

# Gender and noun inflection: The fate of ‘vulnerable’ categories in Northern Norwegian

Hilde Sollid, Philipp Konzett and Åse Mette Johansen

Research has predicted an uncertain future for gender and noun inflection in Northern Norwegian varieties. Gender is expected to disappear and the noun inflection system to undergo simplification. The driving force is said to be contact between Norwegian, a gender language, and Sámi and Kven, non-gender languages. On the basis of data from the Nordic Dialect Corpus, we argue that these predictions are not borne out. Gender is a stable category and noun inflection has divergent patterns. These findings are interpreted in light of the socio-historical background of language contact and shift characterising the region.

**Keywords:** gender; noun inflection; language contact; Sámi; Kven; Norwegian; stability; divergence

## 1. Introduction

Northern Norway is characterised by long and extensive language contact between Norwegian, Sámi<sup>1</sup> and Kven,<sup>2</sup> one Germanic and two Finno-Ugric languages. Consequently, contemporary Northern Norwegian dialects can be divided into two groups: traditional and contact varieties. The latter group is much younger and comprises varieties that have emerged in traditionally Sámi

---

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, *Sámi* refers to *North Sámi*, the language spoken by the indigenous population in the northernmost part of Norway. However, it is common to use *Sámi* as a cover term for no fewer than 10 languages in *Sápmi*, the traditional area of Sámi settlement that covers large parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia.

<sup>2</sup> *Kven* is the language of the descendants of people who arrived in Norway from the northern parts of present-day Finland and Sweden starting at the end of the 17th century.

and Kven settlement areas. Between 1850 and 1980, these areas became largely monolingual due to language shift from Sámi and Kven to Norwegian. Unlike the traditional dialects, the contact varieties have a series of distinctive structural and functional qualities that link them to historical multilingualism and ethnicity in the region, and they are often referred to as ethnolects (cf. Bull 2006).

Focusing on syntax, Sollid (2005) argues that theories from research on creole languages and second language acquisition are useful for understanding the formation and stabilisation of the Norwegian contact variety in Sappen, a small Northern Norwegian community in which Kven used to be the majority language (see Figure 1). More specifically, dialect formation refers to the phase when Kven-speaking parents started to speak Norwegian as their second language (L2), most often at the expense of Kven. Dialect stabilisation covers the development of Norwegian as a first language (L1) in subsequent generations. Sollid's (2005) analysis is related to Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's (1985) seminal study of how diffuse contact situations in creole communities gradually become more focused.

For a long time, the contact varieties were neglected in the ideologically loaded field of Norwegian dialectology (cf. Sollid 2013). It was not until the 1980s that researchers with a focus on contact-/shift-induced variation started to investigate spoken Norwegian in Nord-Troms and Finnmark, the northernmost part of Norway, and the main area for Norwegian-Sámi-Kven language contact.

Norwegian is a gender language, and Sámi and Kven are non-gender languages. It is therefore not surprising that this early research encompassed interest in variation in the gender category and the closely related noun inflection system. Bull, Junttila & Pedersen's (1986) investigation of variation in the noun phrase in a traditionally trilingual village in Nord-Troms is a seminal study. The focus is on instances of gender non-agreement that involve primarily traditionally masculine and neuter nouns and other properties of the noun phrase that would be considered ungrammatical in the traditional spoken varieties and the two written standards of Norwegian (*Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*). This focus is typical of studies from areas in Northern Norway (cf. Bull [1993] 1996, 2012; Martinussen [1991] 1996: 241).

Another observed tendency is that contact features are less frequent among younger speakers (cf. Bull [1993] 1996, Junttila 1988, Sollid 2005). Bull ([1990] 1996) points out that the contact varieties are younger and therefore less stable and remarks that a contact feature such as gender non-agreement is, due to its markedness, at risk of disappearing from norwegianised Sámi and Kven communities.

More generally, research on gender and noun inflection in Northern Norwegian contact areas highlights two aspects: considerable and unsystematic variation (Bull, Junttila & Pedersen 1986) and simplification (Bull, Junttila & Pedersen 1986; Bull 1995; Jahr e.g. 1984; Junttila 1986; Kusmenko 2000; Nesse 2002, 2005). Bull, Junttila & Pedersen (1986) do not observe consistent patterns of so-called gender mixing in their data:

We have tried to systematize all the instances of gender mixing in different ways, hoping to find certain characteristics of the nouns that tend to be masculine as opposed to the nouns that tend to be neuter. We have not been able to find such a pattern. (Bull, Pedersen & Junttila 1986: 64; our translation from Norwegian)

Additionally, Jahr (1984) addresses the simplification of the noun system:

The most salient feature of Sami Norwegian morphology is simplification of the Norwegian gender system. [...] This simplification of the gender system is not, however, fully completed most places, because the definite form singular seems to resist unification. (Jahr 1984: 108)

Jahr (1984: 108) also suggests an idealised scheme for noun inflection in ‘Sami Norwegian’, the Norwegian spoken in traditionally Sámi areas. Table 1 provides an overview of Jahr’s predictions and the three-gender system of noun inflection in *Nynorsk* for *hund* ‘dog’, *bygd* ‘village’, *eple* ‘apple’.

‘Sami Norwegian’			Nynorsk		
	<b>Indef sg</b>	<b>Def sg</b>		<b>Indef sg</b>	<b>Def sg</b>
M	<i>en hund</i>	<i>hunden</i>	M	<i>ein hund</i>	<i>hunden</i>
F	<i>en bygd</i>	<i>bygda</i>	F	<i>ei bygd</i>	<i>bygda</i>
N	<i>en eple</i>	<i>eple</i>	N	<i>eit eple</i>	<i>eplet<sup>3</sup></i>
	<b>Indef pl</b>	<b>Def pl</b>		<b>Indef pl</b>	<b>Def pl</b>
M	<i>hunda</i>	<i>hundan</i>	M	<i>hundar</i>	<i>hundane</i>
F	<i>bygda</i>	<i>bygdan</i>	F	<i>bygder</i>	<i>bygdene</i>
N	<i>epla</i>	<i>eplan</i>	N	<i>eple</i>	<i>epla</i>

**Table 1** Jahr’s (1984) prediction for noun inflection in ‘Sami Norwegian’ and the three-gender system of the written standard of *Nynorsk*

In prospective ‘Sami Norwegian,’ Jahr (1984: 108) expects unification in the indefinite singular as well as the indefinite and definite plural, while

<sup>3</sup> The *t*-ending is, except for a few varieties, not pronounced in Norwegian.

there are still three different inflection endings in the definite singular.<sup>4</sup> Nesse (2002: 229), referring to Jahr (1984), concludes that Scandinavian contact varieties have full reduction of the gender system and hypothesises that contact between a Scandinavian dialect and one or more non-related non-gender languages will lead to a dissolution of the gender system.

Inspired by these findings, we conducted a quantitative investigation of the system of gender and noun inflection in two contact varieties of Northern Norway (Conzett, Johansen & Sollid 2011). This work will be presented in more detail later (see 3.5), but some of our main results can be summed up as follows: the speakers from the two communities in the study had a stable two-gender system (common and neuter) and a noun inflection system similar to that of the traditional varieties in Northern Norway. In other words, this investigation provides solid evidence against the predictions made by Jahr (1984) and Nesse (2002), as there is no collapse of the gender category. Based on these results, we question whether the widespread notion of simplification accurately explains the data. Moreover, the traditional focus on unsystematic contact-induced variation has, in our view, overshadowed linguistic processes that are not obviously related to language contact. In fact, gender non-agreement involving traditionally masculine or neuter nouns (cf. Bull, Junttila & Pedersen 1986, Bull 2012) proved to be a marginal phenomenon in our data.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the definition of gender in the present study (see 3.1), the inflection endings in the definite singular are not decisive for the gender system. They are, however, relevant for the inflection classes.

Despite the history of language shift and long-term linguistic instability in Northern Norway, the concept of stability is useful when approaching speech data from the region. Two different aspects of stability are relevant in the phase after dialect stabilisation (Sollid 2005, see above). First, it is interesting to look for contact features that have survived the levelling process and are integrated into one or more local contact varieties. An example is *jenta min* ('my girl') where the traditional feminine definite marker *-a* is combined with the traditional masculine possessive *min* (cf. Conzett, Johansen & Sollid 2011).

