



# Anglicisms in the Nordic Languages: Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones?

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## *Abstract*

Many young Danes, Swedes and Norwegians prefer to communicate in English rather than in their native tongue (Gooskens 2006; Bacquin and Zola Christensen 2013), and a major part of the new words in the Nordic languages are based on English (Gottlieb 2020). Will English prevail as a lingua franca in the Nordic region? With that question in mind, this study analyses some recent English-induced developments in the Scandinavian languages. While Anglicism dictionaries present the three languages as moving in different directions, the present study – by exploiting large contemporary text corpora – shows cross-linguistic convergence, suggesting better chances for mutual understanding among Scandinavians.

*Keywords:* Anglicisms, Linguistic Convergence, Neighbouring-language Comprehension, Scandinavian Languages

“To a Dane Swedish is a difficult language pronounced in Norwegian, while to a Swede Danish is Norwegian pronounced in a difficult way” (Haugen 1966, 289)

## *1. Mutual Intelligibility in the Nordic Countries*

Before discussing the influence of English on the Nordic languages, we will look at the emerging role of English as an inter-Nordic lingua franca vis-à-vis the traditional Scandinavian preference for *nabosprogsforståelse* (neighbouring-language comprehension), favouring own-language exchanges in (at least) Scandinavia. This practice, an example of what has been termed “semicommunication” (Haugen 1966), is still found in private as well as some business and academic settings. It means that in Scandinavian encounters, speakers of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish may all speak their own language, albeit in a slightly “pan-Scandinavian” fashion. A typical example of such communicative compromises is the avoidance among Danes

to use their numerals for numbers above twenty. So when speaking to other Scandinavians, Danes often replace numerals like 72, in Danish *to og halvfjerds* (two and seventy) – based on the Germanic “ones before tens” principle, combined with the French “twenties rather than tens” principle, as in *soixante-douze* (sixty and twelve) – with the mock-Scandinavian *syvtito* (seventy-two).

As this example may imply, Danish is often seen as the “problem child” (Gooskens 2006) of inter-Scandinavian communication, especially when spoken, as changes in Danish pronunciation have developed faster than changes in spoken Norwegian and Swedish (see also Schüppert in this issue). As pointed out by Einar Haugen, “Norwegian pronunciation agrees with Danish spelling better than does Danish pronunciation” (1966, 288). In written texts, inter-Scandinavian similarities are more obvious, as developments in Danish orthography have not caught up with the fast-paced changes in spoken Danish.

Accordingly, in speech mutual intelligibility is challenged, as Danish is now so far removed from the common Nordic point of departure that more than 90% of young Swedes find it difficult to understand spoken Danish, and 42% switch to English (Bacquin and Zola Christensen 2013, 13).

### 1.1 *The Watershed between Language and Dialect*

When focusing on the (lack of) mutual intelligibility between individuals speaking different languages, the notion of *language* – as opposed to *dialect* – needs clarification. As often found when analysing issues related to human culture, the terminology regarding language vis-à-vis dialect is basically of a political nature. The following example will show this: China, with its 1.4 billion inhabitants, is claimed by the authorities to have only one language understood by all (Mandarin Chinese aka *Putonghua*) plus several dialects, including Cantonese. At the same time, Scandinavia, with merely 22 million people – and since 1905 consisting of three independent kingdoms – is said to be the home of three languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish) plus their many dialects. How can that be?

The reason is that the self-perception of a Chinese citizen vs. a Scandinavian differs regarding linguistic identity. Often subconsciously, the “one nation, one language” conception thrives in minor as well as major countries, and this reveals differing definitions of “language” and “dialect”.

To people in multi-nation Europe, including trained linguists, a language is “foreign” when you have to learn it to understand its speakers. As a monolingual European, you understand someone only if that person speaks your own language – possibly in another dialect. However, as a monolingual Chinese, you may not understand what a fellow Chinese says, but you still consider that person a speaker of Chinese – in fact, a *reader* of Chinese. The point is that in China, the non-alphabetic script, which is (almost) the same across what Europeans will consider different languages, makes the various “dialects” mutually comprehensible when *written*. In Europe (and elsewhere), for a language variant to qualify as a dialect, mutual comprehension should be possible in *oral* communication.

However, even by European standards, the distinction between dialect and language is not easily drawn. As pointed out already in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the “popular impression that dialects are mutually intelligible, while languages are not” (Haugen 1966, 280) does not match sociolinguistic realities: “Experience with actual dialects and languages, as these are commonly defined by linguists, contradicts this idea” (*ibidem*). In defining “language”, social and political factors sometimes overrule strictly linguistic criteria.

1.2 Contact Scenarios and Intelligibility among Speakers of the Nordic Languages

If we include indirect contact scenarios, four basic types of language contact offer themselves, as shown in Table 1:

Type of scenario	Direct contact	Indirect contact
<i>Symmetrical</i>	(1) Danish-Swedish	(3) English-French (before the UK joined the EU in 1972)
<i>Non-symmetrical</i>	(2) Danish-Faroese	(4) English-Danish (due to Anglo-American influence)

Tab. 1 – A concise typology of language contact scenarios

Type 1 may be seen as an ideal type of contact, in the shape of mutual exchange, between speakers of two (almost) equally powerful languages. However, this form of “balanced” direct contact scenario is not the typical one in today’s world: not only are indirect contact scenarios (types 3 and 4) more frequent than type 1 scenarios; non-symmetrical scenarios (types 2 and 4) – often with English as the dominant language – are also more common.

Ever since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English has been the prime driver of neologisms in the Nordic countries, while Danish has played a similar, dominant role in the development of Greenlandic and Faroese – languages with no proven influence on Danish.

