language do die quickly, or decide on taking care of the Norwegian language with politics (Lomheim, 2008). Countries that in the next generation let themselves become monolingual English speakers are according to Lomheim the losers of our society and will ultimately be part of a "B-team", saying that these types of societies will not be fully competitive (Lomheim, 2008).

Lomheim says that globalization will kill the Norwegian language, but what is important to note is that globalization has been happening for many years now, it is not something new.

Modern globalization approached already as a direct result of the industrial revolution, which is well over 200 years ago (Wikipedia s.a.). It is often pointed to though that today's globalization is caused by "Americanization" in terms of the media reach, economic power etc. The United States of America became a superpower after the Second World War which is 70 years ago. In order for globalization to kill the Norwegian language in a relative short period of time, the process needs to quicken up drastically when seeing how strong the Norwegian language stands today.

Sylfest Lomheim is as mentioned very controversial with crystal clear opinions about the future of the Norwegian language. What is unclear though is whether or not to take Lomheim's statements about the extinction of the Norwegian language over a relative short period of time as gospel. He seems to argue against himself when saying that Norwegian is one of the 300 largest languages by far in the world, spoken by 95 percent of the world's population. It looks strange to predict that the Norwegian language will die after pointing out that fact, but Lomheim has been speaking to the media for several years, probably knowing well by now how to gain people's attention, and there is no secret that it requires a certain type of exploitation towards the media to achieve headlines with linguistic issues. Therefore, by saying these controversy things about the Norwegian language, he ignites the debate. With the responses from other professors in linguistics that contributes to heating up the lukewarm debate, Lomheim has succeeded in putting language issues in Norway on the map, and that may as well be his aim.

## **7.1. Helene Uri's response to Sylfest Lomheim's notions.**

Lomheim has got many responses to his statements, one by Helene Uri, a Norwegian linguist and writer that in an article in "Aftenposten" uses the headline "Is Sylfest Lomheim stupid?", which itself does not look like a pleasing title. Uri says that people like Lomheim needs to stop with doomsday scenarios about the Norwegian language because there is nothing that indicates language death during the next generations (Uri, 2011). She says that the Norwegian language will change and will continue to loan words from English and asks the question about how many loan words the Norwegian language can pick up from English before the language ceases to exist (Uri, 2011). Her answer to that question is that as long as Norwegians themselves recognizes their own language in oral and written interaction, the language is safe (Uri, 2011). In other words, the challenges do not lie in the language itself, but people's attitudes towards it. This goes hand in hand with what linguist Salikoko Mufwene says about language death: "Languages don't kill languages; speakers do" (Mufwene, 2000).

Uri is saying that English may take over as the language of communication and that certain sectors like academia and research are exposed. She is worried that the result is a society where mastering English is crucial, and that it will develop into the language of the elite (Uri, 2011). Another danger in Uri's view is that terminology will not develop in all fields of society, which means they have to use English because fields lack necessary Norwegian concepts. The solution is to secure the language users the option to use Norwegian in almost any situation possible, not just in certain selected coherences with low prestige (Uri, 2011). Her conclusion is that Sylfest Lomheim is not stupid, but his views are too harsh.

## **7.2. The academia domain's threat to the Norwegian language.**

The academia domain is pointed out by Lomheim to demonstrate how English is threatening the Norwegian language. Back in 1988 it was a rare cause to teach in English at university level, but today, English is seen as a lucrative language to teach in even though 95 percent of all Norwegians apply for jobs in the home country (Lomheim, 2008). As mentioned in Chapter 4, 7 out of 10 research papers are being published in English. Lomheim adds that 9 percent of master's thesis was written in English in year 1986, while 33 percent in 2006 (Lomheim, 2008). As mentioned at the end of chapter 4: in what degree does linguistic imperialism in academia affect the Norwegian language in general? Gert Kristoffersen, professor in Nordic linguistics science is speaking about the effect the increasing use of English in the academia domain has on the Norwegian language. He says that the academia domain is under pressure in that universities believe that the students will do better in life with English as the language of teaching, and if it is required to write in English, the living Norwegian terminology connected to discipline could be wiped out (Kristoffersen, 2011). The fact is though as Lomheim mentioned that 95 percent of all Norwegian students search for jobs in the home country, so it looks unrealistic at this point that English is pressuring the Norwegian language today in general when around all citizens speak Norwegian.

Fløgstad & Vaa do not see the continuous increase of English in academia as a threat, pointing to the fact that research is meant for an international audience where English has become close to a lingua franca (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 138). They exemplify by saying that even though people write research papers in English, she would never write her book in any other language than Norwegian because that is the people she want to reach out to. The fact that the academia domain is multilingual is in her view no threat for the Norwegian language (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 138).



