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6. Dialects and synchronic variation

6.1 The earliest comments on dialectal differences in the Faroes

6.1.1 Introduction

The first existing remarks on Faroese dialects all mention some differences between roughly the “North” and the “South”. Already in the 17th century the minister Lucas Jacobsøn Debes (1673) says that there is a major difference between the North and the South although he does not say what it consists of (see Weyhe 1996b:72). Other early descriptions and comments refer to three or even four main dialect areas. While the criteria for these divisions are usually less than clear, it is of some interest to note which features are mentioned and where the geographical dividing lines are assumed to be.

6.1.2 Svabo’s division

As Weyhe points out (1996b:72–73), Svabo assumes three main dialects in his earliest comments on Faroese (in his dictionary manuscript from 1773), namely the Southern dialect, the Northern dialect and the Tórshavn dialect (“den Suderøeske, Norderøeske og den Torshavnske”, cf. Svabo 1970:XVII). A few years later (in his report from his expedition to the Faroes 1781–1782) he has added a fourth dialect, which he refers to as the “common” dialect (“Den Almindelige” — see Svabo 1959:265). This dialect seems to be spoken on the island of Vágar (where Svabo came from) and possibly also on Northern Streymoy and even Southern Eysturoy, although that is by no means clear (see Weyhe 1996b:73). Svabo does not describe the dialectal differences in any detail, but they include the following (see Weyhe 1996b:72):

(1) Svabo’s division of Faroese dialects:

Dialect name:	Areas included:	Characteristics mentioned:
Southern (“den Suderøeske”)	Suðuroy, Sandoy, Skúvoy, St. Dímun	old /a/ = [a] before /ng, nk/: <i>tangi, rangt</i>
Tórshavn (“den Torshavnske”)	Tórshavn	‘the most corrupt’ (“den mest fordervede”)
Common (“den Almindelige”)	Vágar (? and possibly more)	?
Northern (“den Norderøeske”)	Fugloy, Svínoy and other Northern islands	intonation, pronunciation, lexical differences

As shown in (1), Svabo mentions one of the dialectal features that are still well known characteristics of “Southern” Faroese, namely the dialect areas south of Skopunarfjørður (the channel between Streymoy and Sandoy, see the dialect map at the end of this chapter), namely the pronunciation of *ang/ank*-sequences. We will return to this in section 6.2.1 below. The other criteria that he mentions are less clear, especially with respect to the “common” dialect and the Tórshavn dialect. By saying that the Tórshavn dialect is “corrupt” he is presumably referring to Danish influence, as he believed in fact that Faroese was about to disappear (hence his interest in making a dictionary and collecting the ballads — these were to be preserved as a historical relic).

6.1.3 Some evidence from the early 19th century

Svabo was the first to write extensively in “modern” Faroese and consequently he had to invent his own orthography. Since he decided to use a relatively phonetic (as opposed to morpho-phonemic or etymological) orthography, his writings give valuable information about his pronunciation. Other writers in the early 19th century also used this kind of orthography (see section 7.3 below), including the Faroese minister Schrøter, who translated St. Matthew’s Gospel (1823) from Danish and ‘The History of the Inhabitants of Faroe’ (*Færeyínga saga*, 1832).

Schrøter had written an introduction (for Danish readers!) to his translation of St. Matthew and it was included in his manuscript but never published (see Matras (ed.) 1973b:18–19). This introduction contains interesting comments on the dialect situation in the Faroes around 1820. Schrøter says that there are two main dialects, the Northern dialect and the Southern one (or “Noran Maali” and “Sunnan Maali” as the Faroese call them, he says (Matras (ed.) 1973b:19). He mentions the differences listed in (2):

(2) Schrøter’s division of Faroese dialects:

Dialect name:	Areas included:	Characteristics mentioned:
Southern (“Sunnan Maali”)	Suðuroy, Sandoy, Skúvoy, Stóra Dímun	no distinction between dual and plural in the pronominal inflection <i>okur</i> ‘we’ (on Suðuroy) no person distinction in the pres.plural of verbs <i>til tess</i> (gen.)
Northern (“Noran Maali”)	Everything north of Skopunarfjørður (?)	distinction between dual and plural person distinction in the pres.plural of verbs intonation <i>til tað</i> (acc.) lexical differences

Although Schrøter only talks about two dialects, he also says that the Northern one is purest on some of the northernmost islands and the northeastern part of Eysturoy and of Streymoy (see Matras (ed.) 1973b:19). Since he also says that the Northern dialect is closer to Old Icelandic

(“det ældste Islandske” — cf. the person distinction in the plural of verbs and the distinction between dual and plural in the inflection of pronouns), it is unlikely that this holds for the Tórshavn dialect of the time, which Svabo claimed was the “most corrupt” a couple of decades earlier.¹ Some of the features that Schrøter refers to as Southern may also have been restricted to parts of the area south of Skopunarfjørður, or Suðuroy in particular, and he says, in fact, that the use of *okur* for *vit* ‘we’ is restricted to Suðuroy, which it still is (see section 6.3.1 below).

The distinction between dual and plural in the pronominal inflection is interesting since it seems to have disappeared much earlier in other Nordic dialects (see especially Helgi Guðmundsson 1972).² The dialectal person distinction in the present plural of verbs is also interesting and it appears to have survived in some places in the Faroes into the 19th century (see e.g. the discussion in Weyhe 1996b:105ff. and section 7.5.6 below).³

Schrøter does, however, maintain that the most important dialectal differences have to do with the pronunciation and mentions a “singing” intonation on Sandoy and that the people on Suðuroy speak faster than others and that their speech is perhaps closer to Danish or even English than that of the others (Matras (ed.) 1973b:20).⁴ Schrøter was born in Tórshavn but served mainly as a minister in Suðuroy and it is therefore to be expected that the dialectal features found in his own writings would either reflect his Tórshavn dialect or the dialect of Suðuroy and not, say, the northernmost dialect, although he seems to admire it to some extent. Matras (ed. 1973b:45) claims that although Schrøter uses Northern spelling of forms like *genga* (for *ganga*) and *længur* (for *langur* — he sometimes uses “æ” where “e” would have been expected on the basis of the pronunciation and etymology), his translation shows some signs of being done in Suðuroy, especially in the selection of lexical forms. Schrøter was actually aware of this and his manuscript contains extensive comments on the selection of words, often pointing out that different expressions or lexical items might be used “in the Northern islands” or “in some dialects” (see Matras (ed.) 1973b:28ff.).

Finally, it should be mentioned here that Schrøter’s colleague Sørensen, who was a minister in the Northern islands when Schrøter’s translation of St. Matthew came out, says that his parishioners complained about some of the words or word forms used in Schrøter’s translation. In a letter to the Danish bible society, which had published the translation, he even offered to translate the gospel into the Northern dialect and sent a short passage for illustrative purposes. This

¹ Schrøter was born in Tórshavn so it is understandable that he does not make any negative comments on the Tórshavn dialect.

² Although Schrøter’s initial illustrative example only involves the 1st person (he gives the forms as *vjid* and *veár*) it seems likely that the distinction was also still made in the second person in the Northern dialect at the time (he later gives examples with *tjid* and *teár* when illustrating the verbal inflection).

³ Schrøter actually illustrates this distinction with the forms 1pl. *lesum*, 2pl. *lesun* and 3pl. *lesa* for the verb *lesa* ‘read’, which is somewhat odd, while Hammershaimb (1854:270) says that the relevant forms end in *-um* (*-un*), *-ið* and *-a* for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person respectively, which is what one would have expected on the basis of Old Norse and Modern Icelandic evidence.

⁴ In Schrøter’s own words: “Allermeest afviiger Udtalen paa de forskiællige Øer fra hinanden, den Sandøiske, som syngende, den Suderøiske, som hurtigst og meest liig den danske eller maaske Angelsaxiske” (Matras (ed.) 1973b:20).

passage was later published by Møller (1927) and compared to Schrøter’s translation of the same verses. Møller’s conclusion is that the Northern dialect is closer to Danish while the Southern one is more similar to Icelandic or Old Norse (Møller 1827:558), which is the exact opposite of Schrøter’s claims cited earlier. Møller bases this conclusion mainly on the form of a few words, such as *skulde* in Sørensen’s translation vs. *skjildi* in Schrøter’s (for ‘should’), and on the order of head and modifier in possessive constructions like Sørensen’s *Guds Sonur* and *tuin Gud* vs. Schrøter’s *Sonur Guds* and *Gud tuin* (for ‘God’s son’ and ‘your God’, resp.), where Sørensen has the Danish order and Schrøter the one more common in Old Norse (and Icelandic). But it is not clear how illustrative this is for the dialectal differences at the time since Sørensen was actually Danish himself! But there is a clear and consistent difference in the spelling of old /ei/ in the two translations: Schrøter consistently writes “ai” while Sørensen writes “oi”, as illustrated in (3) (see Møller 1827:555–558, Matras (ed.) 1973b:51–54):

(3)	Modern Faroese:	Schrøter’s translation:	Sørensen’s translation:
	<i>bleiv</i> ‘was, became’	<i>blaiv</i>	<i>bloiv</i>
	<i>steinarnir</i> ‘the stones’	<i>Stainanir</i>	<i>Stoinanir</i>
	<i>veik</i> ‘moved, went’	<i>vaig</i>	<i>voig</i>
	<i>eitt</i> ‘a(n.)’	<i>ait</i>	<i>oit</i>
	<i>tveir</i> ‘two(m.)’	<i>tvair</i>	<i>tvoir</i>
	<i>teir</i> ‘they(m.)’	<i>tair</i>	<i>toir</i>
	etc.		

As is well known and will be discussed in section 6.2.3.1 below, this is a dialectal difference that still exists in the Faroes and the dialect boundary is usually said to be Kaldbaksfjørður north of Tórshavn.

6.1.4 Hammershaimb’s division 1854

Hammershaimb was the first to publish a Faroese grammar and it came out in 1854. He assumes the dialect division outlined in (4) (see e.g. Weyhe 1996b:73–74).

