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The role of extra-linguistic factors for intelligibility


Extra-linguistic factors

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- › Contact
- › Attitudes
- › Linguistic experience
- › Orthography

May result in asymmetric mutual intelligibility


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contact

Contact

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- › Prior experience with the test language results in higher scores
- › Maurud (1976) only tested Scandinavians from the capitals
- › Bø (1978): subjects who could watch TV from the neighbouring countries performed better in intelligibility tests



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Contact

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How can contact be measured?

1. Translations of non-cognates:
In principle unintelligible. Number of correctly translated cognates is an indication of experience with the test language
2. Questions


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INS-investigation

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The project *Internordisk sprogforståelse*, **INS** (*Inter Nordic comprehension*)

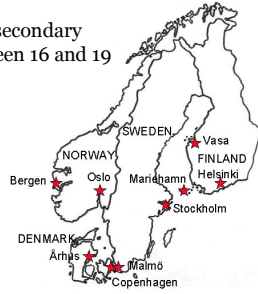
- › Delsing & Lundin Åkesson 2005
- › Test languages: Danish, Norwegian, Swedish
- › Questionnaire about attitude and contact


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INS-investigation

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INS-investigation:
Test persons: 690 secondary
school pupils between 16 and 19
years



INS-investigation

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Task: open questions about a spoken text

- › news item (250 words)
- › read aloud in Danish, Norwegian or Swedish
- › 5 open questions

INS-investigation

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Questions about contact:

I watch Danish/Norwegian/Swedish TV
once a week once a month once a year more seldom

I read Danish/Norwegian/Swedish newspapers/magazines
once a week once a month once a year more seldom

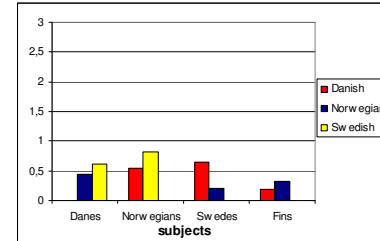
I meet Danes/Norwegians/Swedes
once a week once a month once a year more seldom

I am in Denmark/Norway/Sweden
once a week once a month once a year more seldom

Correlation between intelligibility and contact

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mean contact scores



Correlation between intelligibility and contact

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TV $r = .18$

newspaper $r = .30$

personal contact $r = .27$

visit $r = .02$

total contact $r = .19$

no significant correlations

Contact

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- › It is plausible that contact plays a role for intelligibility
- › Still statistic relationships have hardly been found
- › Scandinavians have little contact

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Attitudes

attitudes

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- › a **positive** attitude towards a language will motivate people to try and understand that language, whereas a **negative** attitude will hinder intelligibility

Ex. Wolff (1966) from Eastern Niger Delta:

- › Speakers of Nembe claim to be able to understand Kalabari, while Kalabari find Nembe unintelligible
- › Explained by the economically strong position of the Kalabari

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INS-investigation

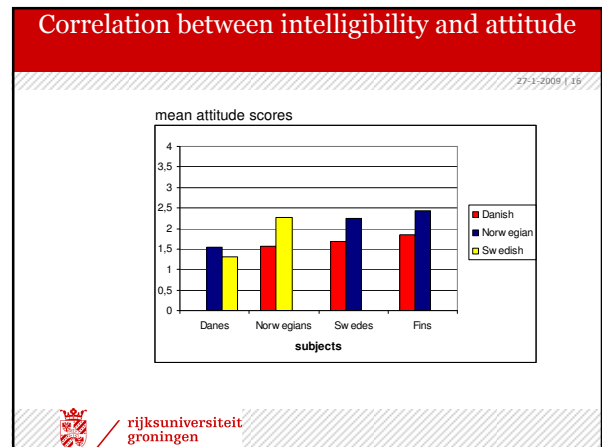
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Questions about attitudes:

How do you like the Danish language?
 beautiful ugly

Would you like to live in Denmark?
 yes maybe no

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Correlation between intelligibility and attitude