Second, another type of stability applies to elements of Norwegian grammar that remain robust despite intense language contact and language shift. In this respect, gender is especially interesting since it is often considered a vulnerable category in language contact (cf. Romaine 1988: 27–33, Thomason 2001: 75). It is first and foremost this last type of stability that will be the focus here. Besides, both types of stability raise the question of how to explain different linguistic outcomes in communities characterised by fairly similar contact situations, at least with respect to the languages involved.

Against this backdrop, this study examines gender and noun inflection in spoken Norwegian in Northern Norway based on new empirical data from nine measure points, or field sites, included in the Nordic Dialect Corpus<sup>5</sup> (hereafter NDC). We aim at mapping tendencies and developments in the gender category and the noun inflection system in the Northern contact areas in the phase after language shift and stabilisation (Sollid 2005). A key

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>

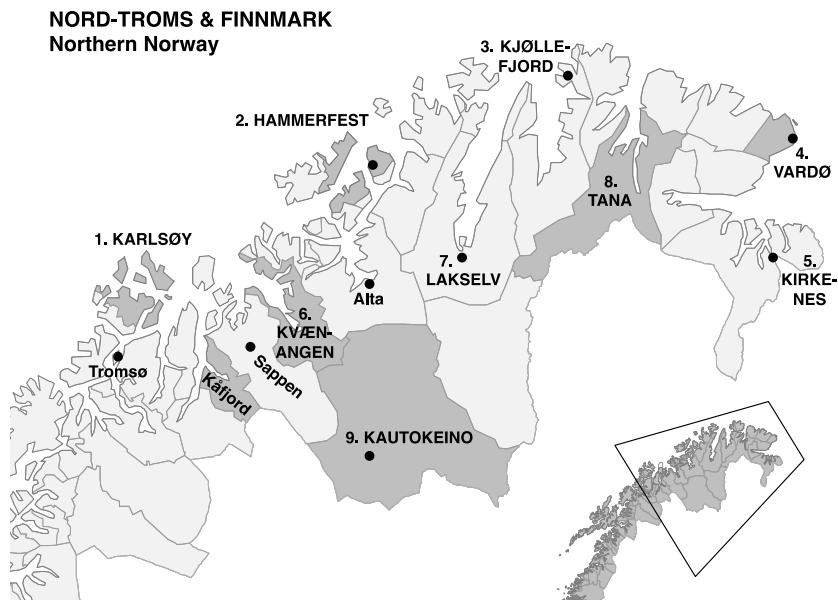
research question is: To what extent is stability a characteristic of these categories? Another key question concerns the comparative approach to data from nine different communities: To what extent does geographic variation occur, and how can this variation be related to contact? Our hypothesis is that although changes in the gender and noun inflection systems in Northern Norway are not to be studied as contact phenomena *per se*, language contact and language shift are important characteristics for the region. Contact should therefore be taken into account when approaching diachronic developments in the northernmost Norwegian varieties.

As mentioned earlier, research on Northern Norwegian contact varieties is a young enterprise in need of more data and new theoretical contributions. With its quantitative orientation, our comparative approach to language contact data from the region is rather unique. By comparing previous reports on variation with our findings, the present study sheds light on the diachronic dimension.

The article is structured as follows: In part 2, we present the language contact situation in Northern Norway with emphasis on the region of Nord-Troms and the county of Finnmark. Part 3 outlines the theoretical foundation and part 4 discusses the NDC methodology and our data. The analysis is presented in part 5, part 6 provides a discussion of the results, and part 7 our concluding remarks.

## 2. The contact situation in Nord-Troms and Finnmark

The NDC measure points in our study are numbered 1–9 in Figure 1.<sup>6</sup> They are all located in the region of Nord-Troms and the county of Finnmark. This is also the traditional settlement area for Kven population. The Sámi ancestral covers a considerably larger territory, reaching all the way from Finnmark to Hedmark in the south (Hansen & Olsen 2004). The (North) Sámi language has remained strongest in Nord-Troms and Finnmark.



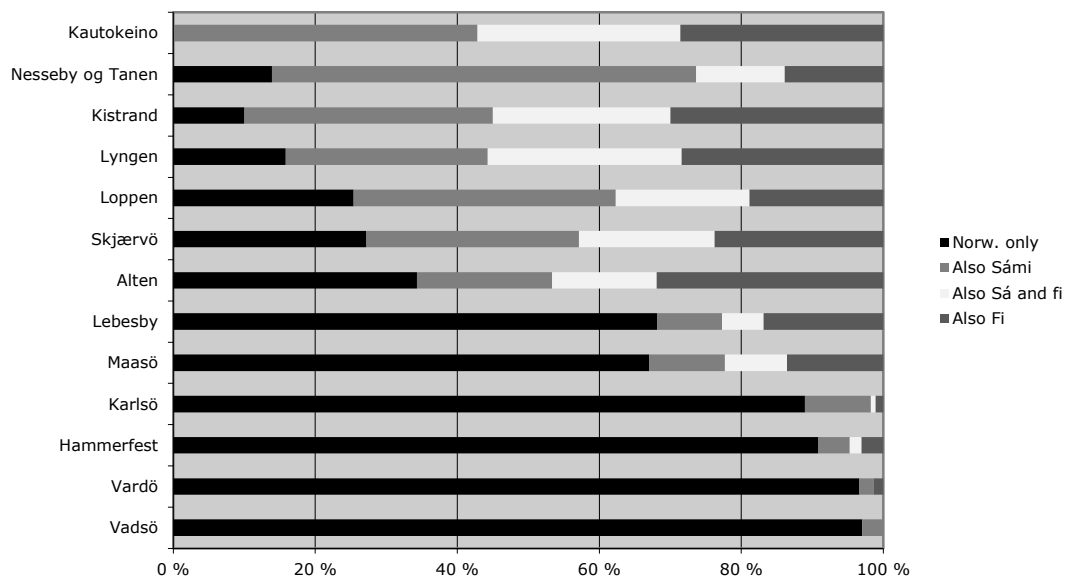
**Figure 1** NDC measure points in Nord-Troms and Finnmark included in the present study. Municipalities are shaded. (©Kartverket)

<sup>6</sup> In the parentheses are the numbers of inhabitants as of January 1, 2012 according to Statistics Norway: 1. Karlsøy (2355), 2. Hammerfest (7119, town), 3. Kjøllefjord (943), 4. Vardø (1885, town), 5. Kirkenes (3444, town), 6. Kvænangen (1284), 7. Lakselv (2237, town), 8. Tana (2896), 9. Kautokeino (1354).



Before the onset of the assimilation policy in the middle of the 19th century, the nature of contact in Northern Norway was defined mainly by factors at the local level such as the settlement patterns for each ethnic group. Friis' (1861) ethnographic map is a valuable source of information on the ethnolinguistic situation in the region at this time. It presents the results of a large-scale survey that was initiated in 1860 and covered an area roughly corresponding to the present two northernmost counties of Norway: Troms and Finnmark. Through a system of multivariate symbols, Friis (1861) provides information on ethnic group, multilingualism, and house type (Sámi turf hut, *goahhti*, vs. wooden house) for each household in the region.

Trosterud (2008) has systematised Friis' data in order to describe the degree of multilingualism in the three ethnic groups. Figure 2 summarises the language profile among Norwegians. The names on the y-axis refer to 1861 parishes.



**Figure 2** Multilingualism among Norwegians, adapted from Trosterud (2008: 97) based on Friis (1861)

It is important to note that Figure 2 illustrates mono- and multilingualism in Norwegian families only. A general pattern in Friis (1861) is that the ethnic groups are multilingual only in a language spoken by a substantial part of the local population (Trosterud 2008: 96). In the seven top-most parishes in Figure 2, multilingualism is prevalent. In these communities, the status of Norwegian in society in general does not apply at the local level. It is interesting to note that these parishes, with the possible exception of Alten, are all located in Inner Finnmark and Nord-Troms. This suggests that the representation of Norwegian and the intensity of contact differ in the region. For example, in the traditional reindeer herding area in Inner Finnmark, here

represented by Kautokeino, over 70% of the Norwegians are bi- or even trilingual with Sámi as one of the languages.