(4) Hammershaimb’s division of Faroese dialects 1854

Dialect name:	Areas included:	Characteristics include:
Southern (“Søndenfjordsdialekten”)	Suðuroy, Sandoy, Skúvoy, Stóra Dímun	old /a/ = [a] before /ng, nk/ old /ei/ = [ai]
The Streymoy-dialect (“Strømødialekten”)	Streymoy (incl. Tórshavn), Vágur, part of Eysturoy	old /ei/ = [ai] (but on Northern Streymoy and Eysturoy old /ei/ = [oi]) a “flat” pronunciation of the vowels Danish influence
Northern (“Norderødialekten”)	the Northern islands and North-east Eysturoy	old /ei/ = [oi] special pronunciation of old /á/ intonation

Here we find again some negative comments on the language in Tórshavn, especially because of the Danish influence, but it is not entirely clear what Hammershaimb means by ‘flat and more provincial pronunciation of the vowels’ (“plattere, stærkere bondeagtig udtale af selvlydene” — cf. Weyhe 1996b:74). See the next section for more details.

6.1.5 Hammershaimb and Jakobsen 1891

Hammershaimb’s anthology (1891) contains a revised version of the grammar he published in 1854. Hammershaimb mentions that Ludvig F.A. Wimmer had read and commented on the first version and his collaborator Jakob Jakobsen had then revised it (Hammershaimb 1891, vol. I, p. III). As we will see below, the division into dialects in the anthology is very close to what is appropriate today. The main dividing line is Skopunarfjørður and Hammershaimb and Jakobsen base their division on the following kinds of facts:

- (5)a. Phonetic quality of certain vowels, partially positionally conditioned (includes both monophthongs and diphthongs).
- b. Differences in the aspiration (voicing?) of /p,t,k/ after long vowels.⁵
- c. Certain differences in the plural forms of the 1st and 2nd person pronouns.

Based on differences of this sort, Hammershaimb and Jakobsen came up with a dialect division which can be diagrammed as in (6) in a simplified form (we have slightly modified some of the phonetic descriptions):

(6) Hammershaimb’s and Jakobsen’s division of Faroese dialects 1891

Main dialect	Common characteristics	Subdialects	Areas include	Special characteristics
Southern	old /a/ = [a] before /ng, nk/ /p,t,k/ unaspir. after long vowels short /ou/ (ó) = [ɔ]	Suðuroy	Suðuroy	old /æ/ = [ɛ]/[ɛ] short vowel bef. /kr, pl/ ógv [ɔǥv] okur, tykur ‘we, you’
		Sandoy	Sandoy, Skúvoy, Dímun	old /e/ = [ei] bef. /ngi, ngj/
Northern	old /a/ = [ɛ] before /ng, nk/ /p,t,k/ aspir. after (long) vowels short /ou/ (ó) = [œ]	Southern Streymoy Hestur, Koltur	S. Streymoy (Tórshavn), Vágur, Nólsoy,	
		Northern islands	N. Streymoy, Eysturoy, the Northern islands	old /ei/ = [ɔi]

⁵ Hammershaimb and Jakobsen say that /p,t,k/ are ‘fully voiced’ (“fuldstemt”) in the South in the relevant environment but they may be talking about lack of aspiration (cf. section 6.2.1.3 below).

Hammershaimb and Jakobsen also observe, that within these four main groups one could in fact distinguish separate dialects, e.g. on Vágar.

As we will see, the Skopunarfjørður-isogloss is still important in Modern Faroese (cf. the dialect map at the end of this chapter) and the dialectal differences listed in (6) are still largely preserved. But recent research has also discovered additional dialectal differences, especially in morphology and syntax, and these too seem to follow the main isoglosses, at least to a certain extent.

In the following overview we will discuss phonological (or phonetic), morphological and syntactic differences in turn.

6.2 Phonetic and phonological differences today

6.2.1 Some North-South differences

Phonological differences that still roughly follow the North-South split include the following:

6.2.1.1 Old /a/ before /ng, nk/

Old /a/ is pronounced [a] before /ng, nk/ in the Southern variety (Far. *sunnanfjørðs* ‘south of the fjord/channel’) but [ɛ] in the Northern dialect (*norðanfjørðs*). Examples:

(7)	Southern:	Northern:
<i>mangur</i> ‘many’	[maŋgʊɹ]	[meŋgʊɹ]
<i>blankur</i> ‘bright, shining’	[blaŋkʊɹ]	[bleŋkʊɹ]

6.2.1.2 Short /ou/ (ó)

Short /ou/ is pronounced [ɔ] in the South (and in Nólsoy) but [œ] in the North. Examples:

(8)	Southern and Nólsoy:	Northern:
<i>bóndi</i> ‘farmer’	[bɔndɪ]	[bœndɪ]

6.2.1.3 Aspiration, preaspiration and voicing of stops after long vowels

There are rather clear dialectal differences with respect to the phonetic quality of /p,t,k/ after long vowels. As mentioned above, Hammershaimb and Jakobsen referred to this difference as one of voicing (Hammershaimb 1891, vol. I, p. LVII). Rischel (1961:XXVII) says that these phonemes are sometimes ‘more or less non-aspirated but voiceless’ (“mere eller mindre uaspirerede, men ustemte”), but dialectally also with ‘weak preaspiration’ (“svag præaspiration”) or even voiced. Werner (1963) also talks about preaspiration in this context but the conditions are unclear. Weyhe (1987:304) mentions weakening of the stops in the whole Southern area (“klusilsvækkelsen [i.e., ‘stop weakening’], der findes i hele søndenfjordsområdet”) but says that it can also be found elsewhere, and Zachariassen (1968) says that leaving out the aspiration (“at blásturin ... verður sleptur”) in this context is the usual pronunciation in Suðuroy but also

occurs in the Southern Streymoy variant of the Northern dialect, which includes Tórshavn (but there is no “weakening of stops” in Vágar, cf. below).

Phonetic measurements that we have done largely verify the general story. Thus /p,t,k/ are typically **preaspirated** after long vowels north of Southern Streymoy, and also in Vágar, except after the high [i] or [u] or diphthohgs that end in these elements (such as [ui:], [ɔi:], [ɔu:]). Postaspiration of /p,t,k/ after long vowels only occurs sporadically, e.g. in Tórshavn (where /p,t,k/ are typically not preaspirated after long vowels), and it is probably very rare in Suðuroy. Partial voicing of the stops seems to occur sporadically in Suðuroy. The table in (9) represents our attempt to summarize this. The versions given in parentheses represent sporadic pronunciations, which may not be restricted to the areas in question although they have been found to occur there. Thus a (weak) postaspiration of stops may be heard in this context in the Northern dialect area (e.g. when the stops are preceded by one of the diphthongs that seem to prevent preaspiration), and preaspirated stops in this context do occur in Tórshavn, although they are much less common than in the Northern area. Thus the table in (9) necessarily represents a simplification:

(9)	South of Skopunarfjørður:	Southern Streymoy (incl. Tórshavn):	Northern areas, including Vágar:
<i>pápi</i> ‘dad’	[p ^h ɔa:bɪ] ([p ^h ɔa:bɪ])	[p ^h ɔa:bɪ] ([p ^h ɔa:p ^h ɪ])	[p ^h ɔa: ^h pɪ]
<i>bátur</i> ‘boat’	[bɔa:ɖuɹ] ([bɔa:ɖuɹ])	[bɔa:ɖuɹ]([bɔa:t ^h uɹ])	[bɔa: ^h tuɹ]
<i>baka</i> ‘bake’	[bɛa:ɡa] ([bɛa:ɡa])	[bɛa:ɡa] ([bɛa:k ^h a])	[bɛa: ^h ka]

What is of special interest here, e.g. in comparison with Icelandic, is that the “hard” pronunciation of /p,t,k/ after long vowels typically involves **preaspiration** and **postaspiration** only occurs sporadically in this context in Faroese, whereas the “hard” dialect of Icelandic (cf. e.g. the overview in Kristján Árnason and Höskuldur Thráinsson 2003 and references cited there; see also Höskuldur Thráinsson 1998a) involves **postaspiration** only (**preaspiration** never occurs after long vowels in Icelandic). This may have to do with the different phonological nature of preaspiration in the two languages. As described in chapter 2 above, there is some evidence that preaspiration in Faroese tends to be shorter than Icelandic preaspiration (see also the discussion in Pétur Helgason 2002 of different phonological nature and phonetic realization of preaspiration).

6.2.2 Dialectal features peculiar to Suðuroy

The Suðuroy dialect is different from that in the rest of the South in a few respects (and there are even dialectal differences within Suðuroy itself). The features concerned include those described below.

6.2.2.1 Vowel length

As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, stressed vowels are long in most of Faroese before the consonant clusters /p,t,k/ + /j,r/ and /p,k/ + /l/. This is not true for the dialect of Suðuroy (except for /k+j/ = [tʃ]). Some of the relevant contrasts are described below. The reader should keep in mind that the degree and type of aspiration of the stop may vary depending on dialect, as discussed in

section 6.2.1.3 above, but there is no need to represent all the possibilities here. Note also that we mark the stops (and the [ʃ]) as long in words of this sort in the Suðuroy-dialect, since preliminary phonetic measurements show that there they can be over twice as long as the vowels preceding them, whereas the stops (and the [ʃ]) following the long vowels in the other dialects are shorter relative to the vowel length.

(10)	Suðuroy:	Elsewhere:
<i>epl(i)</i> ‘potato’	[ɛp̥:l]	[e: ^h p̥lɪ], [e:p̥lɪ]
<i>vitja</i> ‘visit’	[viɖ:ja]	[vi: ^h ɖʒa]
<i>vetrar</i> ‘winter (G)’	[vɛɖ: ^h ɹaɹ]	[ve: ^h tɹaɹ], [ve: ^h ɖɹaɹ]
<i>nakrar</i> ‘some (f.pl.)’	[naɡ: ^h ɹaɹ]	[nea: ^h kɹaɹ], [nea: ^h ɡɹaɹ]
<i>flesjar</i> ‘skerries’	[flɛʃ:aɹ]	[fle: ^h ʃaɹ]

6.2.2.2 Pronunciation of /tj, dj/ sequences

As shown in (10) above, the difference between the pronunciation of words like *vitja* in Suðuroy and elsewhere is not only one of segment length (and the associated difference of vowel quality) but the /tj/ sequence has different phonetic realizations, i.e. as a combination of a (long) stop and /j/ in Suðuroy but as an affricate elsewhere. This difference is not restricted to contexts of this sort but in fact more general (see Hammershaimb’s anthology 1891, vol. I, p. LVIII): Whereas /tj, dj/ are normally realized as the alveopalatal affricates [tʃ^h, ɖʒ] in initial position, they retain their stop element in Suðuroy. This is illustrated in (11):

(11)	Suðuroy: ⁶	Elsewhere:
<i>tjóvur</i> ‘thief’	[tʰjɔu:vʊɹ]	[tʃ ^h ɔu:vʊɹ]
<i>djarvur</i> ‘blunt, bold’	[ɖjɑrvʊɹ]	[ɖʒɑrvʊɹ]

In other respects the affricates [tʃ^h, ɖʒ] have the same distribution in the Suðuroy dialect as elsewhere, being the outcome of the palatalization process (see sections 2.4.1.3 and 2.4.2 above).

