

Abstract

Hansen, Kirsti Dee, *Brugen af maskulinum i færøsk*. Doktorsavhandling i nordiska språk. Institutionen för svenska språket, Göteborgs Universitet. *The use of masculine in Faroese*. Doctoral thesis in Scandinavian Languages. Department of Swedish Language, Göteborg University

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the use of the masculine in Faroese, a language with a three gender system, and the understanding of the masculine in that language. The statement by the language advisory committee that the masculine is historically used to mark masculine as well as gender neutrality is questioned. This statement raised issues such as: is the form really gender neutral and if so, to what extent? In order to map out the perception of the masculine form amongst users of the language, an empirical study using questionnaires was carried out. These were answered by 162 persons. As background material for the analysis, a bank of 1 million words was established and interviews on Faroese language policy and the female cultural heritage were part of the research material. The method consequently does contain numerous inputs where the historical social angle on the material is the main part of the analysis.

The information resulting from the empirical study pointed towards the conclusion that the greater degree of gender neutrality a professional title had, the lower its position was and the opposite was also true; the higher the male dominance, the higher the word was; *priest* and *pedagogue* can be used as examples of words with high and low positions, respectively. Examples such as these clearly show that the masculine form is anything but gender neutral. Most people associate the masculine with men, i.e. when one uses masculine forms, women are by and large not included. This is perhaps the most surprising and shocking result of my study. On the other hand, about 30 % of women consider themselves involved. Anyway the analysis rejects any suggestion that the form has a natural neutrality.

Key words: Faroese, language and gender, the masculine in Faroese, purism, language policy, masculine values, masculine dominance, masculine as a neutral form.

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