### **7.3. The business domain's threat to the Norwegian language.**

Gjert Kristoffersen says that the business domain can be a threat to the Norwegian language. He points out that English is establishing itself as a working language in many businesses, especially in international corporations (Kristoffersen, 2011). Lomheim has also witnessed how English has spread into corporations and points to Telenor that in the summer of 2000 announced that they were switching from Norwegian to English as their working language (Lomheim, 2000). This is an indication according to Lomheim that English will replace Norwegian in the business domain in the future (Lomheim, 2000). Kristoffersen do not share exactly the same view as Lomheim, pointing out that the corporations in Norway that are switching to English do not require people from native English speaking countries (Kristoffersen, 2011); that is people born in English speaking countries like USA and the UK. The requirements are good English speaking skills to be able to communicate with employees from different countries. He points out that it is both impossible and desirable to block English from entering into Norwegian domains because people depend on communicating with the outside world in today's globalized world (Kristoffersen, 2011). The overall ambition according to Kristoffersen would be to run a linguistic policy in Norway that gives room for both Norwegian and English language in the domains where English is necessary (Kristoffersen, 2011).

Fløgstad & Vaa agrees with Kristoffersen in that globalization has caused necessity for Norwegian corporations and businesses to use more English to communicate with collaborating ones from all over the world (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 138). To speak Norwegian to a Chinese collaborating partner and him/her speaking Mandarin to a Norwegian one seems absurd according to (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 138). They defend English in businesses by pointing to the Norwegian shipping industry that has used English as their intern language for a very long time without having negative influence on the Norwegian language (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 138).

## 8. Conclusion

This bachelor thesis asked the question: Is linguistic imperialism threatening the Norwegian language? The paper has looked at what linguistic imperialism is and connected this to Academia and English loan words. The findings in Chapter 4 shows that English linguistic imperialism is actually threatening the academia domain, but there are disagreements to whether this causes a threat to the Norwegian language in general. Chapter 5 has shown that more and more loan words are entering the language, but there is no real threat at this moment because the Norwegian language is developing just like English in that it adds new words into its vocabulary. A research experiment also showed that youth only uses 1 percent of English words in their vocabulary which proves that the Norwegian language stands strong. The UNESCO atlas criteria have shown that the Norwegian language is safe in all aspects today.

The discussion part about the future of the Norwegian language has shared views from different Norwegian linguists and professors, with a special focus on Sylfest Lomheim because he is controversial and possibly the biggest name in Norway in terms of linguistics. The discussions point of departure has been Lomheim's statements about the future death of the Norwegian language in a relative short period of time, further looking at his views about the growing use of English in Norway and what could be done to prevent the death of the Norwegian language. Responses and opinions from Helene Uri, Gjert Kristoffersen and Fløgstad & Vaa made an enlightening debate about the Norwegian language today and in the future.

Is English linguistic imperialism threatening the Norwegian language? The answer to that question is no both today and in a relative short period time of 100 years or more. The reason for that is the overwhelming evidence of how strong the Norwegian language stands today. As mentioned, UNESCO ranks Norway to be 100 percent safe from endangerment in that it fulfills all the criteria. Norway is ranked 114<sup>th</sup> out of over 6000 languages when it comes population speaking the language, with around 5 million speakers (Fløgstad & Vaa, 2010, p. 135). Lomheim said himself that half of the world's languages would be wiped out in a period of 100 years, so for Norway to be amongst them looks illogical today. There are signals of danger though. The domain today that looks to be threatened today by English linguistic imperialism is the academia sector. That is quite natural though as Uri mentioned

because research for example is meant for an international audience. It should be noticed that the big foothold English has gotten in the academia sector displays how quickly one language is being replaced by a dominant one. Business is another domain that English looks to establish a foothold in, especially in large corporations as seen in examples with Hydro and Telenor who has switched to English as the working language.

Helene Uri asked the question whether Sylfest Lomheim is stupid or not, and concluded with a no. That is also the conclusion of this bachelor thesis. Lomheim has successfully protected his dear Norwegian language by exploiting the media in every way possible. By striking fear into people's minds with doomsday scenarios about the future of the Norwegian language, articles with reactions have reached large-scale Norwegian newspapers like "Aftenposten". Language is like democracy, it cannot exist without people's participation. By reaching out to the public, politicians and people may pay more attention to the fact that the Norwegian language requires adoration in order to survive in the future, just like any other language.

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