6.2.2.3 Pronunciation of the -ógv- sequence

In Suðuroy old /ó/ in the Verschärfung environment -ógv- has developed into [ɔ] and not [ɛ] as it has elsewhere in the Faroes. Examples:

(12)	Suðuroy:	Elsewhere:
<i>skógvur</i> ‘shoe’	[skɔɡ̊vʊɹ]	[skeɡ̊vʊɹ]
<i>nógv</i> ‘much(f.n.sg.)’	[nɔɡ̊v]	[neɡ̊v]

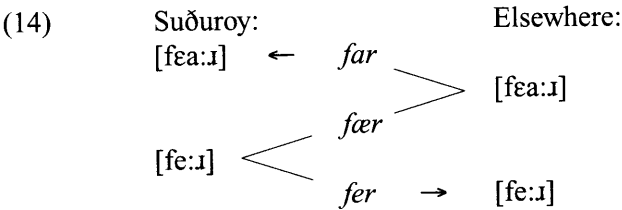
6.2.2.4 Development of old /æ/

In Suðuroy old /æ/ has merged with old /e/, whereas it has merged with old /a/ elsewhere. Thus we have the following differences:

(13)	Suðuroy:	Elsewhere:
<i>læra</i> ‘teach, learn’	[le: ^h ɹa]	[lɛa: ^h ɹa]
<i>lært</i> ‘learned(past part.)’	[lɛ: ^h ɹt]	[la: ^h ɹt]

⁶ This pronunciation is not completely restricted to Suðuroy — it is also found in parts of Eysturoy, for instance.

This implies that the word forms *fær* ‘(he) gets’ and *fer* ‘(he) goes’ are indistinguishable in Suðuroy but not elsewhere, whereas *fær* and *far* ‘vessel’ do not sound the same in Suðuroy although they do elsewhere. This is illustrated below:



6.2.2.5 Short /ø/

In the southern part of Suðuroy (roughly south of Hvalba), the short /ø/ is pronounced [ɣ] whereas it is [œ] elsewhere. Examples:

(15)	Southern Suðuroy:	Elsewhere:
<i>øld</i> ‘age, century’	[ɣld̥]	[œld̥]

6.2.3 Features peculiar to the Northern dialects

As already pointed out by Hammershaimb and Jakobsen (see (6) above), the areas north of Southern Streymoy (and thus also north of Nólsoy, Hestur, Koltur, Vágur and Mykines) have some special dialectal features that distinguish them from the rest of the islands. These include the following:

6.2.3.1 Development of old /ei/

Northern Streymoy, Eysturoy and Norðoyar have [ɔi]-pronunciation of old /ei/ whereas the rest of the islands have [ai]. This is illustrated below:

(16)	North of Kaldbaksfjørður:	Elsewhere:
<i>bein</i> ‘bone, leg’	[bɔi:n]	[b̥ai:n]
<i>nei</i> ‘no’	[nɔi:]	[nai:]

This means, then, that there is no distinction between the diphthongs *ei* /ai/ and *oy* /oi/ in the Northern dialects and word forms like *eiði* ‘small strip of land’ and *oyði* ‘waste, squander(1sg.pres.)’ (from *oyða*) are homophonous.

6.2.3.2 Development of old /á/

In Norðoyar (except for the southern part of Kalsoy) and on the northernmost part of Eysturoy old /á/ is pronounced [a:] when long, whereas other dialect areas have [ɔa:] in this environment. Examples:

(17)	Northernmost areas:	Elsewhere:
<i>mála</i> ‘paint’	[ma:la]	[mɔa:la]
<i>lán</i> ‘loan’	[la:n]	[lɔa:n]

6.2.3.3 Development of old /ó/
In Norðoyar, Eysturoy, Northern Streymoy and Vágar old /ó/ is pronounced [œu:] or [eu:] (see e.g. Petersen 1996c) when long, whereas it is pronounced [ɔu:] in most other places, except for Nólsoy where we have [au:]. Examples:

(18)	Norðoyar, Eysturoy, N-Streymoy and Vágar:	Nólsoy:	Elsewhere:
<i>stórur</i> ‘big’	[stœu:ɹuɹ] ([stœu:ɹuɹ])	[stau:ɹuɹ]	[stɔu:ɹuɹ]
<i>sólin</i> ‘the sun’	[sœu:lin] ([sœu:lin])	[sau:lin]	[sɔu:lin]

6.2.3.4 Long [ɛ:] in Fugloy
In Fugloy we tend to get long [ɛ:] where most other speakers have [ea:]. Examples:

(19)	Fugloy:	Most other places (but see (13)–(14) above):
<i>fær</i> ‘gets’	[fɛ:ɹ]	[fɛa:ɹ]
<i>far</i> ‘vessel’	[fɛ:ɹ]	[fɛa:ɹ]
<i>maður</i> ‘man’	[mɛ:vʊɹ]	[mɛa:vʊɹ]

This can perhaps be seen as lending some support to the analysis suggested in section 2.3 where the relevant phoneme was analyzed as /æ/, suggesting a low, front vowel. In Fugloy the long variant of this phoneme would then be [ɛ:] whereas it is [ea:] in most other places.

6.2.4 Dialectal features peculiar to Vágar

The Vágar dialect is in certain respects different from that of Southern Streymoy, although it is usually said to belong to the same main group (but recall that Svabo was apparently referring to it when he spoke of the ‘common dialect’). It has already been pointed out (in section 6.2.1.3) that it does not have the “weakened” stops after long vowels (“klusilsvækningen”), as much of the Southern Streymoy area tends to have, nor does it have the [ɔu:]-pronunciation of long /ou/ (ó) (see section 6.2.3.3), nor the merger of unstressed /i,u/ (see section 6.2.5 below). But it also differs from the Northern dialects in that it does not have the [ɔi] pronunciation of old /ei/ /(ei). In addition, the Vágar dialect has a couple of special features (see especially Petersen 1991, 1996c). Some of these it has in common with Tjørnuvík and (to a lesser extent) Haldarsvík, the northernmost villages on Streymoy, including a special type of diphthongization in hiatus-environments as shown below:

(20)	Vágar (and Tjørnuvík and Haldarsvík):	Elsewhere: ⁷
<i>hagan</i> ‘the outfield(Acc.)’	[hei:jan]	[hɛ:an]
<i>fáar</i> ‘few(f.pl.)’	[fɔu:wɹ]	[fɔ:ɹ]

⁷ This is a simplification since there seems to be considerable variation in the exact phonetic quality of the stressed vowel in these environments.

Note that the glide insertion normally does not occur between a long /ɛ/ (a) and the unstressed /a/ nor between a long /ɔ/ (á) and the unstressed /a/, unless by analogy (cf. the tables in (23)–(24) in section 2.3.5 above). Rather we get the modification of the stressed vowels to [ɛ:] and [ɔ:], respectively, in most of the dialects, as shown above. But the diphthongization that occurs in the Vágar dialect leads to (or results from?) glide insertion.⁸

Finally, it is commonly said that a special sentence-intonation pattern (*drynjing* ‘bellowing’) characterizes the Vágar dialect (which also includes the island of Mykines). According to Petersen (1991:25–26, 1996c:5, 17; see also Hagström 1967:44), this intonation pattern can only be heard at the end of an intonation phrase. When it occurs, the tone of the last syllable of a phrase-final word is ‘approximately as high as the tone on the following syllable’ (1996c:5).⁹ Being syntactically conditioned and not a lexical tone, this intonation pattern is not obligatory and its use varies considerably from speaker to speaker. When it occurs, however, the unstressed vowels have a quite clear quality, which may have helped “save” /i, u/ from the merger that otherwise occurs in unstressed syllables in the general area that the Vágar-dialect is a part of, namely the “Southern-Streymoy dialect” (cf. Petersen 1996c:18).

6.2.5 Development of unstressed /i/ and /u/

An interesting dialectal features is the distribution of unstressed /i/ and /u/ in inflectional endings. The distribution was originally studied in great detail by Hagström (1961, 1967) and the phonetic nature of the merger has later been investigated thoroughly in a part of the relevant area by Selås (1996, 1997, 2002), who also does some comparison with the development of unstressed vowels elsewhere in Scandinavia. To make a long and complicated story short (and simplifying matters), one can distinguish roughly between areas with an *i*-type merger, areas with an *u*-type merger and areas where unstressed /i,u/ are distinct. More specifically, there are areas where unstressed /i/ and /u/ always merge to an /i/-type sound (frequently something like [ə], although the phonetic details vary), e.g. the Northern islands Viðoy, Fugloy and Svínoy. Then there are areas where unstressed /i/ and /u/ always merge to an /u/-type sound (sometimes probably more like an [ø] than an [ʊ]), namely Suðuroy. Third, there are areas where /i/ and /u/ merge to an /i/-type sound except before /n/, namely the Northern islands Kunoy and Borðoy and also the Tórshavn area (including Nólsoy and Hestur). Finally, there is the the rest of the islands, e.g. Kalsoy, Eysturoy, Northern Streymoy, Vágar, Sandoy, where the merger of unstressed /i,u/ usually does not happen.¹⁰ This is summarized below — and as already men-

⁸ Petersen (1991) also mentions words that have a stressed /ø/ before an unstressed /a/ in examples like *kvøða* ‘chant’, *høgan* ‘high(Asg.m.)’, where the Vágar dialect has a glide insertion and a modified pronunciation of the stressed vowel towards [ju:], giving something like [k^hvju:wa], [hju:wan] in the Vágar dialect vs. [k^hvø:a], [hø:an] elsewhere.

⁹ Hagström says (1967:44): “Mycket karakteristisk är den intonation som kallas “drynja” ... och förekommer på Vágar. Utmärkande är en jamt fallande melodikurva med utdragna betonada stavelser och tydligt uttal av ändelserna på samma tonhöjd som föregående stammstavelse.”

