

## Introduction

*Marianne Rathje*, editor of the volume and organiser of the research network *SwiSca* (*Swearing in Scandinavia*)

Swearing research has traditionally suffered from neglect. Perhaps due to the controversial and taboo nature of such language use, linguists have not taken swearing seriously, resulting in a lack of academic research. In recent years, however, as language aggression and swearword usage has become recognised as a legitimate research area, more linguists have investigated the area. But this research has primarily been on swearing in the English-speaking parts of the world, whereas research on swearing in the Nordic languages is still sparse.

Nevertheless, a few researchers have investigated swearwords in the Nordic countries, which is why a network for researchers of swearwords in Scandinavia was established in 2010. The name of this research network is SwiSca – an abbreviation of “Swearing in Scandinavia”. The aim of this research network is, first and foremost, to unite these Nordic researchers and benefit from the linguistic and cultural similarities we have in the Nordic countries, and to share research results, definitions of swearing and references to publications on swearing research.

Another purpose of the research network is to mutually inform each other about relevant conferences and, in the future, raise funds for Nordic research projects on swearing and compare swearword usage in the Nordic countries.

The members of the network come from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Lithuania.

From Denmark:

- Marianne Rathje (University of Southern Denmark)

From Norway:

- Eli-Marie Drange (University of Agder)
- Ruth Vatvedt Fjeld (University of Oslo)
- Ingrid Kristine Hasund (University of Agder)
- Anna-Brita Stenström (University of Bergen)

From Sweden:

- Lars-Gunnar Andersson (University of Gothenburg)
- Erik Falk (Uppsala University)
- Kristy Beers Fägersten (Södertörn University)
- Magnus Ljung (Stockholm University)
- Ulla Stroh-Wollin (Uppsala University)

From Finland:

- Mona Enell-Nilsson (University of Vaasa)
- Minna Hjort (University of Helsinki)

From Lithuania:

- Giedrius Tamaševičius (Institute of Lithuanian Language, University of Vilnius)

So far the activities of the network have included organising the theme session “Swearing in the Nordic Countries” in Freiburg at the International Conference on General and Nordic Linguistics in April 2012, and holding a network meeting in Copenhagen in December 2012, where we discussed the possibility of having a common inter-Nordic research project on swearing. You can learn more about SwiSca and our future plans on the website <http://nordisksprogkoordination.org/swisca>, where you will also be able to see publications from members of the network.

The most prominent event in the history of the network was the conference “Symposium on Swearing in the Nordic Countries” held in Copenhagen on 6 December 2012, organised by SwiSca and financed by the Danish Language Council. At the symposium the SwiSca network had its first meeting as a group as it shared with the rest of the world what kind of swearing research is going on in the Nordic countries at the moment.

This volume is a written account of the “Symposium on Swearing in the Nordic Countries” and contains the peer-reviewed proceedings from the symposium.

The first theme of the volume is “Swearing and Age”. Ingrid Kristine Hasund, Eli-Marie Drange and Anna-Brita Stenström, in their article *The pragmatic functions of swearing by mother in English, Spanish and Norwegian teenage talk*, discuss the use of swearing by *mother* (e.g. *your mum is a whore*) in English, Spanish and Norwegian teenage language. The data are drawn from three audio-recorded corpora of spoken teenage language, *The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage*

*Language* (COLT), *Corpus Oral de Lenguaje Adolescent de Madrid* (COLAm), and *Språkkontakt och Ungdomsspråk i Norden* (UNO-Oslo), representing teenage language from London, Madrid and Oslo, respectively. In the contribution *Attitudes to Danish swearwords and abusive terms in two generations*, Marianne Rathje examines young and elderly Danes' attitudes toward swearing to find out whether members of the older group really think swearing is as bad as it has been suggested in newspapers' readers' letters. The purpose of the study is to get an insight into how young and elderly Danes *experience* swearwords – the opposite of *using* them.

The theme “Swearing in the Media” is covered by two articles. Kristy Beers Fägersten explores the use of U.S. American swearwords in the Swedish media in the article *The use of English swear words in Swedish media*. She shows how swearword usage may characterise the Swedish variety of lingua franca English and how English swearwords are incorporated into Swedish media. In *Five decades of swearing on air in Lithuania*, Giedrius Tamaševičius seeks to find a Lithuanian answer to the question of whether it is true that today there is much more swearing on radio and television than before, as the media would have us believe. Material for this research was selected from texts found in the *Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media* (1960–2011), and covers three talk-based genre groups: news broadcasts, documentaries and talk shows.

Two articles cover the theme “Swearing and Translation”. In her contribution *Lost in translation? Swearing in the Swedish Millennium films and their German and Finnish translations*, Mona Enell-Nilsson poses the questions: What happens with swearing in film translation? How often is swearing omitted? How is swearing translated if not omitted? The article aims to answer these questions in a case study of the German and Finnish translations of the three Swedish films based on Stieg Larsson's popular crime trilogy *Millennium*. In the article *Perkele – A literary companion: A glimpse at the function and frequency of the Finnish swearword in translated and non-translated contemporary fiction*, Minna Hjort discusses the use of the Finnish lexeme *perkele* from two points of view: a quantitative macro-level analysis of regularities in the use of *perkele* in translated and non-translated Finnish-language fiction and a qualitative analysis of certain realisations of the meaning potential on the micro level.

The final theme of this book is “Historical Swearing”. In the article *In the company of the devil and Our Lord through three centuries – Swearing in Swedish dramas*, Ulla Stroh-Wollin takes us through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Sweden and asks the questions: What swearwords did earlier generations use? Has the view on swearing changed over time? Were there different norms for men and women or for people in different social classes? These questions

are answered on the basis of investigations into swearing in a corpus of 45 Swedish dramas from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Pragmatic dimensions of Swedish insults in the 1600s* is the title of Erik Falk's contribution. He hypothesises that the insult was a significantly different social act in early modern Sweden compared to what it is today, and the departure point of this study is that the insult was an important feature of verbal and social behaviour in Sweden in the 1600s. The hypothesis is tested by examining insults in the language used in courts of law, analysing how they were explicitly expressed in the texts. Finally, in *The vocabulary of Norwegian cursing and swearing – Some of its history, meaning and function*, Ruth Vatvedt Fjeld takes us on a guided tour through the history of Norwegian swearing and sheds light on the different lexical meanings and pragmatic functions of Norwegian swearing.

The SwiSca network would like to thank the peer reviewers of the volume, and Magnus Ljung for proofreading the English version of the articles. We are also very grateful to the Danish Language Council for making the symposium and the book of proceedings possible.