Teze disertační práce

Doctoral thesis summary

Proměny psané norštiny a jejich odraz v tisku na území Spojených států během 19. století a první poloviny 20. století

Changes of the written Norwegian and their reflection in the press published in the United States in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century

supervisor: PhDr. Petra Štajnerová, Ph.D.

2017 Mgr. Pavla Bartásková
Introduction

The thesis focuses on the written language of Norwegian immigrants in the United States in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. It presents its changes and development on the base of analyses of newspaper material published by Norwegian immigrant community in the United States. The framework of the research is language management and its theory. The focus is aimed at two language problems. The impact of the English language is examined through the extent of English borrowings in the material and their specifics and integration. The other view studies the reflection of the Norwegian spelling reform on the written standard of the Norwegian immigrant group in the United States.

Research on the immigrant languages has been a topic of interest of many scholars since the 1920s. Einar Haugen is the leading researcher that studied the situation of Norwegian in the United States and his works (e.g. 1953, 1956, 1966 and 1972) contributed significantly to the development of this linguistic field. However, a lot of the works concentrate on the spoken language of immigrants only. Contrary to it, this study is solely focused on the Norwegian written language.

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. The theoretical background of language management is presented in the first chapter. The second chapter deals with contact linguistics. The history and specifics of the Norwegian migration to the United States are given in the third chapter. The fourth chapter explains the role and significance of the immigrant press in the United States and introduces the leading Norwegian written journals in the United States. The analytical part begins in the fifth chapter by the overview of the research material and specification of research methods. The development of the Norwegian language both in the United States and in Norway and the attitudes to it are discussed in the sixth chapter. Chapters seven, eight and nine present the analyses of the primary newspaper material and their results in detail. The thesis concludes with a final summary in the tenth chapter.

Historical background of Norwegian migration

Norwegians were a part of the massive migration process from Europe to Northern America in the 19th and early 20th century. The first pioneers already came to the US in 1825. However, it took several decades until the Norwegian migration became of a massive character. The main waves of Norwegian immigrants are dated in the periods 1866–1873, 1880–1893 and the first decade of the 20th century. Newcomers from Norway tended to settle
down mainly in the Midwest of the United States (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin). They formed compact settlements and preserved typical features of their traditions and habits of their rural life in Norway. Most of the Norwegians in the US worked as farmers.

The Norwegian community in the US underwent a social development that was also reflected in its activities. Different social, religious and economic organisations were established and various cultural events were held to strengthen the feeling of the national identity. Some of the activities were also aimed at preservation of the mother language as a symbol of the cultural heritage in the new country. The “golden age” of the Norwegian community on the North American continent dates between 1895 and 1925 and is known as Norwegian America.

The launch of the immigration restrictions in the United States caused a decrease in the number of immigrants from Norway, too. The restrictions appeared in the form of the immigrant quota-system. Even though the migration process from Norway has not finished yet, it has never reached the extent as during the period of the massive waves in the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century again.¹

Language perspective

The mother language was a part of the heritage that Norwegian immigrants brought with them to their new homeland. At the beginning stage of the Norwegian migration to the United States, the Norwegian written standard did not exist as a consequence of the historical development of the country. Danish was used as the written language in Norway in that time instead. Norwegians learnt it at school and used it in official documents and religious books. Therefore the Danish written standard maintained a strong position within the Norwegian immigrant community in the United States even in the periods when a Norwegian standard was already codified. The immigrants understood the Danish standard as a part of their culture and ethnic identity that connected them with their home country. For oral communication, people spoke their local dialects.

The language of the Norwegian immigrants was exposed to the English language that had the position of the dominant and prestigious language in this contact situation on the

North American continent. The interaction between Norwegians and American citizens and/or other immigrant communities was unavoidable and led to the language contact, too. This means that Norwegian as a minority and recipient language experienced influence of English as a donor language. The most striking evidence of this influence in the written language is manifested in lexical transfer, i.e. English loanwords transferred into the Norwegian vocabulary.