¹⁰ As will be discussed in section 6.3 below, the picture is further complicated by the fact that certain inflectional endings have merged in some areas while others have not.

tioned the phonetic transcription is a simplification and mainly intended to show whether there is a distinction or not and whether the outcome of the merger is of the /i/-type or the /u/-type:¹¹

(21)	Borðy, Kunoy, the Tórshavn area:	Viðoy, Svínø, Fulgoy:	Suðuroy:	Elsewhere:
<i>gulur</i> ‘yellow’	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:lɔɹ]
<i>gulir</i> ‘yellow(m.pl.)’	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:ləɹ]	[ġu:lɪɹ]
<i>bygdin</i> ‘the town’	[bɪġdɪn]	[bɪġdən]	[bɪġdøn]	[bɪġdɪn]
<i>bygdum</i> ‘the towns(D.pl.)’	[bɪġdun]	[bɪġdən]	[bɪġdøn]	[bɪġdun]

This means that even though the spelling suggests that Modern Faroese has the same vowels in unstressed position that Old Norse had, namely those represented by written *a*, *i*, *u*, this is in fact not the case for all the dialects. The main reason is the merger of old unstressed /i, u/ in some of the dialects. Since this merger is not represented in the spelling, it goes without saying that it is very difficult for children growing up speaking these dialects to learn when to write a *-u-* and when an *-i-* in unstressed position. Should one, for instance, write *konir* or *konur* for ‘women’ (pl. of *kona* ‘woman’), or should one write *býtir* or *býtur* for ‘divides’ (2sg. or 3sg. of the verb *býta* ‘divide, share’)? And why should one write *gulur* for the Nsg.m. form of the word for ‘yellow’ but *gulir* for the plural, or *nevndi* for the past tense singular form of the verb *nevna* ‘name’ but *nevndu* for the past tense plural, when both sound the same?

As indicated in (21) above, old unstressed /i/ and /u/ have merged completely in Suðuroy and the outer (or easternmost) Norðoyar (Viðoy, Svínø og Fugloy) and partially in Southern Streymoy (including Tórshavn) and in the Northern islands Kunoy and Borðoy. This means that in Tórshavn, for instance, there is a distinction between *bygdin* (Nsg. definite) ‘the village’ and *bygdum* ‘villages(Dpl.)’, and between *bátin* (Nsg. definite) ‘the boat’ and *bátum* ‘boats(Dpl.)’, since unstressed /i,u/ do not coalesce before the nasal [n]. No distinction between forms like *gulir* (Npl.m.) and *gulur* (Nsg.m.) ‘yellow’ is made in this area, on the other hand. In other places, namely Sandoy, Vágur, Northern Streymoy, Eysturoy and Kalsoy there is usually a distinction between three vowels in unstressed position. There are, however, areas in Sandoy, the northernmost areas of Streymoy and some parts of Kalsoy where unstressed /i/ and /u/ in absolute final position tend to merge (cf. Hagström 1967:150, 156; Staksberg 1991:34–35; Weyhe 1996b:80). As the reader will recall, this widespread merger of unstressed /i,u/ was disregarded in the the description of inflectional endings in chapter 3. That description is thus idealized to some extent since it does not hold for all dialects. In addition, the distinction between forms like *hest-i-num* ‘the horse(Dsg.)’ and *hest-u-num* ‘the horses(Dpl.)’ is even neutralized in areas without the general merger of unstressed /i,u/. This will be discussed in some detail in the following section.

¹¹ Selås 1996, 1997, 2002 reports, for instance, that in her investigation of the phonetic realization of the the unstressed endings *-ir* and *-ur* in the Tórshavn area, the vowels merged to an [ə] in 70% of the cases but in some instances no vowel at all was heard.

6.3 Morphological differences

As described in great detail by Weyhe (1991b, 1996b, for instance), there are considerable dialectal differences in the inflectional morphology. As already mentioned, the merger of unstressed /i/ and /u/ eliminates several morphological distinctions. An interesting situation obtains when there is a palatal/velar alternation before inflectional endings beginning with /i,u/ or vowels derived from these. As Weyhe (1996b:82) points out, the velar stops are usually not palatalized before an unstressed vowel that has developed from a /u/ whereas they are before a vowel which has developed from an /i/ and sounds exactly the same. There are some exceptions to this before *-u* in absolute final position, where one can distinguish between three stages in the morphophonemic development as shown in (22). The relevant contrasts do not only involve palatalization but also glide insertion. What the two cases have in common is the fact that a phonologically conditioned contrast between the consonants in question (i.e. the palatalized/non-palatalized stop on the one hand and the different types of inserted glides on the other) is preserved for a while after the relevant vowels have merged in absolute final position. This does not happen, on the other hand, when a consonant follows (cf. *klóki*, *klóku* on the one hand and *klókir*, *klókur* on the other):¹²

(22)	preservation of /i/ vs. /u/	merger of /i,u/, but difference in the consonants	complete merger of the forms
<i>gulir</i> ‘yellow(Npl.m.)’	[ġu:lɪɹ]		[ġu:ləɹ]
<i>gulur</i> ‘yellow(Nsg.m.)’	[ġu:lɔɹ]		[ġu:ləɹ]
<i>klókir</i> ‘wise(Npl.m.)’	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒɪɹ]	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒəɹ]	
<i>klókur</i> ‘wise(Nsg.m.)’	[kʰlɔu:ġɔɹ]	[kʰlɔu:ġəɹ]	
<i>klóki</i> ‘wise (sg.m.def.)’	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒɪ]	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒə]	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒə]
<i>klóku</i> ‘wise(pl.def.)’	[kʰlɔu:ġɔ]	[kʰlɔu:ġə]	[kʰlɔu:ɖʒə]
<i>lýsti</i> ‘shone(sg.)’	[lɔɪstɪ]		[lɔɪstə]
<i>lýstu</i> ‘shone(pl.)’	[lɔɪstɔ]		[lɔɪstə]
<i>kallaði</i> ‘called(sg.)’	[kʰaɖlajɪ]	[kʰaɖlajə]	[kʰaɖlajə]
<i>kallaðu</i> ‘called(pl.)’	[kʰaɖlavɔ]	[kʰaɖlavə]	[kʰaɖlajə]

As Weyhe (1996b) points out, the final stage in the merger of forms of the type *klóki/klóku*, with palatalization occurring in both forms, is presumably due to analogy rather than a phonologically conditioned palatalization. Otherwise one would expect the palatalization also to apply when the unstressed vowel is not in absolute final position, as in words of the type *klókir/klókur*, but it does not.

¹² We have represented the merged vowels with a neutral [ə] here as before, although it is probably sometimes quite close to [ɪ] and could then be transcribed that way (cf. Weyhe’s transcription 1996b — but see also the discussion in the preceding section). The reader should keep in mind, though, that the vowel that results from the merger is not always this [ə] but can also be an *u*-type sound (e.g. [ø] in Suðuroy, cf. the preceding section). Note further that we have simplified the transcription of the stops/affricates somewhat, whose aspiration may vary dialectally, as discussed above.

To make the following presentation more transparent, we will first point out some dialectal differences in the inflectional endings representing case and number (regular case and number distinctions in nouns, articles, adjectives, indefinite pronouns and numerals), then give some examples of differences in the (largely irregular) forms of personal pronouns, and finally point out a few variations in the inflection of verbs.

6.3.1 Differences in inflectional endings of case and number

It is useful to distinguish between those dialectal differences in nominal inflection that are a direct consequence of the dialectal merger of /i, u/ and those that are not. Among differences of the former kind, one can mention the following (+ means that a distinction is preserved, – that it has been lost. Note that the description of the dialect areas is somewhat simplified here, cf. 6.2.5 above.):

(23)		Borðoy, Kunoy, S-Streymoy, e.g. Tórshavn:	Kalsoy, Eysturoy, Vágar, Sandoy:
	Viðoy, Svínoy, Fugloy, Suðuroy:		
a. Nsg.m. vs. pl. of weak adjectives, e.g. <i>stóri</i> vs. <i>stóru</i> ‘big’	–	–	–/+
b. Nsg. vs. Npl., e.g. <i>gestur</i> vs. <i>gestir</i> ‘guest’, <i>gulur</i> vs. <i>gulir</i> ‘yellow’	–	–	+
c. N or Asg.def. vs. Dpl., e.g. <i>bátin</i> vs. <i>bátum</i> ‘boat’, <i>ermin</i> vs. <i>ermum</i> ‘sleeve’	–	+	+

As the reader will remember, distinction of unstressed /i,u/ is preserved before a nasal in some areas where /i,u/ merge otherwise. This is shown in the table. Also recall that /i,u/ are apparently most likely to merge in absolute final position. Hence there are fewer speakers who have different final vowels in forms like *stóri* vs. *stóru* than those who distinguish between *bátin* ‘the boat(Asg.m.def.)’ and *bátum* ‘boats(Dpl.m. — as the reader will recall the -m in dative plural forms stands for an [n]) or even *gestur* ‘guest(Nsg.m.)’ and *gestir* ‘guests(Npl.m.)’ (cf. Weyhe 1996b:80).

Among dialectal differences in nominal inflection which are not the result of the dialectal merger of unstressed /i, u/, one can mention the inflection of agentive nouns (“nomina agentis”) like *lærari* ‘teacher’, *riddari* ‘knight’, *skipari* ‘captain’ (see e.g. Weyhe 1991a, 1996b). Here Npl. and Apl. have merged everywhere, but usually not the way that the written form suggests, as shown in (24) (cf. Weyhe 1996b:88):¹³

¹³ Like most of the dialectal differences discussed here, this was disregarded in chapter 3.

(24)	Old Norse: <i>riddarar</i> ‘knights(Npl.) <i>riddara</i> (Apl.)	Written Faroese: <i>riddarar</i> <i>riddarar</i>	Norðoyar, Eysturoy: [ɹɪðːaɹa] [ɹɪðːaɹa]	Elsewhere: [ɹɪðːaɹɪ] [ɹɪðːaɹɪ]
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Note that this is restricted to this particular subclass of nouns (the -ari-nouns) and not generally true of weak masculine nouns (e.g. *granni* ‘neighbor’, cf. class 5 of masculine nouns in section 3.3.2 above).