As a reaction to unwanted foreign influence, then mostly from German, the last centuries have seen several waves of pro-Nordic cultural and linguistic movements, the first of which manifesting itself in events like the “nordiske retskrivningsmøde” (Nordic orthography conference) in Stockholm in 1869. The vision behind that conference was to maintain and expand the bond between the three Scandinavian languages, ideally seen as dialects, “saa at ethvert individ af en af de tre Skandinaviske nationer i sit modersmaal kan tale med og forstaaes af ethvert individ af de to andre, og at sprogforskjelligheden blot er en dialektforskjel, der ikke hindrer den fuldkomne forstaaelse” (Norwegian language guardian Ole Jacob Broch in 1864, quoted in Hansen 2008, 61).<sup>1</sup>

As illustrated here, the linguistic default for inter-Scandinavian communication was – and to a certain extent, still is – to use one’s mother tongue in exchanges with fellow Scandinavians. In other words, Danes, Norwegians and Swedes were supposed to understand each other (a symmetrical scenario) while speaking their own language. This scenario implied that speakers of other languages of the Nordic region (i.e. Finnish, Sami, Icelandic and Faroese) were expected to understand and speak at least one of the three Scandinavian languages, without their own languages being understood by Scandinavians (a non-symmetrical scenario). However, although to a large extent Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are connected via common *nyordsdanning* (coining of new words) (Våge *et al.* 2017, 107), inter-Scandinavian language comprehension has been declining for decades. A report from 2005 (see Delsing and Åkesson 2005) found that young Danes, Swedes and Norwegians were less able to understand each other’s languages than was the case a generation earlier, as found in a 1972 survey (Maurud 1976; see also the comparison in Lund 2011). This development tallies well with the fact that pan-Nordic language policies are no longer *en vogue*: “I vore dage er tanken om en aktiv nordisk sprogpolitik stort set opgivet” (Heidemann *et al.* 2004, 150).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trans.: So that each individual of one of the three Scandinavian nations in his mother tongue can speak to and be understood by every individual of the two others, and that the linguistic difference is merely a dialectal difference that does not impede perfect comprehension. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Trans.: These days, the idea of an active Nordic language policy is by and large abandoned.

The following section presents the various intelligibility scenarios found between (young) speakers of the major heritage languages of the Nordic countries, including Greenland. Using the above-mentioned criterion of oral comprehension as a watershed between language and dialect, it should be pointed out that among the altogether nine languages presented in Table 2, Sami is an umbrella term rather than a specific language; many of the so-called Sami dialects are in fact languages in their own right. Thus, a recent work on Sami history operates with nine Sami languages (*språk*) (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 20) – of which North Sami (aka Sami) is spoken by some 90% of all Sami speakers.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, what is listed as Greenlandic (*Kalaallisut*), an official language in Greenland, is in reality West Greenlandic, a language partly incomprehensible to speakers of the lesser-spoken East Greenlandic. Finally, “Norwegian” covers the two mutually comprehensible written variants Bokmål and Nynorsk, while Finland-Swedish is a language-political entity rather than a *bona fide* language separate from Swedish spoken in Sweden.

Table 2 is an overview of the more or less reciprocal intelligibility scenarios among young speakers of the heritage languages of the Nordic countries – including Finland, Iceland and all parts of the Danish *Rigsfællesskab* (Commonwealth) consisting of Denmark, The Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Speakers of:										
Languages understood:	Danish	Norwegian	Swedish	Finland-Swedish	Faroese	Icelandic	Finnish	Sami	Greenlandic	Total
Danish		<b>6.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	2	<b>6.6</b>	37.3
Norwegian	<b>4.2</b>		<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.6</b>	7	<b>3.7</b>	36.7
Swedish	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>		10	<b>5.8</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	7	<b>2.2</b>	41.2
Finland-Swedish	4	6	10		6	5	6	7	3	47
Faroese	1	2	0	0		7	0	0	0	10
Icelandic	0	1	0	0	6		0	0	0	7
Finnish	0	0	0	9	0	0		5	0	14
Sami	0	0	0	0	0	0	2		0	2
Greenlandic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Total	12.7	21.3	18.8	27.4	33.1	24.1	14.3	28	15.5	—
English	7	7	7	7	7	8	6	5	5	58

Tab. 2 – A tentative survey of oral mutual intelligibility in the Nordic countries

For lack of more recent data, the figures in Table 2 are partly based on Delsing and Åkesson (2005; scores in boldface) and partly my own approximations (inspired by Gooskens 2006; Brink 2018) of Nordic native speakers’ average intelligibility of native speakers of the other Nordic national (in the case of Sami: regional) languages, and of English.<sup>4</sup> Zero ratings indicate no intelligibility, while scenarios with perfect comprehension of language A by speakers of language B would score 10 points.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jussi Ylikoski, Professor of Finno-Ugric Linguistics (personal communication, June 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, no studies on Sami speakers’ comprehension of other Sami languages or Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish seem to exist (Professor Jussi Ylikoski, personal communication, May 2025).

High (one-way) intelligibility (scores from 5 to 10) is highlighted in green, limited intelligibility (from 2 to 4.9) is yellow, low intelligibility (1.0 to 1.9) is orange, and red indicates zero intelligibility. As all figures reflect unidirectional (oral) comprehension, full mutual comprehension is found only between high, matching figures on both sides of the “white” diagonal – a situation not attested at all. The closest thing to such mutual comprehension is communication between speakers of Swedish and Norwegian – yielding rather modest scores of 5.0 for Swedes’ comprehension of Norwegian against 6.2 in the opposite direction.

As seen in Table 2, many Nordic contact situations are non-symmetrical, involving speakers of a dominant and speakers of a dominated language. For instance, Faroese speakers understand spoken Danish (which they learn in school) at 8.3, against a Danish estimated score of 1. Similarly, the average Sami person listening to Swedish may score around 7 points, while the typical Swede will score no points at all when listening to Sami.

Interestingly, a non-Scandinavian speech community seems to obtain the best results overall: the 70,000 speakers of Faroese, the smallest national Nordic language, score a comprehension total of 33.1 points, with high (green) comprehension of five languages. Danes turn out as losers in this inter-Nordic contest: not a single Nordic language is understood well by (young) Danes; with a score of 4.2, even the closely related Norwegian achieves only limited intelligibility.

Moving from the speaker to the language perspective, the figures show that English prevails as the best-suited lingua franca in the Nordic countries. Not only will Finnish speakers benefit from the choice of English; it seems that speakers of most of the languages involved here are well served by English, too – especially as this language is now mastered by all Nordic peoples (European Union 2024).

Thus, if the estimated English comprehension scores of 5 and above prove to be empirically valid, today almost everybody in the North Atlantic sphere will understand (most of) what is said when communicating in English. And in Scandinavia, in their daily lives, Swedes and Norwegians are typically more familiar with English than with Danish, a language not taught in schools in their countries (Gooskens 2006, 238). All this leads to English playing an increasingly important role in inter-Nordic communication, even between speakers of the three Scandinavian languages (Bacquin and Zola Christensen 2013). As Danes, Norwegians and Swedes are all expected to score 7 in English comprehension, embarrassing non-symmetrical scenarios (typically, whenever Danish is involved) are avoided when everybody speaks their second-best language, English. Ironically, the limited mutual intelligibility between Swedish and Danish speakers may in fact justify the “political” labelling of Danish and Swedish as different languages and not dialects of the same language.

Summing up, English seems to have gained an important foothold in inter-Nordic communication. But where does this penchant for English leave the national languages? This question will be dealt with in the following sections.