The written standard of Norwegians on the European continent underwent fundamental changes during the 19th and 20th century, too. As a result of different approaches to the problem of the written language in Norway, two written standards (nowadays known as Bokmål and Nynorsk) were codified. Both of them have been modified by several reforms. Generally, Nynorsk was used in a very limited extent by Norwegian immigrants in the US. Therefore, only the changes and development of Bokmål are relevant for this thesis. Reforms of Bokmål were launched in 1907, 1917, 1938, 1959, 1981 and 2005. The new spelling morphological changes were adopted in the newspapers in Norway sooner or later into their own language policy. However, the situation was different among the editorial boards of the Norwegian newspapers in the United States. Most of the changes of the spelling from the 1907-reform were ignored for a long time. Several reasons led to their rejection of the spelling and morphological changes. The role of the written standard as a national symbol played an important part. The implementation of the reforms would be seen as an unwelcome encroachment into the language that the immigrants knew from their home country. The adoption of the changes codified in the reforms was also limited by the context and conditions in the society in Norway and the US that differed from each other. While Norway experienced a wave of patriotism after it had finally gained independence at the beginning of the 20th century which also was reflected in desire to distinguish the written language from the Danish standard, American Norwegians tried to keep their mother language in the unchanged form. There were also economic aspects leading to the conservative approach of the editors. As long

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as their newspapers were published in the form that ignored most of the points of the reforms, they also attracted subscribers from the Danish immigrant community.

**Immigrant press in the United States**

The immigrant press played a special role in the immigrant communities in the United States. It was an important source of information both from the home country and from America. Most of the newcomers did not speak English when they came to the North American continent and the newspaper contributions that were provided in their mother language were essential and very helpful for them. But the spectrum of functions of the immigrant press was much broader. It facilitated the process of immigrants’ adaptation to the new society and environment, enlightened readers and offered them advice for their everyday life. Editors tried to introduce the new American society to their compatriots through the published newspaper articles. On the other hand, the press strengthened the awareness of the cultural heritage among the immigrants, too. Immigrants’ newspapers served as a mediator of social connections for the subscribers. They could express their opinions, ask for help or look for friends and relatives through the section devoted to their letters.

The content of the immigrant newspapers covered various fields and all aspects of the immigrant’s life in the United States, from interior American news to reports from the local communities to foreign affairs from Europe and other parts of the world to advice for farming and housekeeping. Advertisements for services and goods of the local entrepreneurs were also presented.

The newspapers in the United States were not meant for the highest intellectual class of the society. Subscribers came from a wide range of social classes. Although Norwegian immigrants were not used to subscribe newspapers in their home country in the early beginnings, it became a part of their life in the United States. Therefore the increase in the publishing activities of immigrants can be considered as a sign of the gradual integration process of Norwegians into the American society and its traditions.

As lists of the newspapers show, a large amount of Norwegian written journals was started during the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. Lovoll specifies that the preserved lists mention over four hundred Norwegian newspapers

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established in the United States. But many editors did not succeed in their publishing activities and their papers were ceased in a short time. However, several newspapers turned into a flourishing business and were subscribed for decades.

The collection of the Norwegian newspapers published in the United States is available both in Norway and in the United States. The Norwegian Library in Oslo has a collection devoted to the topic of the Norwegian emigration to the North American continent (called The Norwegian-American Collection at the National Library in Norway). In the US, the material is concentrated mainly at universities and in libraries of historical societies located in the Midwestern states (e.g. St. Olaf College Library in Northfield, Luther College Library in Decorah, Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, South Dakota State Archives in Pierre, University of North Dakota – Chester Fritz Library in Grand Forks).

**Empirical part of the research**

The particular language problems of the written form of Norwegian used in the immigrant press in the United States are approached through language management and its theory in this research. This tool enables to monitor both simple and organized management of the language. It interconnects the linguistic problems with the problems from the socio-economical and socio-cultural field. In order to reconstruct language management strategies that were preferred in the newspapers of The Big Three, the primary material, i.e. the original issues of the newspapers, as well as recorded attitudes and statements of the individual editors, if available, are collected and examined.