The merger of Npl.m. and Apl.m. of the suffixed definite article is quite common, and the same is true of the Npl.m. of adjectives, indefinite pronouns and numerals. This seems to be a relatively recent development and its geographical distribution is unclear at present. Although this change is not reflected in the standard orthography, we present these forms here in written (rather than phonetically transcribed) form for ease of exposition, since the merger can best be appreciated in syntactic contexts:

(25)	a. Allir hesir hestarnir fóru. all(Npl.m.) these(Npl.m.) horses-the(Npl.m.) left ‘All these horses left.’	
	b1 Eg eigi allar hesar hestarnar. (Standard Faroese)	
	b2 Eg eigi allir hesir hestarnir. (Recent Faroese)	
	I own all(Apl.m.) these(Apl.m.) horses-the(Apl.m.) ‘I own all these horses.’	
(26)	a. Triggir hvítir fuglar sótu á takinum. three(Npl.m.) white(Npl.m.) birds(Npl.m.) sat on roof-the(Dpl.) ‘Three white birds sat on the roof.’	
	b1 Eg sá triggjar hvítar fuglar. (Standard Faroese)	
	b2 Eg sá triggir hvítir fuglar. (Recent Faroese)	
	I saw three(Apl.m.) white(Apl.m.) birds(Apl.m.)	

In these examples we see that the nominative forms have “spread” to the accusative, but the reverse is also true dialectally, namely that Apl.m. forms of the definite article have spread to the nominative:

(27)	a1 Hagamenninar fóru burtur í haga. (Suðuroy, Norðoyar)	
	a2 Hagamenninir fóru burtur í haga. (Elsewhere)	
	pasture-men-the(Npl.m.) went away to pasture ‘The shepherds went away to tend the sheep.’	
	b1 Allir hestarnar eru svartir. (Suðuroy, Norðoyar)	
	b2 Allir hestarnir eru svartir. (Elsewhere)	
	all(Npl.m.) horses-the(Npl.m.) are black(Npl.m.)	

Note that this spread of Apl.m. forms to the Npl.m is restricted to the suffixed definite article and does not affect other word classes, cf. the forms *allir* and *svartir* in (27b).

Another dialectal variant which only shows up in definite forms of nouns and is partially but not completely caused by the merger of unstressed /i, u/ is the following: Recall that the final nasal in the common dative plural *-um* is pronounced [n] and not [m] in Faroese, despite the spelling. This means that the ending is standardly pronounced [-ʊn]. In the areas where unstressed /i,u/ merge completely, i.e. also before a nasal (this holds for Outer Norðoyar and Suðuroy), this has the effect that there is no distinction between *-in* and *-um* in forms like *bátin* vs. *bátum* ‘boat’, *ermin* vs. *ermum* ‘sleeve’, as described in (23). But in the Outer Norðoyar (Fugloy, Svínø, Viðø) we also find a further development of definite forms in the dative singular. This development looks like a deletion of the final nasal consonant of the relevant masculine and neuter forms, causing a merger of the Dsg. endings of the definite article in the masculine and neuter with their feminine sg. counterparts. This means that whereas the Dpl. form of the definite article is identical for all genders in all dialects, the Dsg. form is also identical for all genders in the Outer Norðoyar as shown in (28) (cf. Weyhe 1996b:93 — note that here the dative form of the article and the dative ending of the noun itself is in boldface):

(28)	Common Faroese:	Outer Suðuroy:	Norðoyar:
<i>sonunum</i> ‘the sons(Dpl.m.def.)’	[-ɪnʊn]	[-ʊnʊn]	[-ənən]
<i>konunum</i> ‘the women, wives (Dpl.f.def.)’	[-ɪnʊn]	[-ʊnʊn]	[-ənən]
<i>skipunum</i> ‘the ships(Dpl.n.def.)’	[-ɪnʊn]	[-ʊnʊn]	[-ənən]
<i>soninum</i> ‘the son(Dsg.m.def.)’	[-ɪnʊn]	[-ʊnʊn]	[-ənə]
<i>konuni</i> ‘the woman, wife(Dsg.f.def.)’	[-ɪnɪ]	[-ʊnʊ]	[-ənə]
<i>skipinum</i> the ship(Dsg.n.def.)’	[-ɪnʊn]	[-ʊnʊn]	[-ənə]

Here we see that the general merger of unstressed /i,u/ found in Suðuroy and the Outer Norðoyar does not in itself cause any further merger of inflectional endings of definite nouns (nouns with the suffixed definite article) than the merger which is generally found in Faroese, namely the singular/plural merger of masculine and neuter forms like *sonunum* ‘the sons(Dpl.m.def.)’ with *soninum* ‘the son(Dsg.m.def.)’, and *skipunum* ‘the ships (Dpl.n.def.)’ with *skipinum* ‘the ship(Dsg.n.def.)’. But the deletion of the final nasal in the dative singular of definite masculine and neuter nouns in the Outer Norðoyar has led to a merger of the inflectional endings of definite masculine and neuter nouns in the dative singular (spelled *-inum*) with the corresponding feminine form (here spelled *-uni* where the *-u-* is an inflectional ending of the noun — we would have *-ini* if the inflectional form of the noun itself ended in a consonant, cf. *bók-ini* ‘the book(Dsg.)’). While it might seem that this merger is “caused” by a deletion of the final nasal in the masculine and neuter forms, it must be considered an analogical (or morphological) rather than a phonological change since it does not occur in the plural forms (cf. Weyhe 1996b:92).

Another development (or perhaps a (sporadic?) preservation of an older stage) involving dative endings in the Outer Norðoyar is found in the weak (or definite) inflection of adjectives (cf. Zachariasen 1969:14, Weyhe 1996b:93), which we get after the demonstrative pronoun, for instance. Here Modern Faroese has *-u* in the whole plural (like Modern Icelandic does), whereas the dative form had *-um* in Old Norse and this is still found in the Outer Norðoyar:

(29)	Old Norse:	Modern Faroese:	Outer Norðoyar:
Npl.m./f./n.	þeir/þær/þau	gømlu	teir/tær/tey gomlu
A	þá/þær/þau	gømlu	teir/tær/tey gomlu
D	þeim	gømlum	teimum gomlu
G	þeirra	gømlu	gømlum

This can be exemplified by sentences like the following:

(30)	a1	Eg	havi	verið	yviri	hjá	teimum	gomlu.	(Standard Faroese)
	a2	Eg	havi	verið	yviri	hjá	teimum	gømlum.	(Outer Norðoyar)
		I	have	been	over	with	those(Dpl.)	old(Dpl.def.)	
								‘I was visiting the old ones.’	
	b1	Hann	er	í	teimum	nýggju	klæðunum.		(Standard Faroese)
	b2	Hann	er	í	teimum	nýggjum	klæðunum.		(Outer Norðoyar)
		he	is	in	those(Dpl.)	new(Dpl.def.)	clothes-the(Dpl.def.)		
								‘He is wearing the new clothes.’	

Note that although the Dat.pl. ending here “looks” the same in the Norðoyar dialect as in the Old Norse examples given in (29) above, i.e. *-um*, it is phonetically quite different, namely something like [-ən].

The last dialectal form discussed is in some sense a preservation of an earlier stage. Hammershaimb also mentions some instances of dialectal preservation of older inflectional distinctions in the 19th century, as will be pointed out in the section on historical morphology below (section 7.5).

6.3.2 Differences in pronominal forms

As Weyhe discusses in considerable detail in his overview of dialectal differences in the Modern Faroese inflectional system (1991b, 1996b), there is some variation in the pronominal forms used in the different Faroese dialects. We will not list these rather irregular and complex differences here, but we will mention a few for the sake of illustration. As Weyhe reports, Faroese pronominal inflection seems to have been in a state of flux in the 19th century, judging from the grammatical descriptions written at the time. We shall return to some of these differences in section 7.5.4 below.

The Southern dialects of Faroese have different forms in the plural of the 1st and 2nd person pronouns (cf. Weyhe 1996b:99–100):¹⁴

¹⁴ The 1st person sg. form tends to be *jeg* [je:] Nsg. in Suðuroy but it is *eg* [e:] elsewhere. Note also that since Suðuroy does not have aspirated intervocalic stops, Suðuroy forms like *okur*, *tykur* will be pronounced [oːgøɪ], [tʰiːgøɪ].

(31)	Standard Faroese:		Sandoy:		Sumba on Suðuroy:		Elsewhere on Suðuroy:	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Npl	vit	tit	vit	tit	okur	tykur	okur	tykur
A -	okkum	tykkum	okum	tykum	okur	tykur	okum	tykum
D -	okkum	tykkum	okum	tykum	okur	tykur	okum	tykum
G -	okkara	tykkara	ok(a)ra	tyk(a)ra	okra	tykra	okra	tykra

The accusative and dative forms ending in *-m* ([*-n*]) are originally dative forms. Unsurprisingly, the southernmost dialect south of Skopunarfjørður (that of Sumba, the southernmost village on Suðuroy) differs the most from the “standard” and the northernmost (that of Sandoy) is the closest to the standard (the dialect spoken in Tórshavn, for instance).

The demonstrative pronoun *tann* ‘that’ also shows some dialectal differences. The following overview is based on Weyhe (1996b):

(32)	Standard Faroese:			Eysturoy (and some other Northern dialects):			Suðuroy:		
	masc.	fem.	neut.	masc.	fem.	neut.	masc.	fem.	neut.
Nsg.	tann	tann	tað	tann	tann	tað	tann	tann	tað
A -	tann	ta	tað	tann	tí	tað	tann	teirri	tað
D -	tí	teirri/tí	tí	tí	tí	tí	tí/tann	teirri	tí

Here, too, there is some tendency for original dative forms (*tí*, *teirri*) to spread to the accusative, although the reverse also occurs (cf. that *tann* is occasionally used as a dative form by older people in Suðuroy, according to Weyhe (1996b:104)).