### *1.3 Sprogforbistring, Nabosprog, Fremmedsprog: Key Notions in Inter-Scandinavian Communication*

In the 1930s, after centuries of strong Low and High German influence on Danish (Winge 2000), the German language – rather than English – was still seen as a threat to the well-being of Danish and to inter-Scandinavian intelligibility. In a new pan-Scandinavian wave, purist-minded linguists and language custodians noticed signs of diminishing mutual understanding between speakers of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, and the Danish self-appointed language guardian Sven Clausen (1938) coined the term *sprogforbistring* (literally “language confusion”) for this phenomenon. Yet, German was still a useful *lingua franca*. As late as c. 1950, a Norwegian civil

servant, unable to understand spoken Danish, was quoted for saying: “When I am in Copenhagen, I ask the waiters to speak German” (Haugen 1966, 296).

Since the 1950s, with English now the dominant language in the Nordic region, *sprogforbistring* has continued to impede mutual understanding between speakers of languages that abroad might be classified as merely dialects (see Holst Pape 2013).

In inter-Nordic discussions, the opposite of *sprogforbistring* has long been the much-praised concept of *nabosprogsforståelse*. Ideally, at least Danes, Norwegians and Swedes are expected to understand each other’s languages – although, based on the European definitions sketched out in Section 1.1, only dialects, not *bona fide* languages, should be mutually intelligible. This paradox is often ignored by Scandinavian linguists, who take it for granted that Danes, Swedes and Norwegians speak three different languages while at the same time expected – without any formal training – to understand each other. Yet, as we saw in the previous section, realities seem far from the ideal of mutual inter-Scandinavian intelligibility, while English offers itself as a quick fix.

Since the Second World War, with the ever-growing English influence on all Nordic languages, no studies have shown any increase in inter-Scandinavian mutual understanding. On the contrary, hardly any Scandinavians listen to radio shows in the neighbouring languages anymore – as opposed to the 41% of Danish and 52% of Norwegian respondents who did just that around 1950 (Haugen 1966, 287). Similarly, Scandinavian TV programmes and films are always subtitled when shown in the neighbouring countries, and literature – even very popular Danish, Norwegian and Swedish crime fiction – is always read in translation. Today the only situation in which Scandinavians are forced to understand each other is physical or online encounters, when English is often resorted to.

However, although still fewer Scandinavians watch TV shows produced in neighbouring countries (Bacquin and Zola Christensen 2013, 7-8), such productions occasionally lead to increased interest in *nabosprog*. An example of this was the immensely popular Norwegian youth series *Skam*, watched (with Norwegian subtitles) by many Danish teenagers on the Norwegian TV channel NRK in 2016 and on Danish TV (with Danish subtitles) in 2017 (Rathje 2018). A survey found that no less than 96% of the Danish teenagers who watched the show with Norwegian subtitles (and 70% of those who watched it with Danish subtitles) said that they understood Norwegian better after watching the series (Lassen 2018, 12).

Yet, to many Swedes and Danes, the notion of *nabosprog* is losing its meaning:

Når vi om hundrede år kigger tilbage til den tid, vi befinder os i nu, er det altså muligt, at vi vil se tilbage på en periode, fra slutningen af det tyvende århundrede til et stykke ind i det enogtyvende, hvor dansk og svensk gik *fra at være nabosprog til at blive fremmedsprog*. (Bacquin and Zola Christensen 2013, 2; my italics)<sup>5</sup>

The authors of this study add: “De unge i begge lande anser, at det er let til meget let at forstå mundtlig engelsk. De er altså af den opfattelse, at de begriber engelsk betydeligt bedre end deres geografiske nabosprog” (12).<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to avoid total domain loss of the heritage languages in such communicative scenarios and “surrender” to English as a salvaging lingua franca, maybe if Scandinavians could all speak a mix of their national language and English, mutual understanding would increase,

<sup>5</sup> Trans.: When in one hundred years we look back at the present time, we may view a period, from the late 20<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when Danish and Swedish *shifted from being neighbouring into being foreign languages*.

<sup>6</sup> Trans.: Our young respondents in both countries find it easy or very easy to understand spoken English. They believe they are much better at understanding English than the geographical neighbouring language.

to the benefit of all? This scenario may sound unrealistic, even ridiculous (Ohlsson 1977, 25), but as the following sections will illustrate, English loanwords already introduced in the three Scandinavian languages may assist in maintaining a minimum of mutual intelligibility. The very idea that English import words might help Scandinavians understand each other was not at all considered earlier: “Any convergence in the languages [...] can [...] only come about [...] through political union or, failing that, through intense social contact [...]” (Haugen 1966, 295).

No wonder that as part of the ongoing language-political discussion on the role of English in the Nordic region, Danish language professor Jørn Lund has stated: “Lettest går fremmedordene igennem; som regel låner de skandinaviske sprog de samme fremmedord” (Lund 2000, 104).<sup>7</sup> This was also pointed out by Einar Haugen, who mentions “common influences from outside the area as factors that may keep intra-Scandinavian intelligibility on track” (Haugen 2009, 129).

Likewise, in reply to the popular lamentation of the *sprogforbistring* found when “computer” was baptised *datamat* in Danish, *datamaskin* in Norwegian and *dator* in Swedish, a senior researcher at the Danish Language Council wrote: “en seriøs vurdering må jo også medtage alle de nye ord der vitterlig er fælles” (Riber Petersen 1977, 54).<sup>8</sup> And even here, English has had an effect: in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Danish, nobody uses the term *datamat*; all Danes say *computer* – a term understood by all Scandinavians.

## 2. *The English Influence on the Scandinavian Languages*

Having presented and aimed at quantifying the challenges of the diminishing mutual comprehension in the Nordic region while touching the role of English, we will now focus on quantifying and evaluating the present English influence on Danish, Swedish and Norwegian. Does this influence somehow support convergence between the languages, or does it add to the *sprogforbistring*?

### 2.1 *The Visibility of Anglicisms*

In today’s Scandinavian societies, the command of English is generally high, with Norway, Sweden and Denmark rated as having “Very high proficiency” (*EF English Proficiency Index* 2024). All over Scandinavia, English is now a second rather than a foreign language, and as expressed in a Danish report on the present status of English in the speech of young Danes, “[h]ovedsproget er dansk, men engelske ord, udtryk og hele sætninger er en integreret del af sproget” (Lønsmann *et al.* 2024, 92).<sup>9</sup> As opposed to these young respondents, earlier generations of Danes rarely use code-switching, but for more than a century, most new loanwords in Denmark, as in Scandinavia, have been based on English. For Danish, not only do English-based words (i.e. Anglicisms) make up a majority of all new *loanwords*; Anglicisms constitute between 67% and 87% of *all* new words in the language (Gottlieb 2025, 17). For Norwegian and Swedish, similar statistics for the share of neologisms with Anglophone roots seem unavailable, but the fact that a large number of the Anglicisms analysed in this study are found in all three Scandinavian languages leaves no doubt that even in Swedish and Norwegian – often considered more purist than Danish – Anglicisms make up a significant share of all new words and expressions.