The primary material for the research consists of articles from Norwegian newspapers published in the United States. Three leading newspapers were chosen for the purpose of the research: Decorah-Posten (1874–1972; Decorah, Iowa), Skandinaven (1866–1941; Chicago, Illinois) and Minneapolis Tidende (1887–1935; Minneapolis, Minnesota). They are commonly known as The Big Three and reached thanks to their large spread and popularity an unofficial status of the national press of the Norwegian immigrant community in the United States throughout their existence. From the whole volume of their publishing, four periods were defined and selected for the research. They cover all significant historical, linguistic and social turns that could have had any effect on the changes of the language. For

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the analyses, the stages were specified as follows: 1887–1899, 1900–1910, 1930–1945, and 1955–1972. The first January issue and the first July issue of each of the papers were included into the research material. The analyses of studied features are presented separately for each of these newspapers in the above mentioned stages. Every section finishes with a summarizing conclusion comparing the approach of the editors of The Big Three. If the extent of the primary material was limited for the given feature, the results are presented for the whole period and/or for all the three papers together.

The goal of the research is to map a wide range of vocabulary fields. Therefore no particular topics of the articles were preferred for the analyses. The primary material was compiled as a mix of texts from all content categories (designated for the needs of the research as: Interior news; Foreign affairs; News from Scandinavia; Farm, house, kitchen; Amusement and culture; Readers’ input; Advertisements).

The analyses aim to provide answer for the research questions that were defined as follows:

How was the written Norwegian language in the newspapers of Norwegian immigrants in the United States affected by English?

How did the written Norwegian language as used in the Norwegian-American press reflect the spelling reforms adopted in Norway?

The first part of the research studies the influence of English on the Norwegian language. The broad spectrum of topics of the newspaper contributions allows mapping of the impact of English in various vocabulary fields. A detailed insight shows that some sections of the lexicon were more resistant to English borrowings than others. The vocabulary fields that were more exposed to a contact with local inhabitants, other immigrant groups and the new environment absorbed more loanwords than fields that were closely connected with the family life, personal emotions of the individual and internal matters of the community.

The transfer of English words into Norwegian was motivated mainly by the need to find appellations for objects and concepts that were unknown to immigrants in the country of their origin. That is why the majority of the borrowings are substantives. Based on the

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6 Even though this stage stretches into the second half of the 20th century it was included as a part of the analyses. It can be seen as an outline of the final development of the Norwegian written standard in the US. The outcomes can be used for a comparison with outcomes from the previous stages.

7 Examples of loanwords from other open word classes appeared in the material, too. A small number of verbs and a few adjectives were identified in the newspapers. But compared with the volume of nouns they played a very minor part.
research, following vocabulary fields were defined as those which seem to experience the strongest increase in loanwords from English: technical novelties and equipment (e.g. Stoves, Tractor, “trailere”); administration (County, Mayor, Sheriff); farming (Acre, Prairien, Ranch); food (canned beef, Muffin, Pudding); American lifestyle (Boardinghouse, Department Stores, Saloon). These categories are not the only ones that received English borrowings but the impact of English in them is more obvious in others. When comparing the volume of English borrowings in the early issues and the volume in the issues from the 20th century, there is no considerable difference. The amount of transferred words seems to be relatively constant without any extreme increase or decrease in the number of loanwords from English during the particular stages in the newspapers.

After being transferred, English loanwords underwent morphological and orthographic development in accordance with the Norwegian spelling and grammar system, too. However, the extent of the changes was rather limited and varied a lot from editor to editor and sometimes even from issue to issue within one newspaper. The research shows that the morphological adaptations of English words were progressing more quickly than the orthographic changes. The process of the gradual incorporation of English borrowings can be followed for instance on the use of plural forms. Most of English nouns that were transferred into Norwegian appeared with their English plural endings at first (Counties, Elevators, Pecans, Records). Throughout the existence of the newspapers, the use of the Norwegian/Danish plural endings increased (Jobber, Puddinger, Turister, Kringkastingerne, Farmerne, Settlerne). There is only a very limited number of orthographically integrated loanwords in the material (boksing/boxing, “bløffet”/bluffed, Budsjett/budget, intervju/to interview, lynsje/to lynch)10. The majority of the transferred words maintained their original spelling (Check, Pamphlet, Picnic, Racket, score, Trainingskole).