Table 2 shows the correspondence between the 1861 parishes in Friis' survey (cf. Figure 2) and the NDC measure points of our study. We have also added the two locations from Conzett, Johansen & Sollid (2011). As we will show, our findings for gender and noun inflection pattern strongly with the ethnolinguistic information of Friis (1861).

1861 parish	NDC measure points Numbers refer to Figure 1	County
Kautokeino	Kautokeino (9)	Finnmark
Nesseby & Tanen	Tana (8)	Finnmark
Kistrand	Lakselv (7)	Finnmark
Lyngen	Kåfjord (Conzett, Johansen & Sollid 2011)	Troms
Skjervö	Kvænangen (6) Sappen (Conzett, Johansen & Sollid 2011)	Troms
Lebesby	Kjøllefjord in Lebesby (3)	Finnmark
Karlsøy	Karlsøy (1)	Troms
Hammerfest	Hammerfest (2)	Finnmark
Vardö	Vardø (4)	Finnmark
Vadsö	Kirkenes in Sør-Varanger (5)	Finnmark

**Table 2** Key to parishes in Friis (1861) and the locations included in NDC and the present study

Another crucial factor is the all-encompassing process of language shift. Between the late 19th century and the post-war decades, the multilingual profile of Northern Norway changed dramatically. Extensive language shift processes from Kven and/or Sámi to Norwegian were propelled by a combination of overt assimilation and extensive modernisation. The main aim of the *Norwegianisation* policy was to create a culturally and linguisti-

cally homogenous nation of Norwegian-speaking Norwegians (Eriksen & Niemi 1981).

Additionally, the events of World War II had a tremendous impact on language shift. In autumn 1944, more than 12 000 homes in Nord-Troms and Finnmark were burned as the German Army used scorched earth tactics when retreating from the region (Jaklin 2006: 291). It is estimated that 40–50 000 people were evacuated to monolingual Norwegian communities further south, while up to 25 000 individuals refused to leave and sought refuge in primitive caves and huts in the winter of 1944/1945. The following summer, people returned to a material point zero. Conditions for a new start as Norwegians were optimal, as the post-war reconstruction of traditionally Sámi and Kven settlements rested upon the majority's culture, architecture and bureaucracy. Rasmussen and Nolan (2011: 35–36) describe the language shift in this area as a tidal wave that first swept the Sámi language away from the Coastal Sámi, while the reindeer herding areas of the East were hit later: “The areas reached last were also the areas left first, and consequently those are the areas which were least affected by language shift.”

Starting from this historical background, we propose a coast-inland axis as a useful concept for explaining contemporary patterns of variation in the region. In this picture, the fjord region of Nord-Troms (i.e. Kvænangen, Manndalen and Sappen) is a transitional area between the coast (i.e. Karlsøy, Kjøllefjord, Hammerfest, Vardø and Kirkenes) and the inland area (i.e. Kautokeino, Tana and Lakselv). This implies that language contact is more rele-

vant for patterns of variation in spoken varieties of Norwegian in the fjords and the inland area.

A second axis, West-East, helps explain other aspects of variation in our data. Traditionally, the three ethnic groups have all been present at the coast, taking part in trade, transportation and fishing. However, the Norwegian population and language have been dominant in this area. Consequently, dialect contact plays a more important role along this axis. In the western coastal area, including the transitional fjord region, access to more extensive input from traditional Norwegian varieties has played a major role in the diachronic development. In comparison, the Norwegian settlement has traditionally been less stable and less prominent further East.

A third axis, urban-rural, has historically been less significant in a Northern context. Although people have gathered at meeting points for reasons of trading and religious activities for centuries, modern forms of urbanisation did not emerge until after World War II (Martinussen [1991] 1996). This is especially true in Finnmark. Hammerfest is the second largest town in Finnmark and the largest town in our study. This town has experienced considerable population growth over the last years, mainly due to its new status as the oil and gas capital of Northern Norway. The other two urban locations are Vardø and Kirkenes in the East of Finnmark.

### 3. Gender, inflection and language contact

#### 3.1 Definition of gender and inflection class

According to the standard view, usually attributed to Hockett's definition from 1958, "gender is a lexical property of nouns that manifests itself primarily in the choice of inflectional features on words that have a certain syntactic relationship to that noun" (Dahl 2004: 197). Gender in Norwegian is realised in determiners, adjectives and pronouns. Possessives can be either prepositioned or postpositioned. When postpositioned, the head is in the definite form. In *Nynorsk* gender is manifested in attributive position (cf. the different inflectional forms of the indefinite article *ein* 'a') and in predicative position (cf. the different inflectional forms of the possessive *min* 'my/mine'). In addition, gender is expressed by the choice of the personal pronoun *han* vs. *ho* vs. *det* ('he – she – it') in anaphoric reference.

	<b>Indefinite</b>	<b>Preposed poss</b>	<b>Postposed poss</b>	<b>Anaphoric</b>
a.	<i>ein bil</i> a-MASC car 'a car'	<i>min bil</i> mine-MASC car 'my car'	<i>bilen min</i> car-DEF-SG mine-MASC 'my car'	<i>Han er min.</i> He is mine-MASC 'It is mine'
b.	<i>ei lampe</i> a-FEM lamp 'a lamp'	<i>mi lampe</i> mine-FEM lamp 'my lamp'	<i>Lampa mi</i> lamp-DEF-SG mine-FEM 'my lamp'	<i>Ho er mi.</i> 'She is mine.' 'It is mine.'
c.	<i>eit bord</i> a-NEUT table 'a table'	<i>mitt bord</i> mine-NEUT table 'my table'	<i>Bordet mitt</i> table-DEF-SG mine-NEUT 'my table'	<i>Det er mitt.</i> It is mine-NEUT 'It is mine.'

**Table 3** Lexical gender in *Nynorsk*

Carstairs-McCarthy (1994: 739) defines inflection class as a set of lexemes which realise a paradigm, i.e. a given set of combinations of morphosyntactic properties or features, by the same inflectional means. As the present inquiry is restricted to Norwegian nouns, inflection class is illustrated with the main types of plural inflection in modern Nynorsk in Table 4.

The inflection classes are named after the indefinite plural endings. The *ar-* and *er-* class are available for both feminine and masculine nouns. As indicated by the shading, most nouns in the *ar-* class are masculine (e.g. *dag* ‘day’), whereas the members of the *er-* class are predominantly feminine (e.g. *dør* ‘door’).

Class	Indefinite	Definite	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter
-ar	-ar	-ane	elv ‘river’	dag ‘day’	
-er	-er	-ene	dør ‘door’	gjest ‘guest’	
-Ø	-Ø	-a			hus ‘house’

**Table 4** Plural inflection in Norwegian Nynorsk (main types)

The organisation of Table 4 deviates from traditional accounts. When dividing nouns into inflection classes, singular and plural are usually treated together. Since the definite form in singular is unambiguously linked with gender, gender is used as the top criterion for the inflectional classification of nouns.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned earlier, plural inflection is related to gender. The nature of this relationship is discussed in the following section.

---

<sup>7</sup> The definite singular endings are: *-en* (masculine), *-a* (feminine), and *-et* (/ -e/ neuter).

### 3.2 *The function of gender*

Compared with other nominal classification systems, gender is highly grammaticalised. Gender classes typically lack a global class meaning, which means that there is no common semantic property characterising all the nouns of a given gender. This is true for most modern Indo-European languages. Not surprisingly, Trudgill (1999) in his survey of gender systems concludes that lexical gender does not serve any linguistic functions which could not be easily covered by other linguistic means. Still, once developed, gender is usually preserved as a linguistic category. One reason for this, Trudgill argues, is the high degree of frequency with which the gender marking occurs in the languages that have it.