<sup>7</sup> Trans.: Most intelligible are the foreign words; usually the Scandinavian languages borrow the same loanwords.

<sup>8</sup> Trans.: a serious evaluation should also consider all the new words that are in fact shared.

<sup>9</sup> Trans.: the main language is Danish, but English words, expressions and entire sentences constitute an integral part of the language.

Before proceeding, the key term “Anglicism” needs to be defined. Taking heed of the many types of English influence on other languages, the following scholarly definition of “Anglicism” offers itself: “Any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models, used in intralingual communication in a speech community in which English is not the home language” (Gottlieb 2020, 32).

This means that Anglicisms need not look or sound English; what counts is the fact that all Anglicisms rest on Anglophone models. *Unadapted* direct borrowings from English are easily identifiable as Anglicisms and thus often referred to as “visible” (Gottlieb 2023c and 2025, 15). Conversely, many *adapted* borrowings as well as all *indirect* borrowings from English – including loan translations and semantic loans – may be labeled “invisible”.

To illustrate the wide range of Anglicisms in modern languages, the following section will present the various linguistic levels and Anglicism types, with Danish examples and dates for earliest (written) attestations:

*Visible Anglicisms* may:

- represent new concepts or phenomena: *whisky* (1755); *woke* (2017);
- fill an existing void: *panorama* (1830); *stalker* (1996);
- make known entities sound new: *cool* (1958); *coach* (1969).

No matter which functions such Anglicisms serve, or to which word class they belong, they look and/or sound English.

*Invisible Anglicisms* are found in all linguistic fields:

- a) **Phonology:** Original English (yet Danish-looking) spelling, with adapted pronunciation: *film* (1902) (with Danish *stød*, i.e. glottal stop); *database* (1970) (four syllables, no diphthongs).
- b) **Orthography:** Adapted spelling and pronunciation: *splejse* (1804) <“splice”; *dørtræk* (1928) <“dirt track” (racing); *nørd* (1985) <“nerd”.
- c) **Morphology:** Loan translation of compounds: *ekkokammer* (2009) <“echo chamber”; *genforvildning* (2016) <“rewilding”.
- d) **Phraseology:** Morphosyntactic calquing: *gå planken ud* (1910) <“walk the plank”; *når det kommer til...* (1984) <“when it comes to...”.
- e) **Semantics:** Alternative meaning: *mus* (1983) <“(computer) mouse”; *adressere* (1991) <“address” (= deal with).
- f) **Pragmatics:** English-inspired discourse: *et godt spørgsmål* (1990) <“a good question”; *Tak for din tid!* (2004) <“Thanks for your time!”.

Often overlooked in discussions (and dictionaries) of Anglicisms, invisible Anglicisms as exemplified above constitute a considerable share of all English-based elements in the Scandinavian languages. Thus, invisible types accounted for 30.5% of the Danish online neology dictionary NoiD’s 2024 Anglicism harvest – matching the “invisible” share of 26.7% of all Danish Anglicisms in GLAD, the Global Anglicism Database (Gottlieb 2025, 15).

2.2 The Adaptation of Anglicisms in the Scandinavian Languages<sup>10</sup>

As all other *-isms*, Anglicisms are the offspring of two separate languages and not simply exact replicas of their etymons, i.e. the models of the donor language. Presenting three basic aspects of any lexeme (pronunciation, spelling and meaning), Table 3 shows how all possible combinations of maintenance (shown in green) vs. alteration (in red) of the three aspects of English etymons are found in contemporary Swedish, Danish and Norwegian Anglicisms:

Category	Features	Danish	Norwegian	Swedish
1	Identical pronunciation Identical spelling Identical meaning	<i>band</i>	<i>world music</i>	<i>team</i>
2	Altered pronunciation Identical spelling Identical meaning	<i>radar</i>	<i>multiple choice</i>	<i>sulky</i>
3	Identical pronunciation Altered spelling Identical meaning	<i>lørner</i> (“learner”)	<i>steelgitar</i> (“steel guitar”)	<i>hajk</i> (“hike”)
4	Identical pronunciation Identical spelling Altered meaning	<i>bake-off</i> (= half-baked bread)	<i>chips</i> (= potato crisps)	<i>city</i> (= town center)
5	Altered pronunciation Altered spelling Identical meaning	<i>pingvin</i> (“penguin”)	<i>hilite</i> (verb) (“highlight”)	<i>jobb</i> (“job”)
6	Altered pronunciation Identical spelling Altered meaning	<i>rocker</i> (= biker)	<i>calling</i> (= intercom)	<i>hammock</i> (= outdoor sofa)
7	Identical pronunciation Altered spelling Altered meaning	<i>hej</i> (= goodbye <“hi”)	<i>klin</i> (= totally <“clean”)	<i>hoj</i> (= bicycle <“hoy”)
8	Altered pronunciation Altered spelling Altered meaning	<i>sparre</i> (= practice with <“spar”)	<i>tøff</i> (= smart <“tough”)	<i>rostbiff</i> (= rumpsteak <“roast beef”)

Tab. 3 – Adaptation of Anglicisms: a typology of changes

As is clearly seen, anything can happen when people outside the Anglosphere gain interest in an English lexeme. What may support mutual intelligibility among Scandinavians – while harming their ability to make themselves understood by English native speakers – are especially words of categories 4, 6, 7 and 8. Such pseudo-Anglicisms are often used in their non-English senses when Scandinavians communicate in English. A typical example is the (Danish) pseudo-Anglicism *sparre*, which to Danes has a positive flavor and is often used of workplace situations where people challenge each other in a friendly manner. In English the verb “spar”, originally a boxing term, is used in a much more aggressive sense, leading to miscommunication in international encounters.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This and the following sections are based on sections in Gottlieb 2023b.

<sup>11</sup> The phenomenon of pseudo-Anglicisms is dealt with extensively in Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015 and Van der Sijs *et al.* 2026.