6.3.3 Differences in verbal inflection

The dialectal merger of unstressed /i,u/ leads to the coalescence of some inflectional forms of verbs. Most importantly, the singular and plural of weak verbs in the past tense are not distinguished in large areas of the Faroes, as shown for the verbs *nevna* ‘name, mention’ and *lýsa* ‘shine, illuminate’ in (33) (where + indicates distinction and – no distinction, as before):

(33)	Eysturoy and (parts of) Northern Streymoy, Kalsoy, Sandoy and Vágar:	Elsewhere:
	Distinction between past tense forms like <i>nevndi</i> (sg.) vs. <i>nevndu</i> (pl.), <i>lýsti</i> (sg.) vs. <i>lýstu</i> (pl.)	
	+	—

Since unstressed /i, u/ in absolute final position tend to merge even in areas where unstressed /i, u/ do not otherwise do so, such as in some areas in Sandoy, the northernmost parts of Streymoy and some parts of Kalsoy, speakers in these areas do not distinguish the verbal forms in ques-

tion although they may distinguish forms like *gulur* ‘yellow(sg.)’ and *gulir* ‘yellow(pl.)’ or *gestur* ‘guest’ and *gestir* ‘guests’.¹⁵

As described in the chapter on inflectional morphology above, most strong verbs end in *-st* in 2sg. past tense (*tú datst* ‘you(sg.) fell’, *tú slapst* ‘you(sg.) escaped’, etc.) and the same is true of many preterite-present verbs in the present tense (*tú manst* ‘you will’, *tú mást* ‘you may’, etc.). This does not hold, however, for the past tense of strong verbs whose (past tense) stem endst in an *-r*. Here a *-t* (and not *-st*) is added: *tú fórt* ‘you(sg.) went’, *tú bart* ‘you(sg.) carried’. Similarly, a *-t* is added in the 2sg. of the present tense of strong and weak verbs whose (present tense) stem ends in an *-r* (cf. *tú smyrt* ‘you(sg.) smear’, *tú spyrt* ‘you(sg.) ask’, *tú fert* ‘you(sg.) go’, *tú bert* ‘you carry’, *tú býrt* ‘you(sg.) live’, etc. But here we have some dialectal variation, since these endings are typically dropped in the Southern dialects (south of Skopunarfjørður). This does not happen in the Suðuroy-dialect, however, when the verb precedes the personal pronoun *tú* (as it can do, for instance, in direct questions or when some non-subject is preposed, cf. sections 5.3 and 5.7.1 above). This dialectal split is shown in (34) (cf. Weyhe 1996b:108):

(34)	North of Skopunarfjørður	South of Skopunarfjørður	
		Suðuroy	Sandoy
‘you escaped’	<i>tú slapst</i>	<i>tú slapp</i>	<i>tú slapp</i>
‘you will’	<i>tú manst</i>	<i>tú man</i>	<i>tú man</i>
‘you ask’	<i>tú spyrt</i>	<i>tú spyr</i>	<i>tú spyr</i>
‘you go’	<i>tú fert</i>	<i>tú fer</i>	<i>tú fer</i>
‘you went’	<i>tú fórt</i>	<i>tú fôr</i>	<i>tú fôr</i>
‘did you escape?’	<i>slapst tú?</i>	<i>slapst tú?</i>	<i>slapp tú?</i>
‘will you?’	<i>manst tú?</i>	<i>manst tú?</i>	<i>man tú?</i>
‘do you ask?’	<i>spyrt tú?</i>	<i>spyrt tú?</i> ¹⁶	<i>spyr tú?</i>
‘do you go?’	<i>fert tú?</i>	<i>fert tú?</i>	<i>fer tú?</i>
‘did you go?’	<i>fórt tú?</i>	<i>fórt tú?</i>	<i>fôr tú?</i>

The well-known writer Heðin Brú, who was born in Sandoy, always uses the “simple” 2sg. forms (i.e., forms without *-st* or *-t*). Despite the (simplified) picture given in (34), the simple forms are not unknown north of Skopunarfjørður (see e.g. Werner 1970b:341, Weyhe 1996b:108).

¹⁵ Note that in past tense forms of weak verbs of class 1, like *kallaði* ‘called(sg.)’ and *kallaðu* ‘called(pl.)’ of *kalla* ‘call’, the difference between the singular and plural forms in dialects distinguishing between unstressed /i, u/ lies not only in the phonetic quality of the final vowel but also in the glide inserted before it: [kʰaɖlajɪ] vs. [kʰaɖlavu], as discussed in connection with (22). Recall also that in dialects where unstressed /i,u/ merge, some speakers still use the glide *-j-* before the vowel derived from /i/ and *-v-* before the vowel derived from /u/ although these vowels do not seem to be distinguished phonetically anymore, although these forms eventually merge completely, as Weyhe (1996b:82) has pointed out.

¹⁶ The reader may wonder how it is possible to “hear” this final *-t* before a word that begins with a *t-*. The answer is that the “presence” of the final *-t* is mainly manifested in the devoicing of the preceding /t/, which does not happen when the *-t* is not present.

As shown in section 3.8.2.1, verbs of the weak class 2a which end in *-ja*, like *selja* ‘sell’, *telja*, ‘count’, *venja* ‘practise’ etc., end in *-ur* in 2sg and 3sg. in the present tense: *tú/hann selur, telur, venur*. In Suðuroy, on the other hand, some of these verbs get a *-jir*-ending, i.e. *tú/hann seljir, teljir, venjir*. This may be due to an analogy with verbs like *berja* ‘hit’, *flekja* ‘split (fish)’, *verja* ‘defend’ and others (class 2b in section 3.8.2.1) which end in *-(j)ir* in all dialects (i.e. *tú/hann berjir, flekir, verjir*) (cf. Weyhe 1996b:112; Andreassen and Dahl 1997:224).

In addition to these fairly general dialectal differences (general in the sense that they involve the majority of a class or a subclass of verbs), there are inflectional differences that are restricted to individual words or at least just a few words. One such example involves the verb ‘run’, which was *hlaupa* in Old Norse (and still is in Modern Icelandic). The inflection of this verb varies, as shown in (35) (based on Weyhe 1996b: 114 — the differences from the “standard” inflection are indicated by boldface):

(35)	Old Norse:	Standard	South of Skopunar-		Elsewhere north of Skopunar-
	Old Norse:	Faroese:	fjørður:	Eysturoy:	fjørður:
inf.	hlaupa	leypa	loypa	leypa	leypa
3sg.pres.	hleypr	loypur	loypur	lýpur	leypur
3sg.past	hljóp	leyp	leyp	leyp	leyp
3pl.past	hlupu	lupu	lupu	lupu	lupu
past part.	hlaupinn	lopin	lopin	lopin	lopin

Finally, note that there is some dialectal difference in the inflection of the verbs *hava* ‘have’, *leggja* ‘lay’ and *siga* ‘say’. The past tense singular of these verbs in most dialects is historically derived from the subjunctive form in Old Norse, whereas the past tense plural derives from the indicative. But the subjunctive stem is spreading to the plural in some dialects, especially where unstressed /i,u/ have merged. The geographical distribution of this inflection is difficult to determine, but the forms have been heard in Suðuroy, Sandoy and Streymoy, for instance. As a result of this change in the stem, the singular and plural of these verbs merge completely in the dialects affected, as indicated in (36) exemplifying *hava* ‘have’ (based on Weyhe 1996b:115):

(36)	Old Norse:		Standard Faroese:	Dialectally:
	indic.	subjunc.		
1sg.past	hafða	hefða	hevði	hevði
2sg. -	hafðir	hefðir	hevði	hevði
3sg. -	hafði	hefði	hevði	hevði
1pl. -	høfðum	hefðim	høvdu	hevði
2pl. -	høfðuð	hefðið	høvdu	hevði
3pl. -	høfðu	hefði	høvdu	hevði

Similarly, for the verbs *leggja* ‘lay’ and *siga* ‘say’ the past tense plural forms *legði, segði* occur dialectally instead of the “standard” *løgdu, søgdu*. But these forms are frowned upon in Faroese schools.

6.4 Syntactic differences

Relatively little is known about dialectal differences in the syntax of Faroese, but it seems safe to say that these are not very obvious. The following is a brief overview of what is known about such differences at present but it seems likely that there are more.

6.4.1 Word order in embedded clauses

As described in the sections 5.3.3.2 and 5.7.3, the negation *ikki* and (other) sentence adverbs may either precede or follow the finite verb in embedded *at*-clauses that are the complements of verbs like *siga* ‘say’, *halda* ‘believe’, *svara* ‘answer’ etc. (the so-called bridge verbs). Thus both versions of (37) are accepted by most speakers, although there are those who recommend the order finite verb – negation in embedded clauses of this kind. Thus (37b2) is given as the “more correct” or “better” version of (37b1) in a recent usage handbook for media people (Tausen 1996:48), which presumably means that (37b1) is likely to be used by journalists:

- (37)a1. Anna helt, at han **var** **ikki** fittur.
 Anna thought that he was not good
- a2. Anna helt at hann **ikki** **var** fittur.
 ‘Anna thought that he wasn’t good.’ (cf. Andreassen and Dahl 1997:184)
- b1. Sjóvinnubankin upplýsti , at hann **ikki** **fer** at gjalda skatt í ár.
 fisheriesbank-the informed that he not goes to pay taxes in year
- b2. Sjóvinnubankin segði, at hann **fer** **ikki** at gjalda skatt í ár.
 fisheriesbank-the said that he goes not to pay taxes in year
- ‘The Fisheries Bank said that it is not going to pay any taxes this year.’

But there is apparently considerable variation between speaker with respect to this. Authors like Heðin Brú (born 1901 in Sandoy), for instance, never seem to use the order negation – finite verb in embedded clauses of this kind, whereas Jógvan Isaksen (born 1950 in Tórshavn) uses it half the time or more (see the table below). Preliminary investigations suggest, however, that this variation is not geographical but partly idiolectal and partly generational — and it may also have to do with style (see Hjalmar Petersen 2000a, Höskuldur Thráinsson 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, Jonas 2003). The following is an overview of the results of these investigations.

There has been some disagreement among linguists about whether the order finite verb–adverb (Vf-adv) is possible in Faroese embedded clauses other than the *at*-complements of bridge verbs. Although Lockwood (1977:157) mentions the two possible orders, the only example of the Vf-adv order he gives is in a bridge verb complement, whereas the examples of other embedded clauses have the order adv-Vf. In his extensive overview of word order in Germanic languages, Vikner (1995) argues that Faroese is more or less like Danish in this respect. Basing his arguments on the judgments of a couple of Faroese informants, he concludes that to the extent that the order Vf-adv is found at all in Faroese embedded clauses (other than the *at*-complements of bridge verbs), it is a literary phenomenon or represents an older stage of the language (Vikner 1995:150–151). A similar position is taken by Rohrbacher (1994, 1999). In their overview of Faroese grammar, Barnes and Weyhe (1994:215) say, on the other hand, that that the

order of the adverb and finite verb in embedded clauses “may be reversed, as is normally always the case in Icelandic” and give an example of both orders in an embedded adverbial clause:

- (38)a. ...hóast fólk **ongantið** **hava** fingið fisk her.
although people never have caught fish here
b. ...hóast fólk **hava** **ongantið** fingið fisk her.
‘... although people have never caught any fish here.’