Furthermore, in the history of the noun system in Germanic languages, gender emerges as an “organizational principle” for inflection (Duke 2009: 87). This development is particularly prominent in the northern branch of Germanic. Most interestingly for us, there is an almost watertight partition between masculine and feminine plural inflection in many traditional varieties of Northern Norwegian. Table 5 shows the system of noun inflection in Tromsø Norwegian, illustrated by the nouns *bygd* F<sup>8</sup> ‘village’, *klokka* F ‘clock’, *båt* M ‘boat’, *time* M ‘hour’, *hus* N ‘house’ and *støkke* N ‘piece’, thus including a strong and a weak noun for each gender. If we disregard neuter nouns for the moment, the plural inflectional endings for both indefi-

---

<sup>8</sup> F = feminine, M = masculine, N = neuter.



nite and definite are neatly distributed between feminine (-e and -(e)n) and masculine (-a and -an). In varieties of the Tromsø type, gender can be considered the main factor in allocating nouns to inflection classes.

	F	M	N
<b>SG INDEF</b>	-/a bygd klokk-a	-/e båt tim-e	-/e hus støkk-e
<b>DEF</b>	-a bygd-a klokk-a	-(e)n båt-n tim-en	-e hus-e støkk-e
<b>PL INDEF</b>	-e bygd-e klokk-e	-a båt-a tim-a	-/-a hus støkk-a
<b>DEF</b>	-(e)n bygd-n klokk-en	-an båt-an tim-an	-an hus-an støkk-an

**Table 5** Noun inflection in the traditional variety of Tromsø Norwegian (main types<sup>9</sup>)

### 3.3 Gender and contact

Earlier, we pointed out how gender participates in structuring the nominal inflection system in a morphologically mature language such as Norwegian. Apart from this “morphology-internal” side, both gender and inflection classes are seen as features languages easily can dispense with. Not surprisingly, one of the trends in the historical development of the gender systems in Indo-European languages has been a decrease in the number of gender classes.

While gender reduction into a masculine/feminine (MF)-system has been most common in the Indo-European language family, in the Germanic subgroup it is the feminine class that has been most vulnerable. In Danish, Dutch, Frisian and Swedish, feminine has been absorbed into the masculine group, the result being a common/neuter (CN)-system. The Norwegian writ-

<sup>9</sup> Some minor groups of feminine as well as masculine nouns do not have distinct plural endings, e.g. *mil* : *mil* F ‘10 km’ and *ting* : *ting* M ‘thing(s)’. These nouns will not be analysed in this article.

ten standard Bokmål originates from Danish. The most prestigious variant of Bokmål has always had a CN-system. Despite its prevalence, the reduction and, in some cases, complete loss of gender systems is poorly understood (Duke 2009: 61). Language contact is often used to explain gender atrophy, but as Duke points out, there is “no discussion within the gender literature on why language contact affects gender in the way it does” (Duke 2009: 67). In their seminal work, Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 37f.) distinguish two types of language contact, yielding different results: borrowing and substratum or (shift-induced) interference. The first type of contact is, in its mild form, according to Duke (2009: 69) “unlikely to lead to the demise of an entire gender”. In contrast, interference can affect gender.

To master the gender system of a foreign language, numerous agreement markers have to be identified and learned. Given that gender assignment in many languages (e.g. in the Indo-European family) is only partially transparent, the gender of a great many nouns has to be learned as well. From this, Duke (2009: 71) concludes that gender systems are “particularly susceptible to change through imperfect learning”. If we add to this “the lack of obvious communicative purpose of gender [...] the loss or simplification of a gender system in an interference situation is hardly surprising” (Duke 2009: 71f.).

Nesse (2002) formulates three working hypotheses on how gender systems develop in contact situations:

- a) [C]ontact between a Scandinavian dialect and one or more genderless, non-related languages leads to the dissolution of the gender system [...] (Lyngen, Neder[ve]til).
- b) [C]ontact between a Scandinavian dialect and a related, gender language leads to a reduction from three to two genders (Bergen, Copenhagen, Stockholm).
- c) [C]ontact between different Norwegian dialects which all have three genders but which mark inflectional endings in different inflection classes in different ways leads to a three-gender system in which all words within a single gender belong to the same inflection class (I do not include here the difference in the indefinite singular form between strong and weak nouns) (Høyanger). (Nesse 2002: 229, English translation by Duke 2009: 185f.)

Duke (2009: 186) finds it interesting that Nesse uses typological distance as the decisive factor in gender change in contact situations. One would perhaps expect the social circumstances of the contact between the speakers to play a major role as well.

### 3.4 *Gender and noun inflection in Manndalen and Sappen*

In earlier work (Conzett, Johansen & Sollid 2011), we investigated the system of gender and noun inflection in two contact varieties of Northern Norway, Manndalen and Sappen (cf. Figure 1).

We found that the speakers in our study had a stable two-gender system (common and neuter) and a noun inflection in line with traditional Northern varieties (cf. Table 5). Gender in Manndalen and Sappen thus has not developed as predicted in previous studies on language contact between Germanic and Finno-Ugric. In both varieties, we find a fully-fledged two-gender system, with no signs of decay. Nesse's (2002) first hypothesis that language contact

between a gender language and a non-gender language leads to the dissolution of the gender system is thus not tenable.

Our findings also stand in contrast to the extensive unsystematic variation reported in earlier studies (cf. Bull, Junttila & Pedersen 1986). Less than 3% of the noun phrases in our data showed what is traditionally called gender deviation (e.g. *den eple* this-COMMON apple-NEUTER). Bull, Junttila & Pedersen's informants were from another location within the contact area (Skibotn in Nord-Troms) and, crucially, they are of a different generation. The variation described by Bull, Junttila & Pedersen (1986) can therefore be considered characteristic of a Norwegian contact variety in formation, whereas our informants from Manndalen and Sappen represent the phase of stabilisation (Sollid 2005).

#### **4. The Nordic Dialect Corpus – methodological considerations**

##### *4.1 The Nordic Dialect Corpus and our corpus*

This study uses data from the Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC), a collection of speech data from Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. In the Norwegian part of the corpus, there are over 2 million words from 137 measure points. Our data comes from nine field sites: Karlsøy,

Kvænangen, Hammerfest, Kjøllefjord, Kirkenes, Vardø, Lakselv, Tana and Kautokeino (cf. Figure 1).

The NDC includes two types of speech data. In the interviews, a project assistant is interviewing individual speakers. The interviews are short (10-15 minutes), and according to the NDC web site, the goal is to have the speakers talking about themselves. The second type are conversations between two speakers from the field site. These conversations are longer than the interviews (about 30 minutes), and the speakers talk about everyday topics from a list. The interviews and the conversations are filmed, and the sound files, films and written transcripts (phonetic and orthographic)<sup>10</sup> are available on the NDC web site.

Table 6 gives an overview of our corpus, the number of speakers in the nine locations, and the total number of words. In some cases, the name of the measure point is a specific place. In other cases, it refers to a municipality, making the information about the field site ambiguous. In Table 6, we list both the name of the measure point given in the corpus and the name of the municipality. There are a total of 35 speakers, 3-4 from each location, representing both genders and two age groups (50 years and older and 30 years and younger). The number of words from each field site, which ranges

---

<sup>10</sup> The orthographic transcription is in *Bokmål*. The phonetic transcription is based on the Norwegian alphabet and has no special symbols to represent any qualities of the sound system.

from 10 551 to 36 024 (indicating changing conditions during field work) includes data from both interviews and conversations.<sup>11</sup>

Measure point	Municipality	County	# of speakers	# of words
Karlsøy	Karlsøy	Troms	3	10 551
Hammerfest	Hammerfest	Finnmark	4	17 127
Kjøllefjord	Lebesby	Finnmark	4	22 082
Vardø	Vardø	Finnmark	4	36 024
Kirkenes	Sør-Varanger	Finnmark	4	23 614
Kvænangen	Kvænangen	Troms	4	25 062
Lakselv	Porsanger	Finnmark	4	24 772
Tana	Tana	Finnmark	4	21 847
Kautokeino	Kautokeino	Finnmark	4	15 785
Total			35	160 840

**Table 6** Overview of measure point

#### 4.2 A two-step search process

The study of gender and noun inflection in the nine locations is limited to gender in attributive position in contexts with indefinite articles and predicative position with possessives. With respect to noun inflection, this study focuses on potentially feminine nouns according to the traditional gender system<sup>12</sup> in singular and plural and also in indefinite and definite forms. For each place, the first step was to search for the following single item word strings: indefinite articles <et>, <en>, <ei> and possessives <mitt>, <ditt>, <sitt>, <min>, <din>, <sin>, <mi>, <di>, <si>. In each search, the list of

<sup>11</sup> Since there are two different speech genres in the NDC, it is possible to compare the realisation of gender and noun inflection in the two. We do not, however, do this, as the recordings are relatively short.