### 3. Are “The Same” Anglicisms Introduced Across Scandinavia?

When discussing the role that “foreign words” – and thus Anglicisms – may play in the context of inter-Scandinavian mutual intelligibility (see Section 1.3), we need to know to which extent Danish, Norwegian and Swedish speakers use similar Anglicisms. To that end, we will

- (1) compare the inventory (aka *richness*) of Anglicisms in printed *Anglicism dictionaries* with that of the online *Global Anglicism Database* (GLAD; Instituut Voor De Nederlandse Taal. 2023);<sup>12</sup>
- (2) compare these findings with the inventory of Anglicisms in *standard dictionaries*;
- (3) analyse the usage (*frequency*) of selected Anglicisms in major Scandinavian *text corpora*.

#### 3.1 Types of Anglicisms in Scandinavian Anglicism Dictionaries

Prior to the present *Global Anglicism Database* – now presenting thousands of Anglicisms in Danish, Norwegian and fifteen other languages<sup>13</sup>– the English influence on the Nordic languages was documented in the following Anglicism dictionaries, none of which have been updated since their publication:

- Danish: *A Dictionary of Anglicisms in Danish* (DAD; Sørensen 1997);
- Norwegian: *Anglismeordboka. Engelske lånord i norsk* (AO; Graedler and Johansson 1997);
- Entries included in *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (DEA; Görlach 2001);
- Swedish: *Ny svengelsk ordbok* (NSO; Seltén 1993);
- A Dictionary of Anglicisms in Swedish* (DAS; Antunović 1999);
- Icelandic: Entries included in *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (DEA; Görlach 2001);
- Finnish: Entries included in *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (DEA; Görlach 2001);
- Faroese: Word list in *English loanwords in Faroese* (ELF; Jóansson 1997).

As reflected in the number of entries listed in Table 4, these Nordic listings of Anglicisms rest on differing definitions of “Anglicism” – and, of course, on differing success in compiling entries. As a result, especially invisible types suffer from these discrepancies. The editors of AO are fully aware that their Norwegian dictionary misses out on indirect (invisible) loans: “Grunnen til dette er at *slike indirekte lån ofte er vanskeligere å oppdage*, og derfor dårligere representert i grunnlagsmaterialet for boka” (Graedler and Johansson 1997, 11; my italics).<sup>14</sup>

Anglicism type	Danish		Norwegian			Swedish		Ice-landic	Finnish	Faroese
	DAD	GLAD	AO	DEA	GLAD	NSO	DAS	DEA	DEA	ELF
Unadapted	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Adapted	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Loan translation	√	√	Very few	Very few	√	None	None	Very few	Very few	√

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the GLAD project, including languages and criteria for inclusion, see Gottlieb *et al.* 2018, Gottlieb 2021 and 2023a.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, Swedish is still not represented in GLAD. Potential contributors for Swedish are invited to contact the author.

<sup>14</sup> Trans.: The reason for this is that such indirect borrowings are often more difficult to detect, and hence less well represented in the material that this book is based on.

Semantic loan	√	√	Very few	None	√	None	None	None	None	None
Hybrid <sup>15</sup>	√	√	√	√	√	√	A few	√	√	√
Pseudo-loan	√	√	√	√	√	√	Very few	√	√	Very few
Types fully included	6	6	4	4	6	4	2	4	4	4
Entries <sup>16</sup>	6,180	15,653	>4,000	2,906	7,386	2,093	c.1,500	1,516	1,125	c. 1,485

Tab. 4 – Scandinavian Anglicism dictionaries: differing criteria for inclusion

Of the printed dictionaries, only the Danish DAD includes all the Anglicism types necessary to chart the English influence on recipient languages, e.g. those used in Scandinavia.

### 3.2 Randomly Selected Items in Scandinavian Anglicism Dictionaries

The first part of this inter-Scandinavian comparison looks at a type of Anglicism included in all the above-mentioned dictionaries: direct borrowing of single words, unadapted as well as adapted.

Starting with the Norwegian GLAD contribution – consisting of 7,388 Anglicisms – 15 words were selected, alphabetically separated by exactly 500 entries. This randomisation ensures alphabetical balance and allows for variation regarding word class and stylistic level.

Although no less than 14 out of the 15 Norwegian Anglicisms have direct counterparts in the Danish GLAD contribution, only seven (AO) and three (DEA) of these fifteen are included in the two Norwegian Anglicism dictionaries, while five are listed in the Danish Anglicism dictionary (DAD). The Swedish Anglicism dictionaries present an even more humble result: only one of the 15 words is included in each of them.

Judging from these (printed) sources, one may therefore conclude that the three Scandinavian languages differ considerably with regard to English influence – counterproductive to inter-Scandinavian *nabosprogsforståelse*. Table 5 juxtaposes the (lack of) presence of the 15 items in the dictionaries vis-à-vis GLAD:

Danish		Norwegian			Swedish	
GLAD	DAD	GLAD	AO	DEA	NSO	DAS
behaviourist	–	behaviourist	–	–	–	+
callboy	–	call-boy	–	+	–	–
dead end	–	dead end	+	–	–	–
event	+	event	–	–	–	–
førsteslag	–	førsteslag	–	–	–	–

<sup>15</sup> Hybrids are half-translations of compounds, with one element left untranslated, as in Norwegian *speedbåt* <“speedboat”.

<sup>16</sup> Numbers of entries in DEA are based on the figures reported in Görlach 2003, 163-64.

hit	–	hit/hitt <sup>17</sup>	+	–	–	–
just-in-time	–	just-in-time	+	+	+	–
location	–	location	+	–	–	–
naile	Ø	naile <sup>18</sup>	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø
ph.d.	+	ph.d.	+	–	–	–
replay	–	replay	+	+	–	–
skygge	+	skygge <sup>19</sup>	–	–	–	–
–	–	submersibel	+	–	–	–
tryghedszone	–	komfortsone	–	–	–	–
yorkshire pudding	+	yorkshirepudding	–	–	–	–
14	5	15	7	3	1	1

Tab. 5 – None of the 15 randomly selected Anglicisms is included in all Anglicism dictionaries

As we will later see, 14 out of these 15 single-word Anglicisms were in fact already introduced in several of the three languages by 1990, before the time of publication of the five Anglicism dictionaries. And fortunately, the parallel introduction of these fifteen randomly selected items is backed up by more recent (standard) dictionaries of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish.