Especially in the early stages of the publishing, there was a tendency to distinguish English transferred elements from the indigenous Norwegian words visually in the articles. They used quotation marks (‘Bargains’, “Basement”, “Best Seller”, “bløffe”, “steamer”, “Tramps”) and italic type (boiler, Common School, debating society, gluten meal, outlaw, payments) or a combination of both of them (“small grain”, “surprise”) for this purpose. But

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8 All the examples are typed in the same way as they were used in the newspapers, i.e. in italics, quotation marks, with capital initial letters and including inflection (plural forms, determiners, preterite forms).
9 In the period prior to the reform of 1907, English loanwords adopted the Danish inflection. This trend continued in the US even after the fundamental changes of the spelling and grammar codified in the reforms launched during the 20th century. But as the focus of this section lies on the transition from the English morphological and orthographic system to the language system of the immigrants, this fact does not have any relevance for the analyses of this feature.
10 The original English spelling of the given word is added after the slash.
the visual differentiation seems to have no consistent rules, neither for the three newspapers nor for the individual editors. Instances of loanwords that appear in varying visual forms can be found when the newspapers are compared with each other as well as within issues of one of them.

The second part of the research deals with the internal changes of the Norwegian written standard. It was modified several times during the 19th and 20th century by reforms that introduced both spelling and grammar novelties. As already stated above, the Norwegian press in the United States did not switch to the new spelling automatically. It took a long time until some of the points of the reforms were included into the language policy of the newspapers. The research focuses only on the reflections of the changes launched in the reform of 1907 as the adaptations introduced in the other reforms were not taken into consideration by the editorial boards in their language management.

The goal of the reform launched in 1907 was to distinguish the Norwegian written standard from the Danish written standard. One of the main points was the change of Danish voiced consonants b/d/g into Norwegian unvoiced consonants p/t/lk. However, in the most cases the Danish spelling was preferred in the editorial boards of The Big Three (e.g.: angreb, drabet, hvede, landskabet, ligesom, lufedisk). The Norwegian unvoiced consonants appeared to a limited extent in Minneapolis Tidende and Decorah-Posten the third and fourth monitored periods (1930–1945 and 1955–1972): e.g. bruker, mesterskap, skyte.

The reform of 1907 also substituted Danish plural and preterite forms with Norwegian forms. The results from the research show that the Norwegian preterite forms were adopted in the immigrant newspaper earlier and in higher volume than the Norwegian plural forms. While the preterite forms were in majority in the material from the mid-1930s on, the Norwegian plural forms outnumbered the Danish forms only in the issues of Decorah-Posten published after the mid 1960s. Therefore in the material, a mix of both adapted and unadapted spelling can be found, e.g.: billede, Døre, Julesange, Staterne, Alperne, Svenskerne; mistede, naaede, feirede, mislykkedes, dannede, indrømmede; benyttet, handlet, husket, krævet, landet, virket, barn, erfaringsene, Farmproduktene, knivene, nordmenn, slegtninger.

The process of Norwegianization manifested in several other features that are also reflected in the material. The reform introduced a short form of some words instead the Danish long form (mor x moder, bli x blive, gi x give). The application of double consonants was generally ignored in the contributions from The Big Three and the Danish spelling with a single consonant was preferred (Gut x gutt, opleve x oppleve, Nat x natt). The spelling of diphthongs was modified by the reform, too. It substituted the Danish ej, aj, oj, øj with the
Norwegian *ei, ai, oi, øi*. The analyses reveal that the use of the Norwegian versions was broadly spread in all the examined periods.

Visually, the newspaper contributions also underwent changes. The newspapers were printed in the Gothic script throughout the most of its existence. The Latin script appeared in Skandinaven and Minneapolis Tidende in the issues from the 1930s while Decorah-Posten ceased to use the Gothic script as late as in 1952. Nouns were capitalized in the Norwegian American press much longer than in Norway. Capitalization of substantives remained a part of the editorial policy in Skandinaven during its whole existence. In Minneapolis Tidende, it was stopped shortly before the paper merged with Skandinaven and Decorah-Posten introduced small initial letters of nouns in 1961. Both the font and the capitalization of nouns contributed to the conservative visual character of the journals.

