

Preface

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The year 2019 saw the start of a new programme at the University of Stavanger called *Linguistic Identities*. It was initiated by Merja Stenroos, Professor of English Linguistics, and was funded until 2022. During that period two symposia were held: the first one on 12 and 13 September 2019 under its general title, and the second one on 29 and 30 November 2021 with the added subtitle *Spelling, Writing and Identity*. These featured papers given by members of the English and Nordic sections at the Stavanger Department of Cultural Studies and Languages as well as by international academics working in these areas. The focus of the latter symposium prompted us to consider the series *LautSchriftSprache – ScriptandSound* as a suitable platform for the publication of some select papers as well as two specifically commissioned articles. This decision was strengthened by the fact that one of the speakers and contributors is also one of the co-editors of this series, namely Gaby Waxenberger, Apl. Professor of English Language and Medieval Literature at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

The notion of identity may be defined in a number of ways, depending on the context and the direction of research. For the purpose of the Stavanger programme area, linguistic identities have been characterised as “those realizations of social, cultural and geographical identities that are communicated through linguistic choices”. Of course, these may involve not only the actual language or variety that is used, but also the choices within specific linguistic categories, such as pronunciation or vocabulary. The second symposium and this resulting volume focus on the written aspect. It presents several cases of how identities have been expressed by specific orthographic conventions within some languages throughout various time periods from the early Middle Ages up to the present day. Some aspects covered include the spelling of names, the use of archaisms and the role of the intended audience. The book is divided into three sections, which are devoted to English, the Nordic languages of Icelandic and Norwegian, and some constructed languages respectively.

The first section begins with a study on one of the oldest pieces of evidence for the English language, namely the more than five metre tall Ruthwell Cross, dated to the eighth century. Gaby Waxenberger discusses the runes employed in its inscription and explains their phonetic realisations in relation to those found on other artefacts. Then Merja Stenroos takes us into the Middle English period by focussing on specific spellings in some fifteenth-century manuscripts, such as British Library Harley 1735. Linguistic identity is expressed here by the use of initial <x> in *shall* and *should*, which is shown to be a typical feature of the Norfolk

area and its surroundings. Staying in the fifteenth century but also moving into the beginning of the sixteenth is Kjetil V. Thengs, who discusses some instances of orthographic variation, such as the realisation of the variable (sh) or the Old English *ge-* prefix, in two sets of churchwardens' accounts produced at Oxford during the period 1424–1525. These demonstrate individual preferences for certain spelling conventions, thereby providing evidence for the various geographical origins of their scribes. The final contribution on the English language is devoted to onomastics and extends over several time periods, from the early Middle Ages up to the present day. On the basis of various examples, Carole Hough traces the changing role and form of both place and people spellings within Britain and relates them to the idea of identity in this context.

The second section presents a wide range of topics drawn from Icelandic and Norwegian language history, including onomastics. It starts out with a detailed overview of different spelling customs in Iceland and Norway in the thirteenth century. Haraldur Bernharðsson points out that even though the linguistic differences between the two countries were relatively small, two separate but parallel writing traditions can be identified in the preserved manuscript material. This, he claims, made it possible to use orthographic distinctions as social or cultural markers across these countries. In the next study, Jóhannes B. Sigtryggsson introduces us to an individual who used orthographic markers to distinguish himself: Eggert Ólafsson (1726–1768) was an Enlightenment figure in Iceland who advocated for a modern spelling of the language, still allowing himself some very archaic traits in his own poems. Jóhannes shows how these archaisms are linked to a preference by some writers of the early modern period for “reviving” medieval features that they found in old manuscripts. With Agnete Nesse we move from Iceland to Norway, but thematically we are still dealing with deviant spelling traits. Nesse takes a perspective “from below”, asking to what degree people adhered to official norms of style and spelling when writing for the private sphere. Using examples from different genres and times, spanning the long period 1700–1976, Nesse seeks to shed light on the “linguistic identities” of the writers by analysing them through dimensions like traditional/modern and urban/rural. The last two studies in the Nordic section are devoted to onomastics: Klaus Johan Myrvoll focuses on a striking feature of Norwegian naming customs in the wake of the national independency from 1814, that is the tendency of “Norwegianizing” one’s personal names. Myrvoll shows that this trend was most common among authors and poets as well as philologists. Furthermore, he finds a strong correlation between an engagement in the Norwegian language movement and the act of re-spelling one’s name in a more Norwegian fashion. In the last contribution of the Nordic section, Inge Særheim discusses the strong feelings of identity that many Norwegians express towards the official regulation of the spelling of placenames. This situation is related both to the recent Norwegian language history, going through a process of re-establishing a Norwegian written language, with implications also for the spelling of placenames, and to the fact that many Norwegians derive their family names from farm names and therefore have special feelings towards their spelling.

The final section contains just one contribution, though it deals with more than one language, namely some conlangs (constructed languages) found in fiction, in particular Klingon, Elvish and pseudo-historical as well as future Englishes. Oliver M. Traxel presents their orthographic peculiarities when realised in the Latin script and discusses the ideas behind these so that an (English-speaking) audience would know about their pronunciation as intended by their creators.

The activities of the programme area and the publication of this volume had to overcome numerous obstacles. After a successful first year with several productive meetings and the conduction of the first symposium, COVID-19 hit, and besides its impact on the health of its members and their families it also brought with it many organisational problems. These resulted in the delays of several papers to be submitted for this volume. Some even had to be withdrawn completely. For these reasons, the book is not only shorter than originally planned but was also published more than a year later than was initially arranged with the editors of the series and the publishing house. We are therefore very grateful to Paola Cotticelli-Kurras (University of Verona) and Gaby Waxenberger (University of Munich) as well as to Ursula Reichert, Carolin Solzbacher and Miriam Würfel (Reichert Verlag), without whose patience and understanding the realisation of this volume would not have been possible. Further thanks in this regard go to Anna Sara Lahr (Reichert Verlag) for providing the final layout and formatting, thereby taking a lot of additional work from the editors, which would have resulted in even more delays.

There are a number of other people to whom we would like to express our gratitude. Particular mention must be made to Merja Stenroos (University of Stavanger) for the initiation of the programme area and for leading the group through difficult times, though regrettably she had to withdraw from the editorial board of this publication. We are especially grateful to the Department of Cultural Studies and Languages at the University of Stavanger, with its Head Kjetil V. Thengs, for providing generous financial assistance, without which this volume could not have been realised. Further thanks go to David Natvig (University of Stavanger), who meticulously went through all papers in the Nordic section and performed copy editing (“språkvask”) where necessary. More quality assurance was conducted by the (anonymous) peer reviewers of all articles, who provided many useful suggestions for improvement. Finally, Oliver M. Traxel would like to dedicate this volume to his late father, Dr. med. Herbert Traxel, who always believed in him and without whose support in all areas of life his academic career might not have been possible.