### 3.3 Randomly Selected Items in Scandinavian Standard Dictionaries

Table 6 presents an altogether different picture of the situation regarding the 15 single-word Anglicisms. The standard dictionaries compared are *Den Danske Ordbog* (DDO), *Nye Ord i Dansk 1955 til i dag* (NoiD), *ordbokene.no* (OB), *Det Norske Akademis Ordbok* (NAOB), *Svenska Akademiens ordlista* (SAOL), and *Svensk ordbok* (SO) – all of which include more of the 15 Anglicisms than the specialised Anglicism dictionaries:

Danish		Norwegian			Swedish	
DDO	NOiD	GLAD	OB <sup>20</sup>	NAOB	SAOL	SO
+	Ø <sup>21</sup>	behaviourist	+/+	+	+	+
–	+	call-boy	–/–	+	–	–
–	–	dead end	–/–	(+)	–	–
+	+	event	+/+	+	+	+
–	–	førsteslag	–/–	+	+ <sup>22</sup>	+

<sup>17</sup> In the sense “occurrence” (not “popular song” etc.).

<sup>18</sup> This verb was introduced in these languages after the publication of the dictionaries, hence the “Ø” label.

<sup>19</sup> In the sense “monitor”, from English “shadow (a suspect)”.

<sup>20</sup> This dictionary covers Bokmål as well as Nynorsk. A plus or minus mark to the left of the slash refers to Bokmål; the mark to the right refers to Nynorsk.

<sup>21</sup> As NOiD is a dictionary of neologisms, pre-1955 Anglicisms are not included, hence the Ø sign.

<sup>22</sup> SAOL & SO have *førstaslagsförmåga*.

+	+	hit/hitt	+/+	+	(+) <sup>23</sup>	(+)
-	-	just-in-time	-/-	+	-	-
+	+	location	+/+	+	-	-
-	+	naile	-/-	+	-	-
+	+	ph.d.	+/+	+	-	-
-	-	replay	-/-	+	-	-
+	∅	skygge	+/+	+	+	+
-	-	submersibel	+/-	+	-	-
tryghedszone, komfortzone, comfortzone		komfortsone	+/+	+	-	-
-	∅	yorkshirepudding	-/-	-	-	-
7	7	15	8/7	15	5	5

Tab. 6 – Four of the Anglicisms are found in all the standard dictionaries of the three languages

The four “identical” Anglicisms found in all three languages (highlighted in red in Table 6) indicate that – as opposed to what the dedicated Anglicism dictionaries implied – quite a number of Anglicisms are in fact shared by the three Scandinavian speech communities. This parallelism will prove even more conspicuous when we later turn to (English-based) multi-word units.

### 3.4 Anglicism Frequencies in Scandinavian Online Text Corpora

The third type of source for investigating the lexis of the Scandinavian languages is text corpora. Still focusing on single-word Anglicisms, we now move from investigating Anglicism richness to looking at usage frequencies.

#### 3.4.1 The Frequencies of Much-used Anglicisms in Danish

Via parallel searches in January 2023 in *Korpus TiDK* and *Infomedia* (huge Danish text corpora), the Norwegian *Aviskorpus* and the Swedish *KORP*, counts were made of the absolute and relative occurrences of the 15 Anglicisms whose inclusion in dictionaries was covered in the previous sections. Before revealing the frequencies of these items, let us see how “rare” even very well-known Anglicisms turn out to be.

To show this, I searched the Danish *KorpusTiDK* (a news-media based corpus of 365 million running words) for four popular and highly frequent Danish Anglicisms, each representing one word class: *computer*, *okay*, *grøn(ne)* (followed by *omstilling*) and *tænke(r) at*. In Table 7 we see that none of these words and expressions, frequently used since 2010 by nearly all Danes in speech and writing, is used more than 39 times for every million running words:

<sup>23</sup> SAOL & SO do not have the sense “occurrence”, only “popular song”.

Word/expression	Class	English etymon	Anglicism type	Frequency 2020
<i>computer</i>	Noun	computer	Direct Borrowing	20 ppm <sup>24</sup>
<i>okay</i>	Interjection	okay	Direct Borrowing	29 ppm
<i>grøn(ne)omstilling</i>	Adjective	green (revolution)	Semantic Loan	35 ppm
<i>tænke(r) at ...</i>	Verb	think that ...	Loan Translation	39 ppm

Tab. 7– Frequent Danish Anglicisms with values between 20 and 40 ppm

Figure 1 shows the trajectories of *computer*, *okay*, *grøn(ne)omstilling* og *tænker at* (including *tænker*, *at*) over the decade 2011-2020:

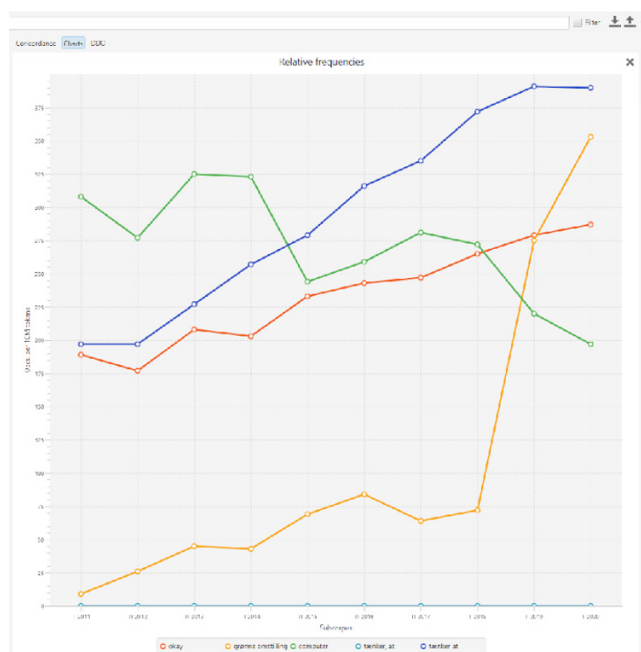


Fig. 1 – The trajectory of four frequent Anglicisms in Danish news media 2011-2020

### 3.4.2 The Frequencies of Randomly Selected Items in Scandinavian Online Text Corpora

Seeing that none of the above-mentioned well-known Danish Anglicisms obtain corpus frequencies above 40 ppm, we must realise that even items with nominally very low frequencies should be considered for inclusion in dictionaries and databases. Thus, the Danish GLAD contribution operates with a threshold of 0.008 ppm, corresponding to the vocabulary of educated adult speakers (Gottlieb 2021). The feasibility of this “low” value is proven by the data in the following two tables showing the frequency figures of our (rather well-known) fifteen randomly selected single-word Anglicisms found in the above-mentioned Danish (Table 8), Norwegian and Swedish corpora (Table 9):

<sup>24</sup> ppm = parts per million.