<sup>12</sup> *Traditional gender* here refers to the system in traditional Northern Norwegian dialects. In addition, *Nynorsk* has served as a point of reference.

tokens was controlled so as to exclude possibly irrelevant tokens (e.g. the verb form <si> ('say')).

The second step was to search for nouns as parts of speech using definiteness and number as search criteria. This search had limited success due to tagging errors in the corpus: 13% of all nouns in the Kautokeino and the Tana transcripts had incorrect tagging. To validate the data, we built a corpus of annotated nouns according to expected feminine gender, number and definiteness. For this, we used the phonetic transcripts.

Like all corpora, the NDC has limitations that result from tagging, changing social circumstances during fieldwork and vague measure point specifications. Those limitations influence the present study. It is thus important to recognise this study as a first step towards a broader investigation of grammatical, dialectological and sociolinguistic aspects of gender and noun inflection in the region. Nevertheless, as gender and noun inflection are expressed frequently in most speech acts, including interviews and conversations, the present study aims at giving a quantitative description of gender and noun inflection in nine locations across Nord-Troms and Finnmark.

## **5. Analysis**

In this section, we first present our findings on gender as realised in indefinite articles and possessives. The analysis of gender is based on 1375 noun phrases

with indefinite articles and 307 possessive phrases (possessive + noun). Then, we give an account of the results for noun inflection as found in 1461 nouns traditionally associated with feminine gender.

### 5.1 Gender: indefinite articles and possessives

In the 1375 noun phrases with indefinite articles, there are 998 (= 73%) tokens of the article *en*. The numbers for *et* and *ei* are 264 (= 19%) and 113 (= 8%), respectively. Table 7 presents the distribution of the indefinite articles according to location and traditional gender.

Indef art Location	<i>ei</i> (# = 113)			<i>en</i> (# = 998)			<i>et</i> (# = 264)		
	F	M	N	F	M	N	F	M	N
1 Karlsøy	22	1	0	0	48	0	0	0	23
2 Hammerfest	27	0	0	3	63	3	0	0	13
3 Kjøllefjord	23	0	1	4	68	1	0	0	18
4 Vardø	18	0	0	9	161	0	0	1	41
5 Kirkenes	16	0	0	9	100	0	0	1	41
6 Kvænangen	1	0	0	19	154	0	0	2	32
7 Lakselv	3	0	0	20	113	2	0	0	54
8 Tana	0	0	0	36	106	3	0	0	18
9 Kautokeino	0	1	0	21	55	0	0	0	20
Total: 1375	110	2	1	121	868	9	0	4	260

**Table 7** Distribution of indefinite articles according to location and traditional gender (numbering of locations refers to Figure 1)

As Table 7 shows, the article *ei* seems to be well integrated in the gender system in locations 1–5 (cf. the shaded cells for *ei*), all coastal communities (e.g. *ei stonn* ‘a while’). When it comes to the article *en*, the situation is more complex: most of the 998 tokens occur with traditionally mas-



culine nouns (868 noun phrases = 87%). More interesting are the 121 instances (= 12%) in which *en* is combined with a traditionally feminine noun, e.g. *en onng dame* ‘a young lady’ (cf. the shaded cells for *en* in Table 7). In fact, Karlsøy is the only place where no such noun phrase is found. The combination of *en* with a traditionally feminine noun is rather frequent in Kvænangen in Nord-Troms, and in Lakselv, Kautokeino and Tana in the inner part of Finnmark. Here, the use of the indefinite article *ei* is rare. There are only four tokens, three of them in the speech of one speaker from Lakselv.

The geographical distribution of *ei* and *en* is in line with the coast-inland axis described in part 2; *en* is preferred in the areas that were most recently and least affected by language shift. This pattern is also discussed in previous research. According to Martinussen ([1991] 1996: 242), *ei* is a typical coastal feature in Finnmark, while *en* with traditionally feminine nouns is a typical inland phenomenon. The widespread use of *en* is also documented in Kautokeino by Dannemark (2010: 142).

Bull ([1990] 1996: 167–170) claims that the use of *en* and *ei* for feminine nouns varies in eastern and western dialects of coastal Finnmark: speakers in the East tend to prefer *en* and speakers in the West *ei*. As mentioned, both Vardø and Kirkenes are coastal towns in the East of Finnmark. The NDC speakers from these places seem to prefer *ei* over *en*. There is more variation between *ei* and *en* in Vardø and Kirkenes than in the West (Hammerfest and Kjøllefjord). This might indicate that a three-gender sys-

tem is possibly gaining foothold on the coast in the eastern part of Finnmark. This would be in line with the overall tendency of diffusion of coastal dialect features observed in previous research (Bull [1990] 1996; Martinussen [1991] 1996).

There is little variation in the indefinite article *et*. As Table 7 shows, there are only four cases where *et* occurs with a traditionally masculine noun and only nine tokens in which *en* occurs with a traditionally neuter noun. In other words, the phenomenon of gender non-agreement discussed in previous research (cf. Bull, Junttila & Pedersen 1986) is hardly represented in our corpus.

Possessives are less frequent in the data than indefinite articles. Altogether there are 307 noun phrases with possessives: 46 (= 15%) are of the *mitt/ditt/sitt*-category, which typically occurs with neuter nouns. Non-agreement for traditionally neuter nouns is so marginal that *mitt/ditt/sitt*-possessives are excluded from further analysis.

Table 8 is an overview of gender agreement in the 261 possessives with feminine and masculine nouns. Of 82 *mi/di/si*-possessives (27% of the 307 tokens), 77 occur with feminine nouns. Speakers generally prefer post-positioning of possessives. This tendency is more prevalent for *mi/di/si*-phrases than for *min/din/sin*.

Possessive phrase Location	mi/di/si_X (# = 15)		X_mi/di/si (# = 67)		min/din/sin_X (# = 79)		X_min/din/sin (# = 100)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1 Karlsøy	7	0	2	0	0	6	0	11

2 Hammerfest	2	0	11	0	1	5	0	8
3 Kjøllefjord	1	2	4	0	0	3	2	11
4 Vardø	1	0	3	0	0	6	0	14
5 Kirkenes	0	0	11	0	0	7	0	11
6 Kvænangen	0	0	10	0	4	11	1	10
7 Lakselv	2	0	4	0	2	7	0	9
8 Tana	0	0	15	3	5	15	1	15
9 Kautokeino	0	0	4	0	5	2	0	7
Total: 261	13	2	64	3	17	62	4	96

**Table 8** Possessives with traditionally feminine and masculine nouns

Note that the pattern for prepositioned possessives correlates with the pattern for indefinite articles in Table 7. In locations 6–9, traditionally feminine nouns are either combined with postpositioned *mi/di/si* or prepositioned *min/din/sin*. At a glance, it might seem paradoxical that *mi/di/si*-phrases hold such a strong position in communities where the use of the article *ei* is rare or not attested. As we argue in Conzett, Johansen & Sollid (2011: 52), the postposed possessives in Norwegian should not be analysed as representing gender congruence, but rather as expressions of noun inflection. The main argument for this analysis is that the definite form of the noun with a possessive marker constitutes a prosodic unit, preventing any element from being inserted between the noun and the possessive, e.g. between *lampa* and *mi* in *lampa mi* ('my lamp'). Consequently, *mi* can be analysed as an inflectional marker for definiteness. This implies that these dialects, all of which are contact varieties, do not have feminine gender, but rather a two-gender system with common and neuter. With the exception of Karlsøy, preposed

possessives are sparsely documented. The possessives *min/din/sin* in varieties 1–5 behave as expected in a traditional three-gender system, i.e. they co-occur with traditionally masculine nouns.