Barnes and Weyhe do not say anything about the distribution of these variants, but Jonas (1996, chapter 4) claims that they are dialectal. Basing her claims on some informant work in Tórshavn, she argues that some speakers do not accept the order Vf-adv as readily as others in the *at*-complements of bridge verbs and these speakers do not accept the Vf-adv order at all in other types of embedded clauses.

An overview of the order of the finite verb and the negation *ikki* in selected Faroese 20th century texts gives an interesting picture, as shown in (39) (see also Höskuldur Thráinsson 2000, 2001a,b, 2003). Here the texts are sorted by authors and the embedded clauses divided into categories.¹⁷

(39) Word order in embedded clauses in selected works by some Faroese writers

Authors	at-compl. of bridge vbs.		at-compl. of non-bridge vbs.		adverbial clauses		indirect questions		relative clauses	
	Vf-A	A-Vf	Vf-A	A-Vf	Vf-A	A-Vf	Vf-A	A-Vf	Vf-A	A-Vf
Heðin Brú (b. 1901)	7	0			9	0	1	0	6	2
Sigurð Joensen (1911)	7	0	1	1	3	4				
Jens Pauli Heinesen (1932)	6	1	1	4	11	11	0	4	1	1
Jóhan H.W. Poulsen (1934)	6	0	1	5	5	8	1	0	0	3
Bergtóra Hanusard. (1946)	5	0	2	1	2	15	0	1	0	2
Jógvan Isaksen (1950)	2	3	0	3	3	5	0	1	0	3
Martin Næs (1953)	18	2	7	2	5	8	0	2	1	2
Hjalmar Petersen (1962)	2	10	0	2	0	18	0	3	0	5

Some examples from texts by the authors listed in (39) are given below to illustrate the Vf-adv order in embedded clauses that are not bridge verb complements:¹⁸

¹⁷ Note that the figures in this table differ slightly from the figures in Höskuldur Thráinsson’s papers cited in the text because of some increase in the text material used. Despite this, figures showing the situation in all the relevant clause types could not be extracted for all the authors from the texts excerpts used (up to 100 pages from each of the texts listed below) and more research is obviously needed.
¹⁸ Some of these examples were taken from computer-accessible corpora made available by the authors. In such instances the page references may be misleading and these are marked by # if given at all.

- (40) Non-bridge verb complements:
a. egeri bangin fyri, at tú **fært ikki** so hjartaligt svar
I am afraid for that you get not such cordial answer
‘I am afraid that you won’t get a particularly cordial answer.’
(Jens Pauli Heinesen: *Læran um sálina*, Act 1)
b. men tíverri noydd at ásanna, at tað **bar ikki** til her á landi
but sadly forced to admit that it bore not to here in land
‘but had to admit that it was not possible in this country’
(Bergtóra Hanusardóttir: *Loynigongir*, #79)
c. Løgið ... at lærarin **hefur ikki** sagt øllum børnunum ... hetta.
strange that teacher-the has not told all children-the this
‘Strange ... that the teacher hasn’t told this to all the children ...’
(Martin Næs: *Í abbasa húsi*, 29)
- (41) Adverbial clauses:
a. Tær halda fyri munnin, fyri at tað **skal ikki** hoyrast at...
they hold for mouth for to it shall not be-heard that
‘They put their hand over their mouth so it won’t be heard that ...’
(Jens Pauli Heinesen: *Læran um sálina*, Act 1)
b. Tað vóru eisini so nógvir titlar, at eg **kundi ikki** fara ígjøgnum alt
there were also so many titles that I could not go through all
(Jógvan Isaksen: *Blið er summarnátt...*, 33)
c. Hvussu verður um nú omman **kemur ikki** aftur?
how will-be if now grandma-the comes not again
‘What will happen if grandma doesn’t come back?’
(Martin Næs: *Í abbasa húsi*, 63)
- (42) Indirect questions:
a. ... so kom tað lágmælt: Um hann **vildi ikki** lata vera at melda.
then came it softly: if he would not l et be to sue
‘... then he quietly asked if he would consider not suing.’
(Heðin Brú: *Purkhús*, 39–40)
b. Spurningur er, um ... navnið **man ikki** vera komið av danska heitinum ...
question is if name-the will not be come from Danish name-the
‘The question is whether the ... name is not derived from the Danish name...’
(Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen: *Føroysk fólkanøvn*, 37)
- (43) A relative clause:
... millum tey, sum **skulu ikki** við.
between those who shall not with
‘... between those who are not going with (us).’ (Heðin Brú, *Purkhús*, 95)

As can be seen in the table above, there is apparently considerable variation between writers with respect to the use of embedded Vf-adv order. The only writer who uses it virtually all the

time in all types of embedded clauses is Heðin Brú (cf. also Sandqvist 1981).¹⁹ The fact that he is the oldest of the authors mentioned here cannot be the sole explanation, since there is evidence for the adv-Vf order already in 19th century texts, as we will see in section 7.6.7, and Sigurð Joensen, who is only 10 years younger, does not use it all the time. Note also that some of the younger writers mentioned here use the Vf-adv order more than others. Thus Bergtóra Hanusardóttir (b. 1946) uses it more than Jógvan Isaksen (b. 1950), even in non-bridge verb complements, and Martin Næs (b. 1953) uses it much more than Hjalmar Petersen (b. 1962).²⁰ Note also that the examples are found in all types of embedded clauses although they are very rare in indirect questions and relative clauses.

The dialectal split is thus apparently not simply one between different generations. It is not easy to pin it down geographically either. One could speculate that the Vf-adv order is more common in the Southern dialects than the Northern ones and at a first glance there is some suggestive evidence. First, note that Heðin Brú, who came from the Southern island Sandoy, uses the Vf-adv order much more consistently than the only slightly younger Sigurð Joensen, who came from Eysturoy. Second, note the clear difference between the preferences by Næs and Petersen. They are both relatively young, both have lived in Iceland and the texts investigated here are in both cases translations from Icelandic (which virtually uniformly has the order Vf-adv in all types of embedded clauses). But Næs, who grew up on Suðuroy, makes considerable use of the Vf-adv order in various clause types whereas Petersen, who comes from Vágar, practically never does (but see footnote 20). Third, one could speculate that although both Bergtóra Hanusardóttir and Jógvan Isaksen both grew up in Tórshavn, the fact that Bergtóra’s father came from Skúvoy and she spent considerable time there as a child (cf. *Rithøvundabókin* 1995, p. 41) may be the reason why she uses the Vf-adv order somewhat more than the only slightly younger Isaksen does. Finally, recall that Barnes and Weyhe (1994) say that both orders are possible in an adverbial clause — and Weyhe comes from Suðuroy.

But there is also some evidence contradicting the speculation in the preceding paragraph. Thus Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen was born on Suðuroy (1934) and later moved to Sandoy although he has lived on Streymoy most of his adult life. Thus his geographical background is rather similar to that of Heðin Brú’s. Yet he is nowhere near as consistent in using the Vf-adv order in embedded clauses as Heðin Brú is and in fact only uses it in relatively few instances except for the bridge verb complements. Also, Jens Pauli Heinesen was born in Vágar, like Hjalmar Petersen, but he uses the Vf-adv order in his work much more than Petersen does in his

¹⁹ In subjectless relative clauses as the one in (43) an adv-Vf order could be an instance of Stylistic Fronting (cf. the discussion in 5.7.2). Such examples have not been included in the statistics here. Note also that although examples of the adv-Vf order are very rare in Heðin Brú’s texts, they do occur. The example in (i) is an illustration:

(i) Eg ætlaði nógv í mínum ungu døgum, sum eg ikki fekk útint.
I intended much in my young days, which I not got done
‘I had many plans in my young days which I did not follow through.’ (Heðin Brú, *Purkhús*, 52)

Interestingly, the adv-Vf order can also be found in relative clauses with a pronominal subjects in Icelandic (see e.g. Höskuldur Thráinsson 2003, Ásgrímur Angantýsson 2001).

²⁰ Petersen says, however, that his choice of this order was at least partially conscious and for stylistic purposes.

translations from Icelandic. But whatever the reason, it is clear that there is variation here and we will return to the diachronic aspect of it in section 7.6.7 below (see also the discussion in Höskuldur Thráinsson’s paper 2003).

It has also been pointed out that speakers vary in their acceptance of the Vf-adv order in embedded clauses when asked to judge sentences. This was first noted by Jonas (see e.g. Jonas 1996, chapter 4) and this has been confirmed by some later studies, although the picture is apparently less clear than Jonas originally assumed. Thus Petersen (2000a) used a questionnaire to ask high school students from different islands to judge the acceptability of sentences involving the Vf-adv order in bridge verb and non-bridge verb complements. Most of the students accepted the Vf-adv order quite readily in bridge verb complements but rejected it in non-bridge verb complements and Petersen did not find any trace of geographic dialectal difference.²¹ In another study, which also included other types of embedded clauses, Höskuldur Thráinsson found that his subjects²² were somewhat less reluctant to accept the Vf-adv order than Petersen’s subjects were. He also found that two linguists tested were in general much more willing to accept the Vf-adv order than the high school students were (see e.g. Höskuldur Thráinsson 2001a:112). But since this variation is probably more of a generational difference than one having to do with geographical background or social class, we will postpone further discussion to section 7.6.7 below (but see also Höskuldur Thráinsson 2003:170–178).

6.4.2 Double supines as non-finite complements

As discussed in section 5.8.2, control verbs take infinitival complements and cannot take supine complements in examples like those in (44):

- (44) Hann royndi at lesa/*lisið bókina.
he tried to read(inf./*sup.) book-the
‘He tried to read the book.’

When the control verb itself is in the supine form, however, as it is after the perfect auxiliary *hava* ‘have’, the supine can “spread” to the complement of the control verb, as shown in 5.2.5 (see also Henriksen 1991 and Sandøy 1991). Thus both versions of (45) are possible:

- (45) Hann hevur roynt at lesa/lisið bókina.
he has tried(sup.) to read(inf./sup.) book-the
‘He has tried to read the book.’

According to a study by Henriksen (1991), there is some evidence for a dialectal split in the preferences here. The split follows by and large the familiar North-South pattern, but with Tórshavn following the South to some extent at least: The South prefers the double supine (*roynt at lisið*) whereas Northern Streymoy and Vágar prefer the supine+infinitive (*roynt at lesa*). Preferences are less clear in Norðoyar.

²¹ Only one of his subjects came from Sandoy and all the others were from areas north of Skopunarfjørður.
²² His subjects were also high school students, mostly from the Tórshavn area, tested by Zakaris Svabo Hansen.