Danish					
GLAD 2023	Korpus TiDK (2011-20) 365 million words			Infomedia (1990-2023) <sup>25</sup> 40,000millionwords	
	2011 ppm	2020 ppm	2011-20 hits	1990-2023	
				hits	ppm
behaviourist	0.005		2	68	0.002
callboy	0.011		4	30	0.001
dead end	> 0.025		> 9	> 163	> 0.004
event	> 2.5	> 3.0	>1,004	> 36,226	> 0.91
førsteslag	0.008		3	92	0.002
hit	> 16.1	>11.2	> 5,371	> 129,149	> 3.23
just-in-time	0.085		31	3,078	0.08
location	1.4	1.1	469	49,625	1.24
naile	0.022		8	269	0.007
ph.d.	1.7	0.6	334	203,179	5.08
replay	> 0.008		> 3	221	0.006
skygge <sup>26</sup>	> 0.052		> 19	> 2,304	> 0.06
submersibel	0.003		1	10	0.000
komfortzone	0.1	0.7	175	7,888	0.20
tryghedszone	0.2	0.1	50	1,455	0.04
yorkshire pudding	0.027		10	298	0.007
					Average: 0.68

Tab. 8 – Frequencies in Danish corpora

Only four of these randomly selected Anglicisms (highlighted in green) obtain frequencies in *KorpusTiDK* of at least 1 ppm. Even more noticeable, only two additional Anglicisms – both based on the etymon “comfort zone” – score more than 0.1 ppm (in blue). Six additional items score between 0.008 and 0.1 ppm (in yellow), while the frequencies of *førsteslag* and *replay* (in orange) are at, or slightly above, the threshold. Finally, *behaviourist* and *submersibel* (in red) fail to reach the 0.008 ppm.

Even lower, yet more statistically significant, values are offered by the huge *Infomedia* news archive of some 40 billion words. Here only half of the 16 Anglicisms obtain scores of above the 0.008 ppm threshold, with a total average frequency of merely 0.68 ppm.

We will now compare the Danish data with the Norwegian and Swedish figures:

<sup>25</sup> As of January 20, 2023, Infomedia included 86 million news items of approximately 460 words, a total of 39.56 billion running words.

<sup>26</sup> Search node: “blev skygget”.

Norwegian (Bokmål)			Swedish		
GLAD 2023 (year of earliest attestation)	Aviskorpus (1998-2020) 2,127 millionwords			KORP (2002-2022) 243 millionwords	
	hits	ppm		hits	ppm
behaviourist (1948)	1	0.000	behaviourist	0	0
call-boy (1975)	3	0.001	call-boy	0	0
dead end (1966)	14	0.007	dead end	2	0.008
(en) event (1967)	58	0.027	(ett) event	132	0.54
førsteslag (1971)	28	<b>0.013</b>	förstaslag	2	0.008
(en) hit (1960)	3,602	1.69	(en) hit	111	0.46
(en) hitt	4	0.002			
just-in-time (1987)	38	0.018	just-in-time	34	0.058
location (1952)	802	0.38	location	8	0.033
naile (1992)	22	0.010	naile/nejle	0	0
ph.d. (1989)	25	0.012	ph.d.	0	0
(et) replay (1953)	1	0.000	replay	2	0.008
skygge (1931) <sup>27</sup>	> 72	> 0.034	skugga <sup>28</sup>	> 21	<b>&gt;0.086</b>
submersibel (1966)	0	0	submersibel	0	0
komfortsone (1964)	409	0.19	komfortzon	13	0.053
trygghetszone (1984)	16	0.008	trygghetszon	13	0.053
yorkshirepudding (1879)	6	0.003	yorkshirepudding	0	0
Average 0.15			Average 0.08		

Tab. 9 – Frequencies in Norwegian and Swedish corpora

The Norwegian figures in Table 9 show that only the polysemous Anglicism *hit* (in green) obtains a frequency of more than 1 ppm, and only two other words (in blue) make it above 0.1 ppm. Nine Anglicisms appear with a frequency above the 0.008 threshold, and the average frequency is as low as 0.15 ppm.

The Swedish average is even lower, at 0.08 ppm – yet ten times the suggested minimum value – with only two (blue) Anglicisms at more than 0.1 ppm, and a total of just seven Anglicisms above the 0.008 ppm threshold value.

Comparing the three languages, we see that five of the Anglicisms (figures in bold face in the far right column of Table 8) are most common in Danish, while only the loan translation *førsteslag* and the semantic loan *skugga* are most common in Norwegian and Swedish, respectively (Table 9).

Tables 8 and 9 show that Danish leads with regard to Anglicism frequency – provided that the respective corpora yield commensurable data. As they all contain large amounts of texts from

<sup>27</sup> Search node: “ble skygget”.

<sup>28</sup> Search node: “ble skuggat”.

various news media and cover almost the same period, comparisons between the languages seem valid. Yet, even relatively large corpora like *Korpus TiDK*, *Aviskorpus* and *KORP* (the smallest of them all) may represent certain statistical inaccuracies when dealing with low-frequency items as the Anglicisms under scrutiny here.

Still, it seems fair to say that, at least in the news media, the Danish variants of our randomly selected Anglicisms are markedly more frequent than their Norwegian and Swedish counterparts:

- Four of the Danish Anglicisms (*event*, *hit*, *location*, *ph.d.*) obtain frequency scores of above 1 ppm, against only one Norwegian (*hit*) and no Swedish Anglicism.
- The average frequency of the Danish Anglicisms (0.68 ppm) is more than four times that of the Norwegian figure (0.15 ppm) and eight times the Swedish figure (0.08 ppm).

### 3.5 The Adaptation and Frequencies of Multi-word Anglicisms

We will now investigate the Scandinavian echoes of 14 English compound nouns and multi-word expressions. These complex Anglicisms show large variation, both in terms of visibility, style and word class, and except for the early loan translations of the boxing term “throw in the towel”, they have all been discussed in the Scandinavian media and/or the scholarly literature.