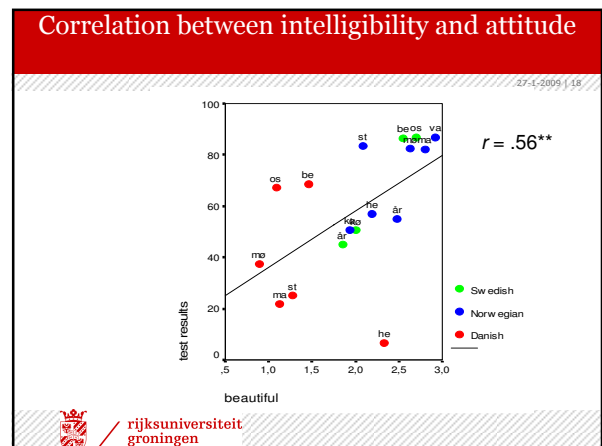
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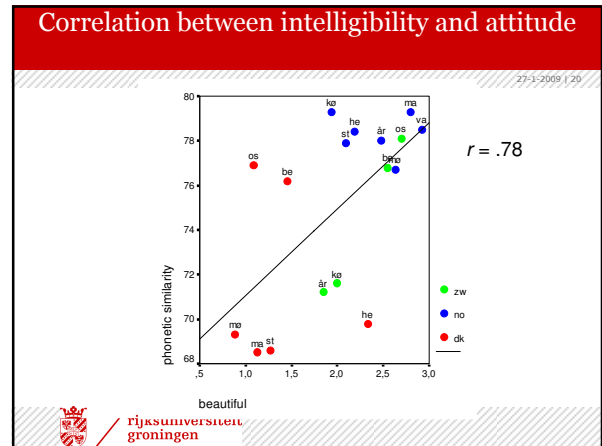
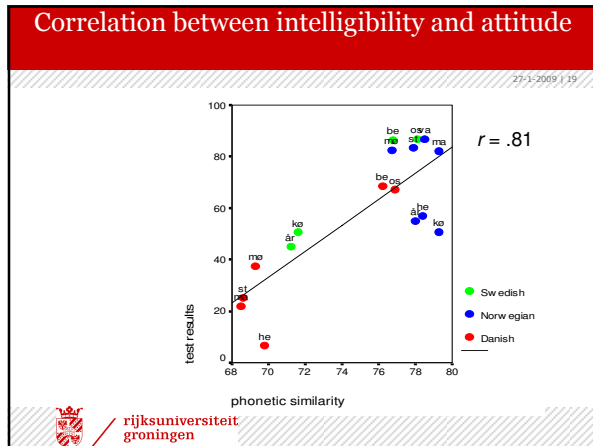
live in $r = .20$

beautiful $r = .56^{**}$

total attitude $r = .50^*$

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- ### attitudes
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- › It is plausible that attitudes play a role in intelligibility
 - › Still statistic relationships are not very strong
 - › The test situations are likely to block attitudes
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Linguistic experience

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Linguistic experience

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Hypothesis:
Multilingualism may result in a better comprehension of closely related languages due to a larger language consciousness

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Linguistic experience

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Berthele (2009):

Listeners:

- › 168 speakers of Standard German without dialect competence
- › 82 speakers of standard German with dialect competence

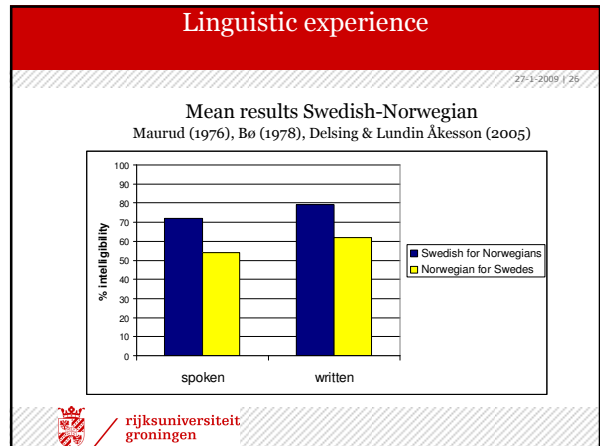
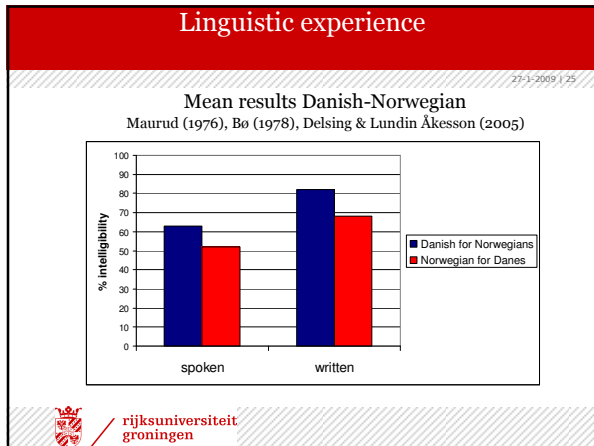
Intelligibility tests:

- › Dutch and Swedish

Results:

- › Listeners with dialect competence had higher intelligibility scores

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Linguistic experience

Norwegians have experience with linguistic variation:

- > strong position of dialects in Norway
- > two written languages

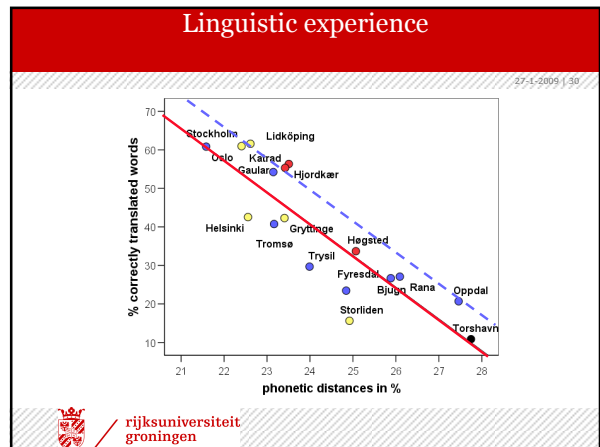
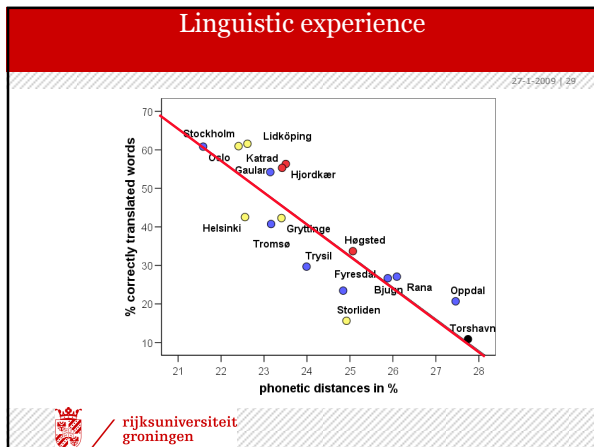
Can this be an explanation for the fact that they understand Danish and Swedish so well?

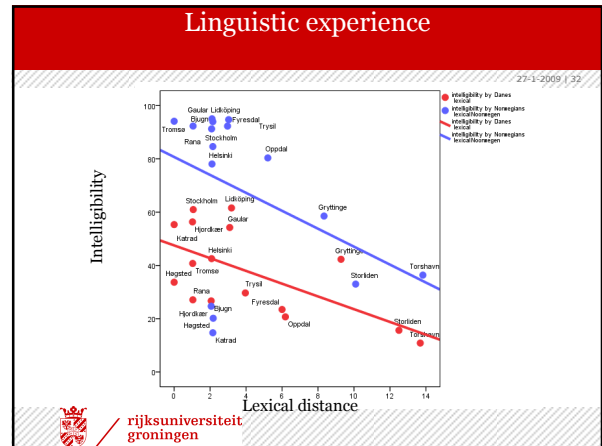
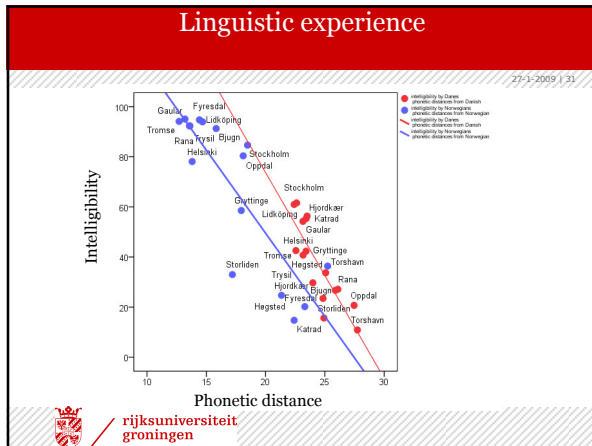
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Repetition of Danish dialect experiment in Norway

Hypothesis:
Norwegians understand closely related varieties better than Danes (and Swedes)

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orthography

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orthography

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Danish	Swedish	
<i>tikke</i> [teɡə]	<i>ticka</i> [tɪkːɑ]	'tick'
<i>hånd</i> [hɔn]	<i>hand</i> [hand]	'hand'

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orthography

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Doetjes & Gooskens (2009)

- › Correlation between intelligibility of 100 frequent Swedish word by Danish listeners and phonetic distances: $r = .54$
- › Corrected for orthography: $r = .64$

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