A similar situation obtains when control verbs are embedded under modal verbs. As discussed in section 5.8.2.2, modal verbs in the past tense can either take an infinitival complement or a supine complement, but these are not semantically equivalent as the supine frequently (but not always) implies an irrealis reading, i.e. something that almost happened (or should have happened) but did not. This is briefly reviewed in (46) (see also the discussion in sections 3.2.2.6, 5.2.5 and 5.8.2.2):

- (46)a. Vit áttu at samtykkja hetta.
we ought(past) to agree(inf.) this
'We were supposed to agree to this.'
b. Vit áttu at samtykt hetta.
we ought(past.) to agree(sup.) this
'We should agree/should have agreed to this.'

As indicated by the gloss, (46b) can either mean 'We should agree to do this' and can thus be said as a suggestion before the relevant action takes place — or the sentence can be said after the relevant action took place and mean 'We should have agreed to do this (but we didn't)', in which case we have an irrealis reading. The verb *samtykkja* 'agree to' is a control verb, which normally takes an infinitival complement and not a supine complement, as shown in (47), but when it is embedded under a modal verb taking a supine complement the supine can spread, as shown in (48):

- (47) Vit samtyktu at fara/*farið.
we agreed(past) to go(inf./*sup.)
(48)a. Vit áttu at samtykkja at fara/*farið.
we ought(past) to agree(inf.) to go(inf./*sup.)
'We were supposed to agree to go.'
b. Vit áttu at samtykt at fara/farið.
we ought(past) to agree(sup.) to go(inf./sup.)
'We should agree/should have agreed to go.'

As discussed by Henriksen (1991), there is some evidence that here, too, the preferences are dialectal with the South (including Tórshavn) again preferring the supine (*samtykt at farið*) and the Northern-Streymoy and Vágar dialect preferring the infinitive (which is also allowed in Norðoyar, if not necessarily preferred).

6.4.3 Infinitival marker after plaga 'be used to'

Finally, it has been observed that in Suðuroy the verb *plaga* 'be used to' takes a bare infinitival complement whereas it takes the infinitival marker elsewhere. This is evidenced by examples in the Faroese dictionary project and also by the following examples (here cited after Sandqvist 1980:161):

- (49)a. Eg plagdi onkuntíð stækka inn á gólvið.
I was-used-to sometimes jump in on floor-the
'I used to come for visits sometimes.' (Martin Joensen: *Tað lýsir á landi*, 99)
b. Hann plagdi eisini vera vanur at tæga sundur.
he was-used-to also be used to pull apart
'He also used to tear into bits and pieces.'
(Martin Joensen: *Tað lýsir á landi*, 132)

Sandqvist remarks that in the texts excerpted by her, the verb *plaga* occurs many times with an infinitival complement and it always has the infinitival marker *at* except for the two examples just cited. This is not surprising if the use of *plaga* without an infinitival marker is a Suðuroy dialect feature, since Martin Joensen was born and raised on Suðuroy and lived there most of his adult life also.

6.5 Conclusion and a dialect map

As the reader will have noted, the basic North-South dialect split along Skopunarfjørður already mentioned by Hammershaimb in the 19th century is still important today. But it should also be evident from the overview above that the dialectal situation is quite complex in many instances and some features need to be investigated in more detail. This holds for all types of dialectal differences discussed here and also differences that we have not said anything about, such as lexical differences (for an interesting case study see Johansen 1995). Note also that almost no sociolinguistic studies have been done in the Faroes as yet. As will be discussed briefly in section 7.7 below, there has understandably been considerable Danish influence on Faroese and this adds to the sociolinguistic interest of the modern Faroese language (see also the discussion in Akselberg 2001, Vikør 2001 and Jóansson's detailed study 1997). We will return to this issue in section 7.7, where we will also attempt to give a brief overview of some recent sociolinguistic discussion in the Faroes as it relates to language planning and language policy.

The dialect map included at the end of this section is mainly based on Weyhe's discussion of phonological dialect features of Faroese (1988) and includes some of the dialect features mentioned above. Although we have not marked any morphological or syntactic dialect boundaries, the map can be referred to when reading about the the morphological and syntactic differences discussed in the preceding sections.

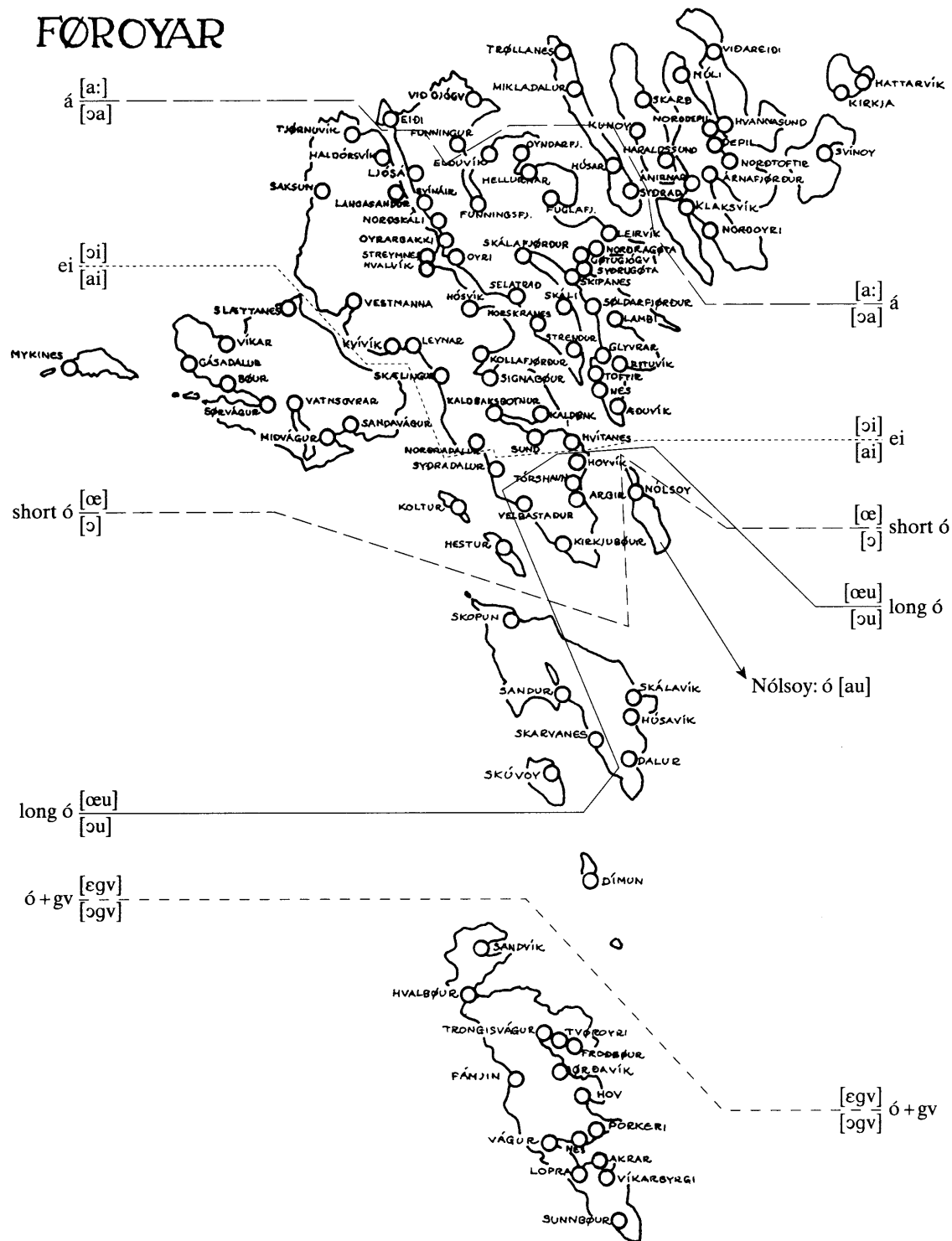
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Some isoglosses in Faroese dialects. Note that the length of diphthongs is not indicated. Based on work by Weyhe.

7. History and diachronic variation

7.1 Introduction

As is well known, Faroese is one of the West-Scandinavian languages, and thus a North-Germanic language. It is standardly believed that the Faroe Islands were settled around 800–900 and that the settlers mainly came from Norway, especially Western Norway. But a number of Celtic loanwords, including such common words as *dunna* ‘duck’, *drunnur* ‘rump (on sheep or cattle)’, *korki* ‘a special lichen from which a purple dye can be made’, and place names like *Dímun* and (possibly) *Mykines* are believed to indicate certain contacts with the Celtic area. Barnes and Weyhe (1994:217) even mention the Faroese expression *tað er ótti á mær* ‘I am afraid’ (lit. “there is fear on me”) which apparently has a direct counterpart in Celtic but none in the other Scandinavian languages. It is not clear, of course, whether all of this indicates direct contact with the Celts or indirect contact through people who had visited countries inhabited by them. An excellent overview of Celtic and West-Scandinavian interaction in the Viking age and later can be found in Helgi Guðmundsson’s book on the subject (1997), which also contains an extensive list of references.

The Faroese lexicon has been under heavy Danish influence for several centuries, however, and shows a considerable number of Danish loanwords, especially the spoken language. There is also a number of English loanwords (see e.g. Jóansson 1997), despite quite strong puristic official language policy (see section 7.7). As has been pointed out several times in the preceding pages, Faroese is structurally quite close to Icelandic, e.g. with respect to the inflectional morphology. But various changes have affected the structure of Faroese through the ages. In general, one can say that Faroese has changed more than Icelandic but less than Danish. This is perhaps most obvious in the inflectional system. Thus the inflectional system of the verbs has been simplified compared to Old Norse and Icelandic, although it is still richer than inflectional system of Danish verbs.

This chapter describes the most important changes in Faroese from as far back as we can follow the language, in the phonology (and phonetics), the inflectional morphology and the syntax. The organization of the chapter is as follows: In section 7.2 we give an overview of the existing medieval sources on the history of Faroese. In section 7.3 we trace the development of Faroese orthography in some detail since we believe that a solid understanding of its foundations and some knowledge of its history is of crucial importance for anyone studying Faroese. This section also contains some information on the development of Faroese as an official language in the Faroes. Then we turn to a more systematic description of the most important phonological, morphological and syntactic changes in the history of Faroese, devoting a section to each type of change and trying to relate the changes to dialectal differences existing in Modern Faroese or in 19th century Faroese where relevant. The final section of the chapter contains some comments on foreign influence on the language and on Faroese language policy.