Table 10 shows the 14 English etymons with their 15 derived Scandinavian Anglicisms. It is striking that in the three speech communities, people have made almost the same choices between direct borrowing and translation of the English expressions:

Etymon	Danish	Norwegian	Swedish
business as usual	business as usual	business as usual	business as usual
shit happens	shit happens	shit happens	shit happens
worst-case scenario	worst-case scenario	worst case scenario	worst case scenario
from scratch	fra scratch	fra scratch	från scratch
(no) free lunch	(ingen/en) gratis frokost	(ingen/en) gratis lunsj	fri lunch
side-effect	sideeffekt	sideeffekt	sidoeffekt
address (a problem)	adressere	adressere	adressera
make a difference	gøre en forskel	gjøre en forskjell	göra skillnad <sup>29</sup>
(go the) extra mile	(gå en/den) ekstra mil	(gå den) ekstra milen	(gå den) extra milen
throw in the towel	(kaste/smide) håndklædet i ringen	kaste inn håndkleet	kasta in handduken
(put your) foot down	(sætte) foden ned	(sette) foten ned	(sätta) ner foten
(not) rocket science	(ikke) raketvidenskab	(ikke) raketvitenskap	(ingen) raketvetenskap
	(ikke) rocket science	(ikke) rocket science	(ingen) rocket science
when it comes to	når det kommer til <sup>30</sup>	når det kommer til	når det kommer till <sup>31</sup>
on a daily basis	på daglig basis	på daglig basis	på daglig basis

Tab. 10 – The Scandinavian echoes of English multi-word units

<sup>29</sup> Searches excluding “på”.

<sup>30</sup> Searches excluding “stykket”.

<sup>31</sup> Searches excluding “kritan”.

Such Anglicisms have been the subject of several studies in the individual Scandinavian languages (e.g. Mickwitz 2007; Gottlieb 2012 and 2023c; Andersen 2022). Also contrastive studies have been published: the article “Three Cases of Phraseological Borrowing” compares the expressions *as if*, *Oh wait* and *ever* in corpora of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish social media texts. In his conclusion, the author states as follows (Andersen 2020, 7): “It is remarkable to which degree the three Scandinavian languages display similarities in the formal and functional adaptation of these pragmatic items”. Another study (Andersen and Gottlieb 2026), comparing Danish and Norwegian Anglicisms in GLAD, found “a high degree of consistency regarding the inventory of phraseological Anglicisms across the two languages” (229).

Table 11 shows that such inter-Scandinavian parallel developments regarding the formal features of phraseological Anglicisms also apply to the frequencies of these Anglicisms in text corpora:

Anglicism (shared; Danish; Norwegian; Swedish)	Danish		Norwegian		Swedish	
	Infomedia		Aviskorpus		KORP	
	hits	ppm	hits	ppm	hits	ppm
business as usual	19,380	0.48	1,143	<b>0.54</b>	104	0.43
shit happens	1,726	0.04	84	0.04	9	0.04
worst-case scenario	5,153	<b>0.13</b>	253	0.12	20	0.08
fra / fra / från scratch	6,259	0.16	443	<b>0.21</b>	37	0.15
gratis frokost / gratis lunsj / fri lunch	401	0.01	114	0.05	5	0.02
sideeffekt / sideeffekt / sidoeffekt	16,839	<b>0.42</b>	329	0.15	60	0.25
adressere / adressere / adressera	90,028	2.25	1,817	0.85	669	<b>2.75</b>
gøre en forskel / gjøre en forskjell / göra skillnad	316,519	<b>7.91</b>	3,452	1.62	1,119	4.60
ekstra mil / ekstra milen / extra milen	3,705	0.09	32	0.02	1	0.004
kaste / smide håndklædet i ringen / kaste inn håndkleet / kasta in handduken	70,068	1.75	5,950	<b>2.80</b>	386	1.59
foden ned / foten ned / ner foten	7,753	0.19	6,980	3.28	911	<b>3.75</b>
raketvidenskab / raketvitenskap / raketvetenskap / rocket science	10,845	<b>0.27</b>	0	0	1	0.004
	1,050	0.03	23	0.01	10	0.04
når det kommer til / når det kommer til / när det kommer till	410,231	10.26	18,678	8.78	3,388	<b>13.94</b>
på daglig basis	25,377	<b>0.63</b>	743	0.35	87	0.35
Average scores	Danish: 1.64		Norwegian: 1.25		Swedish: <b>1.87</b>	
Wins (highest scores in boldface)	<b>5 wins</b>		3 wins		3 wins	

Tab. 11 – Strikingly similar frequencies of English-based multi-word units across Scandinavia

Despite the considerable differences in size – and, accordingly, in numbers of hits – the three Scandinavian corpora yield frequencies of the same magnitude. While, for instance, *business as usual* occurs 19,380 times in the Danish *Infomedia* but “only” 104 times in the Swedish *KORP*, the frequencies are almost identical: 0.48 and 0.43 ppm. Five of the Anglicisms are most

frequent in Danish, against three in Norwegian and another three in Swedish – a rather close race in comparison with the total dominance of Danish regarding the “random” Anglicisms (see the *Infomedica* scores in Table 8). Interestingly, this time Swedish has the highest average score; the 1.87 ppm for these multi-word Anglicisms is more than 20 times higher than the Swedish average for the “random” items.

#### 4. Conclusion: Anglicisms as Inter-Scandinavian Stepping Stones?

When looking for similarities between the inventory (richness) of English-based words and expressions in the three Scandinavian languages, standard dictionaries and (for Norwegian and Danish) the GLAD database turn out to be much more useful (and truthful) than the various Anglicism dictionaries. Not only are these works outdated, as they were all conceived in the 1990s; their differing criteria for inclusion of entries make cross-language comparisons problematic.

As for actual usage, searches in comparable text corpora produce much more valid data, and Danish, Norwegian and Swedish online corpora present a surprisingly uniform picture of Anglicism types and frequencies in contemporary Danish, Swedish and Norwegian.

Most of the randomly selected Norwegian entries in GLAD (typically unadapted single-word items) are not only introduced in Danish and Swedish; they typically appear in the same shape. This cross-linguistic similarity is even more pronounced when it comes to the more salient phraseological Anglicisms, where speakers in the three speech communities have made almost the same adaptational choices between direct (visible) borrowing and indirect (invisible) loan translation of the English phrasemes in question (see Table 10).

To an even larger extent than the randomly selected Anglicisms, the English-based multi-word units prove to be part of the common stock of the three Scandinavian languages. With frequencies in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish of up to 20 times the ones found for the “simple” words, these more complex Anglicisms (often semantic loans or loan translations) are almost equally popular in all three Scandinavian speech communities – and may thus contribute to counteract continued deterioration of the inter-Scandinavian *nabosprogsforståelse*.

In other words, with their mostly positive connotations (at least to those who use them), the various types of present-day Anglicisms may help maintain a modicum of mutual intelligibility in Scandinavia. Using recognisable (whether visible or invisible) Anglicisms, typically content words or expressions with emotional power, young and old Scandinavians may continue to communicate without resorting to “real” English.

Whether the many Anglicisms in Scandinavian neology, although generators of convergence between the languages, will in fact contribute to improve cross-border intelligibility will need to be tested empirically. To the best of my knowledge, this has not yet been tried.

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