## 5.2 Noun inflection

In our corpus, there are 1461 traditionally feminine nouns. Table 9 describes the distribution of these nouns according to location and inflection endings.

Location \ Inflection ending	Sg				Pl					
	Weak Indef		Def		Indef			Def		
	<i>-a</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-(e)n</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-er</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-(e)n</i>	<i>-(e)ne</i>	<i>-an</i>
1 Karlsøy	0	17	50	0	12	0	2	5	0	0
2 Hammerfest	12	9	70	1	13	6	2	2	1	4
3 Kjøllefjord	23	1	131	3	17	0	2	7	0	1
4 Vardø	14	10	156	3	3	38	0	2	1	18
5 Kirkenes	7	18	82	1	1	26	2	0	0	14
6 Kvænangen	0	7	126	0	30	5	2	5	0	1
7 Lakselv	1	26	108	1	5	41	2	3	0	15
8 Tana	4	29	93	0	5	23	0	0	0	5
9 Kautokeino	0	28	71	3	3	24	1	1	2	4
Total: 1461	61	145	887	12	89	163	13	25	4	62

**Table 9** Inflection of traditionally feminine nouns

Traditionally, the variation in weak feminine nouns in indefinite singular is one of the main criteria for classifying Norwegian dialects. This is also true for Nord-Troms and Finnmark. The *a*-ending is associated with coastal varieties and the *e*-ending with the inland area. Note also that Karlsøy is described as a transitional area where both *-a* and *-e* are attested, cf.

Jahr & Skare (1996: 54). Our findings show that the most widespread and consistent pattern is the *e*-ending found in the two Nord-Troms locations, Kvænangen and Karlsøy, as well as in Lakselv, Tana and Kautokeino in Inner Finnmark. Kjøllefjord in Western Finnmark is the only location in which the *a*-ending is consistent. In the urban coastal communities Hammerfest, Vardø and Kirkenes there is variation between *-e* and *-a*, with a preference for *-e* in Kirkenes. In traditional accounts for variation in Finnmark, Hammerfest is defined as a part of the *a*-area, while variation between *-e* and *-a* is reported for Vardø (Elstad 1982) and Kirkenes (Paulsen 1971). Variation between *-a* and *-e* is also found in Hammerfest.

As pointed out in section 3.1, the endings in definite singular unambiguously correlate with gender. This is also the case for the locations in question; therefore, we do not pursue these forms any further.

Moving on to indefinite plural, the variation between *-e* and *-er* seems distributed along the West-East axis. In the western locations Karlsøy, Kjøllefjord and Kvænangen, we find the traditional *e*-ending. In Hammerfest, there is variation between *-e* and *-er*. In the eastern locations (Vardø, Kirkenes, Lakselv, Tana and Kautokeino) the *r*-ending is dominant. Paulsen (1971) claims that younger speakers in the Kirkenes area tend to prefer *-a*. This indicates a change in progress in this part of the noun inflection system. Forty years later, the impression we get from the NDC corpus is slightly different: in Kirkenes, the *er*-ending is actually strongly preferred in the indefinite plural form of traditionally feminine nouns. It should be men-

tioned, however, that the two occurrences of *-a* in Kirkenes are found in the speech of younger speakers. When it comes to Hammerfest and Vardø, according to Elstad (1982), the indefinite plural is formed by *-e*. However, in our study, Vardø and Hammerfest are different. In Hammerfest, *-e* is still preferred but co-varies with *-er*; Vardø speakers favour *-er*.

The definite plural, with 91 tokens, is less than half as frequently attested as weak indefinite singular (206 tokens) and indefinite plural (259 tokens). Due to the small number of nouns, the picture for definite plural is less clear than for the rest of the noun inflection system, and we refrain from drawing any conclusions. Still, certain tendencies can be read from Table 9. The geographical distribution of definite plural endings correlates with that of indefinite plural endings. In the West, we find Karlsøy, Kjøllefjord and Kvænangen with *-(e)n*, and in the East, Vardø, Kirkenes, Lakselv and Tana with *-an*. The endings in definite plural in our data are on the whole in accord with what is known from earlier accounts on the systems in Vardø (Elstad 1982) and Kirkenes (Paulsen 1971). When it comes to Hammerfest, *-en* is reported as the typical ending (Elstad 1982: 80). In the NDC data from Hammerfest and Kautokeino, all three endings are represented, though the numbers are very low.

### 5.3 *Summary of distributional patterns*

The first point to note is that we do not find the same geographical distribution for indefinite articles and possessives on the one hand, and noun inflection on the other. Geographic variation of gender seems to be clearly distributed along a coast-inland axis. Coastal locations have a three-gender system, while inland locations have a system with two genders, as illustrated in Table 10. Within the coastal area, we also observe variation along the West-East axis: the farther East, the less distinct the realisation of feminine gender.

	Coast					Inland			
	Western			Eastern		Kvæ	Lak	Tana	Kau
	Kar	Ham	Kjø	Var	Kir				
Indef art	<i>ei</i>			<i>ei/en</i>		<i>en</i>			
Poss	not <i>min</i> + traditionally F					<i>min</i> + traditionally F			

**Table 10** Variation in gender in Nord-Troms and Finnmark

The West-East axis is also relevant for the analysis of plural noun inflection as the attested endings cluster in two main patterns. As illustrated in Table 11, we find the traditional correlation between the endings *-e* in indefinite and *-(e)n* in definite plural in the West; in the East, the corresponding endings are *-er* and *-an*. In Hammerfest, both patterns are represented. Hammerfest is further West than Kjøllefjord, but the attested variation can be ascribed to the fact that Hammerfest is an urban centre.

	West					East				
	Rural			Urban		Rural				
	Kar	Kvæ	Kjø	Ham	Var	Kir	Kvæ	Lak	Tana	Kau
Pl indef	<i>-e</i>			<i>-e</i> <i>-er</i>	<i>-er</i>					

Pl def	<i>-(e)n</i>	<i>-(e)n</i> <i>-an</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-(e)ne</i> <i>-an</i>
--------	--------------	----------------------------	------------	-----------------------------

**Table 11** Variation in plural noun inflection in Nord-Troms and Finnmark

Finally, the coast-inland axis also turns out to be relevant in the findings for weak feminine in singular indefinite form. As Table 12 shows, *-e* is a feature of inland varieties, whereas *-a* is still found in coastal varieties. According to Bull ([1990] 1996: 165), the coastal variant *-a* is spreading into the inland area at the expense of *-e*. Such a development is not apparent from the NDC corpus.

	Coast					Inland			
	Kjø	Ham	Var	Kir	Kar	Kvæ	Lak	Tana	Kau
Sg indef	<i>-a</i>	<i>-a/-e</i>		<i>-e/-a</i>		<i>-e</i>			

**Table 12** Variation in indefinite form of weak feminine nouns in Nord-Troms and Finnmark

## 6. Discussion

As already stated, the hypotheses and predictions put forth by Jahr (e.g. 1984) and Nesse (2002) about gender and noun inflection in Northern Norwegian contact varieties do not hold on closer empirical investigation. Instead we can conclude, at least for the nine locations in our study and also the two locations in Konzett, Johansen & Sollid (2011), that gender has not dissolved. We also see that the noun inflection systems have not become



uniform. We discuss these findings in light of the concepts of stability (6.1) and divergence (6.2).

### 6.1 *Stability*

We maintain that gender in the Norwegian varieties in Northern Norway represents a case of stability. Despite intense language contact and language shift, gender has been transmitted to current generations.