**Conclusion**

The topic of the study was the development of the Norwegian written standard in the newspapers published by the immigrant community in the United States. The theoretical framework of the research was language management and its theory. The research was based on the primary material from the newspapers. This material comprised the major Norwegian-American newspapers known as The Big Three. It involved a wide variety of texts, both from the perspective of their origin, style and content. The aim of the study was to present language management of two comprehensive linguistic problems in the Norwegian-American press: the impact of English as the dominant language in this specific contact situation and the reflection of the Norwegian language reforms. In order to give a general overview of the topic the historical background of the Norwegian migration and the specifics of the immigrant press were presented. In the empirical part the analyses of the primary material were commented. The analyses were supplemented by a part which showed the discussions concerning the language problems and their language management to present the wide range of the opinions and attitudes of the individual performers of language management, both simple and organized. The changes of the written standard were discussed in the immigrant community by various actors of the language management process. The diversity of the attitudes to the language changes also reflected diverse interests of the language managers. These factors played a significant part in language management and policy of the newspapers.

Even though there were no general lines in language management and policy of the newspapers of The Big Three, some common features may be identified. These emerged as a consequence of sociocultural setting of the management processes. The selected newspapers
of The Big Three were regarded as the well-established immigrant newspapers with a long tradition of publishing in the United States. They were known for their rather invariable style, content and form. There were several reasons that led to this constancy. The written language was seen as a part of the cultural heritage that was brought by the Norwegians immigrants. The immigrant community wanted to build identity in the new home country and the language was an important part of it. It was natural to choose the written standard that the immigrant had acquired before they left for the United States. The economic motivation was another factor for preserving the tradition form of the newspapers.

The graphic style of the newspapers did not undergo any considerable changes during their existence. Features such as use of the Gothic font and capitalisation of initial letters of nouns referred to the newspaper form from the time of their beginnings even in the more recent periods. The analyses of the changes in the morphology and orthography in The Big Three showed some general trends in the treatment of linguistic problems. Compared with the situation in Norway, the innovations codified in the reform of 1907 were implemented later into the language policy of the immigrant newspapers in the US. The incorporation/ignorance of the main features of the spelling reform as well as the treatment of English borrowings was followed in several periods during the existence of The Big Three in the study. The analyses revealed that the progress did not proceed evenly in the individual newspapers and even in the individual issues. According to the data, the implementation of the Norwegian preterite forms was the easiest of the innovations from the reform in all the newspapers of The Big Three. On the other hand, the Norwegian plural forms were adopted only in limited volume.

The written language of the immigrants was also exposed to influence of English. It was reflected in the form of English loanwords in the Norwegian language. The volume was constant during the existence of the monitored newspapers. The identified borrowings were evaluated from the perspective of their origin, incorporation into the text and morphological and orthographical integration. There were no general guidelines that were obligatory for the use of English loanwords in the newspapers. Therefore a variety of forms and implementation of them was found in the texts. These showed the different stages of the integration process of the borrowings into the Norwegian lexicon.

The study is one of the first in the field of the Norwegian written language and its language management in the immigrant community in the United States. It offers an insight into the development of the written standard and presents the main linguistic problems that had to be considered in the Norwegian immigrant newspapers. The results of the analyses also open several questions that can become subjects of follow-up research work. The further
focus can be aimed on the specific types of the newspaper contribution. A thorough comparison of language management and policy in the immigrant newspapers with the Norwegian newspapers in the home country is another topic that could reveal interesting facts.
Selected references


PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCES

2014 Letní škola lingvistiky, Dačice
poster section: presentation of the PhD project *Proměny psané norštiny a jejich odraz v tisku na území Spojených států během 19. století a první poloviny 20. století*

2015 Lingvistika Praha, Charles University, Prague
Sociolinguistics and Sociology of language section: talk on *Proměny psané norštiny a jejich odraz v tisku na území Spojených států během 19. století a první poloviny 20. Století*

2016 Workshop on Immigrant Languages in Americas, University of Georgia, Athens, US
talk on *Changes of the written Norwegian and their reflection in the press published in the United States in the 19th and 20th century*
GRANTS AND PROJECTS

EEA and Norway Grants – research stay in Norway (Universitet i Oslo); March 2015

Transnational and national migration: experiences from the Czech Republic and Norway – member of the team (researcher); 2015–2016

Mobility grant for Norwegian Language and Literature – research stay in Norway (Universitet i Oslo); October 2016