Nesse (2002) sees typological distance as the decisive factor for the development of gender in contact. To better understand this matter, we find it critical to take into account the social circumstances of the contact between the speakers (see also Duke 2009: 186). The examples used by Nesse (2002) represent two different contact situations. The situation in Lyngen<sup>13</sup> in Nord-Troms involves a language shift from the non-gender language Sámi to the gender language Norwegian. In the case of Nedervetil in Finland, on the other hand, the shift goes in the opposite direction, i.e. from the gender language Finland Swedish to the non-gender language Finnish. Moreover, the two gender languages involved are opposites in terms of the social status and prestige they enjoy in the Norwegian and the Finnish speech communities, respectively. In Norway, the gender language is spoken by the majority and has high prestige, whereas in Finland, the gender language is Finland Swedish, which after the independence from Sweden in 1809, became a minority language with

---

<sup>13</sup> Manndalen is in the Lyngen region and is included in Conzett, Johansen & Sollid (2011).

decreasing status and prestige. This comparison of factors shows that the gender/non-gender dichotomy is the only common property in the two contact situations, as illustrated in Figure 3.

	<b>Gender language</b>	<b>Non-gender language</b>
<b>Lyngen (Norway)</b>	<b>Norwegian</b> Majority language Target language in language shift	<b>Sámi</b> Minority language
<b>Nedervetil (Finland)</b>	<b>Finland Swedish</b> Minority language Source language in language shift	<b>Finnish</b> Majority language

**Figure 3** Comparison of gender in contact in Lyngen and Nedervetil

The most prominent factor responsible for the transmission – and therefore the stability – of the gender system in Northern Norway is undoubtedly the fact that gender is a salient feature in Norwegian varieties (cf. Part 3.2). Although we find a two-gender system in the language contact areas, no merger between neuter and masculine has taken place. Furthermore, we find a system with no feminine gender in *Bokmål*, often considered the most prestigious written standard, as well as in the spoken varieties of Oslo (Lødrup 2011) and Bergen (Nesse 2002). In addition, long-term fieldwork experience in Northern Norway has shown us that gender non-agreement involving masculine and neuter receives metalinguistic attention among speakers in contact communities and elsewhere. Bull (2004) also explains the preservation of the gender category in northern contact varieties with the massive norm pressure on speakers in the contact areas, not least through education and mass media.

## 6.2 *Divergence*

We observe that neither the gender category nor the noun inflection system have become uniform. As described in Part 5, the variation we document in the NDC data can be structured along three axes related to external factors that trigger divergent linguistic outcomes in the region.

Variation along the coast-inland axis is the result of the mechanisms of contact and the difference in the time of onset of language shift between the coast and the inland area. The undisputable goal of Norwegianisation was assimilation, but the implications of this policy differed locally because the ethnolinguistic settings were different. On the coast, there was extensive multilingualism and also dialect contact before the imposed language shift. Friis (1861) shows that monolingual Norwegian speaking families are the largest group here. They were most likely speakers of traditional Northern Norwegian varieties. Activities on the coast also attracted people from other regions, transforming the coastline into a dynamic contact zone. Furthermore, we expect that the contact between ethnic groups prior to the state-initiated language shift took place in a context of social equality and was characterised by symmetrical power relations.

Inland, the Norwegian language did not gain a foothold until the assimilation policy started to affect language choice at the family level. While the combination of fishing and small-scale farming was a common means of

living for all three ethnic groups on the coast, reindeer herding inland was intimately tied to Sámi culture and language, forming a domain in which Norwegian hardly gained entry during the period of Norwegianisation. In addition, interethnic marriage has been much more common on the coast. These factors may explain why the realisation of gender in the coastal varieties is in line with the neighbouring traditional varieties. The same line of argumentation holds for the inflection of feminine nouns.

In the areas where Norwegian was imposed by the official assimilation policy, the written standard language had a prominent role in the formation and stabilisation of new contact varieties. This holds true along the coast-inland as well as along the West-East axis. As has been pointed out, the two-gender system is characteristic for the inland region and to a certain extent also for the eastern area. It is noteworthy that the most prestigious variant of written Norwegian always has had a two-gender system (Danish Norwegian, Riksmål, and conservative Bokmål). From our point of view, the presence of *-er* in indefinite plural of traditionally feminine nouns in the eastern inland area can also be ascribed to the influence of the standard language. In Bokmål, *-er* is the only indefinite plural ending. The divergence between West and East also connects to the nation building process started in the 19th century. It was important for the newly established Norwegian nation state to demonstrate its sovereignty in the border area close to Finland and Russia in the East (cf. Eriksen & Niemi 1981), partly through the

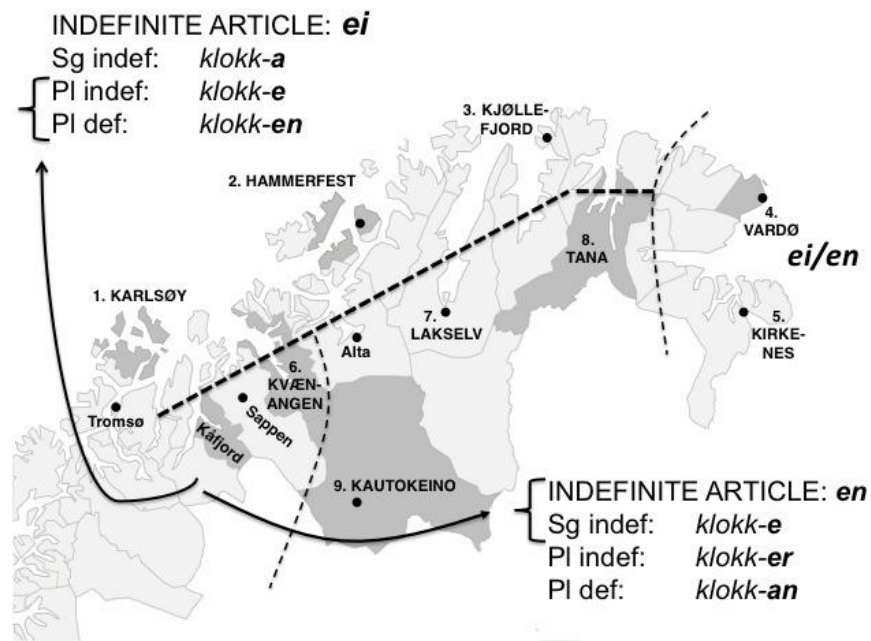
strategic presence of officials and settlers whose varieties were often closely related to the written standard.

Earlier, we described the fjord region of Nord-Troms (Manndalen, Sappen, Kvænangen) as a transitional area. This intermediate position is reflected in unique variations, which can be described as a combination of features typical of the coast (plural *-e/- $(e)n$* ) and the inland area (two-gender system). As we argue in Conzett, Johansen & Sollid (2011), the plural inflection in these varieties is a more intricate system than that of traditional Norwegian varieties (cf. the pattern for the Tromsø dialect in Table 5).

Another possible explanation for this constellation of features is rooted in typological aspects of the noun system, which fundamentally relates to mechanisms at stake in language acquisition. It is now widely accepted that the more closely a feature is tied to a lexical root, the more resistant it is to reduction and loss (Bybee 1985). It has been observed that both mono- and multilingual children acquire the noun inflection system earlier and more easily than the more abstract rules of gender agreement (cf. Rodina & Westergaard 2013). Taking earlier descriptions of the western fjord varieties into account, we see in the present study that these varieties have the traditional plural inflection endings *-e/- $(e)n$*  intact.

As mentioned in Part 2, urbanisation is not common in the northernmost part of Norway. Still, we observe a somewhat broader variation in the urban locations along the West-East axis. Considering that urbanity goes hand in hand with (socio)linguistic heterogeneity, this observation is hardly surprising.

Figure 4 is an illustration of variation in gender and noun inflection in our data along the two axes: inland-coast and West-East. The variation is illustrated with the indefinite article associated with feminine nouns (*ei/en*) and inflection of traditionally feminine nouns (with the noun *klokke* ‘watch’ as the example). In this area, the outcomes of long-term language contact, language shift and dialect contact vary according to the changing demographic and social circumstances; adjacent communities might have slightly different gender and inflection systems. Note, for instance, that the fjord Nord-Troms is a transition area that shares the gender system and the indefinite singular ending with the inland area (with *en* as the indefinite marker and *e*-ending in indefinite singular in traditionally weak feminine nouns) and the noun inflection system with the coast (with *e*- and *en*-ending in plural).



**Figure 4** Variation in gender and noun inflection along two axes: coast-inland and West-East (©Kartverket)

## 7. Conclusion

In this quantitative study, we compare gender and noun inflection in nine varieties in Nord-Troms and Finnmark in Northern Norway. In this area, Norwegian (a gender language) has been in long-term contact with Sámi and Kven (both non-gender languages), and many communities have undergone language shift to Norwegian monolingualism. Contrary to hypotheses advanced in previous studies, gender and noun inflection classes do not dissolve. Instead, these contact varieties of Norwegian show a stable gender

category with either two (common and neuter) or three (masculine, feminine and neuter) genders. Additionally, we observe interesting variation and divergence in noun inflection. Thus, we argue that it is critical to pay attention to micro-level variation in gender and noun inflection as it shows that the outcomes of language and dialect contact are not uniform along a continuum of language and dialect contact. The outcomes of language contact should be interpreted in light of changing social circumstances.

The NDC corpus is suitable for describing variation from a traditional dialectological perspective, though on a general level. We have attempted to disentangle the different factors and mechanisms that affect the outcomes of language and dialect contact in the northernmost part of Norway. We have shown that contemporary variation in this region as a whole, not only in the traditional Sámi and Kven core areas, can be linked to contact. The socio-historical contexts are essential for answering questions related to diachronic development, and therefore stability and divergence, in spoken Norwegian in Nord-Troms and Finnmark. Future research should combine traditional dialectology with sociolinguistic approaches to language contact, two research fields that have been kept apart in research on Northern Norwegian varieties. The present study is an initial step in more comprehensive investigation into variation in one of the sociolinguistically most complex and fascinating areas in Norway.



## References

- Bull, T. [1990] 1996. Målet i Troms og Finnmark. In *Nordnorske dialektar*, E.H. Jahr & O. Skare (eds.), 157–174. Oslo: Novus.
- Bull, T. [1993] 1996. Språkskifte hos kvinner og menn i ei nordnorsk fjordsamebygd. In *Nordnorske dialektar*, E.H. Jahr & O. Skare (eds.), 185–200. Oslo: Novus.
- Bull, T. 1995. Language maintenance and loss in an originally trilingual area in North Norway. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 115: 125–134.
- Bull, T. 2004. Samisk-nordisk språkkontaktforskning – eit statusoversyn. In *The Sámi and the Scandinavians*, J. Kusmenko (ed.), 183–198, Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac.
- Bull, T. 2006. Språkkontakt, etnolekt og asymmetriske maktforhold. Norsk på samisk grunn. *Nordand. Nordisk tidsskrift for andrespråksforskning*. 1(1): 37–50.
- Bull, T. 2012. “Enten man ville eller ikke, så lærte man samisk”. Genus og substantivbøying i ein nordleg norsk språkkontaktvarietet. In *Grammatikk, bruk og norm. Festskrift til Svein Lie på 70-årsdagen, 15. april 2012*, H.O. Enger, J.T. Faarlund & K.I. Vannebo (eds), 33–55. Oslo: Novus.
- Bull, T., Junttila, J.H. & Pedersen, A.K. 1986. Nominalfrasen i skibotnålet i Troms. *Norsk Lingvistisk Tidsskrift* 1(2): 60–71.
- Bybee, J.L. 1985. *Morphology: a study of the relation between meaning and form*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Carstairs-McCarthy, A. 1994. Inflection classes, gender and the Principle of Contrast. *Language* 70: 737–788.

- Conzett, Ph., Johansen, Å.M. & Sollid, H. 2011. Genus og substantivbøying i nordnorske språkkontaktområder. *Nordand. Nordisk tidsskrift for andrespråksforskning*. (6)1: 35–71.
- Dahl, Ö. 2000. Animacy and the notion of semantic gender. In *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*, B. Unterbeck, M. Rissanen, T. Nevalainen & M. Saari (eds), 99–115. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dahl, Ö. 2004. *The Growth and Maintenance of Linguistic Complexity*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Dannemark, N. 2010. *Variasjon og mønster: drag i det norske talemålet til ein del barn i Guovdageaidnu*. PhD thesis, University of Tromsø.
- Duke, J. 2009. *The development of gender as a grammatical category: five case studies from the Germanic languages*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Elstad, K. 1982. Nordnorske dialektar. In *Nordnorsk. Språkarv og språkforhold i Nord-Noreg*. T. Bull & K. Jetne (eds), 9–100. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Eriksen, K. & Niemi, E. 1981. *Den finske fare*. Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Friis, J.A. 1861. Ethnografisk Kart over Finnmarken. Available at <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/omfriis.html> (Read 20.05.2013).
- Hansen, L.I. & Olsen, B. 2004. *Samenes historie frem til 1750*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk.
- Hockett, C.F. 1958. *A course in modern linguistics*. New York: MacMillan.
- Jahr, E.H. 1984. Language Contact in Northern Norway. Adstratum and Substratum in the Norwegian, Sami and Finnish of Northern Norway. *Acta Borealia* 1: 103–112.
- Jahr, E.H. & Skare (eds), O. 1996. *Nordnorske dialektar*. Oslo: Novus forlag.

- Jaklin, A. 2006. *Historien om Nord-Norge*. [Oslo]: Gyldendal.
- Junttila, J.H. 1986. Språkkontakt i ei bygd i Nord-Troms. *Nordlyd* 12: 179–204.
- Junttila, J.H. 1988. Språkval og språkbruk i Skibotn. Kven forstår kven? MA thesis, University of Tromsø.
- Kusmenko, J. 2000. Entwicklung des Genussystems in den skandinavischen Sprachen. In *Arbeiten zur Skandinavistik. 13. Arbeitstagung der deutschsprachigen Skandinavistik*. F. Paul (ed), 469–479 Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang Verlag.
- Le Page, R.B. & Tabouret-Keller, A. 1985. *Acts of identity. Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lødrup, H. 2011. Hvor mange genus er det i Oslo-dialekten? *Maal og Minne* 2: 120–136.
- Martinussen, B. [1991] 1996. Mot én dialekt i Finnmark. In *Nordnorske dialektar*, E.H. Jahr & O. Skare (eds), 238–248. Oslo: Novus.
- NDC = Johannessen, J.B., Priestley, J., Hagen, K., Åfarli, T.A. & Vangsnes, Ø.A. 2009. The Nordic Dialect Corpus - an Advanced Research Tool. In *Proceedings of the 17th Nordic Conference of Computational Linguistics NODALIDA 2009*. NEALT Proceedings Series Volume 4, K. Jokinen & E. Bick (eds). Available at: <http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/handle/10062/9206>.
- Nesse, A. 2002. *Språkkontakt mellom norsk og tysk i hansatidens Bergen*. Oslo: Novus.
- Nesse, A. 2005. Boken – han og Kua – den. Om endringer i norske genussystem. *Maal og Minne* 2: 136–146.
- Paulsen, K.A. 1971. Litt om det norske språket i Sør-Varanger tidligere og i dag. Kort oversikt over lydverk og formverk i Sør-Varanger-dialekten. MA thesis, University of Oslo.

- Rasmussen, T. & Nolan J.S. 2011. Reclaiming Sámi languages: indigenous language emancipation from East to West. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 209: 35–55.
- Rodina, Y. & Westergaard, M. 2013. The acquisition of gender and declension class in a non-transparent system: monolinguals and bilinguals. *Studia Linguistica* 67(1): 47–67.
- Romaine, S. 1988. *Pidgin and creole languages*. London: Longman.
- Sollid, H. 2005. *Språkdannelse og -stabilisering i møtet mellom kvensk og norsk*. Oslo: Novus.
- Sollid, H. 2013. Ethnolects in Northern Norway: From national negligence to local linguistic pride. In *Multilingualism and Language Diversity in Urban Areas*, P. Siemund, I. Gogolin, M. Schulz & J. Davydova (eds), 63–94, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Thomason, S.G. 2001. *Language contact*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Thomason, S. G. & Kaufman, T. 1988. *Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Trosterud, T. 2008. Language Assimilation During the Modernisation Process: Experiences from Norway and North-West Russia. *Acta Borealia* 25 (9): 93–112.
- Trudgill, P. 1999. Language contact and the function of linguistic gender. *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 35: 133–152.