

reader will recall, this use has arguably some morphophonemic support in Modern Faroese. In addition, *Broyting* preserved all the purely morphophonemic characteristics of Hammershaimb's orthography listed in (20), namely those that have to do with identical representation of long and short variants of vowels and disregarding the automatic alternations caused by glide insertion and palatalization. Because of this, one could argue that *Broyting* was a more genuinely morphophonemic orthography than Hammershaimb's. Jakobsen accepted it and used it in his later writings (e.g. in his edition of *Diplomatarium Færoense* 1907), but it was not generally well received and the compromise was not accepted by all members of the *Føringafelag* and the paper *Føringatíðindi* died. The Icelandic linguist Valtýr Guðmundsson at Copenhagen University was eventually consulted and he recommended Hammershaimb's orthography over *Broyting*, using the by now familiar argument that it would be preferable to have a Faroese orthography that made Faroese words easily recognizable to Icelanders and other Scandinavians. The etymological aspects of Hammershaimb's orthography certainly had that effect, and still do (cf. Djupedal 1964, Hagström 1986, Larsen 1991, Nauerby 1996a — see also the conference report in *Málting* 17:2–13 and Lenvig 1997).

7.3.3 Faroese as an official language

The first newspaper written in Faroese, *Føringatíðindi*, was of crucial importance for the development of written Faroese and Faroese orthography. It was first published in 1890 as a result of the so-called *Jólafundur* 'Christmas Meeting' in 1888, where a program for Faroese language policy and cultural policy was established.

Another result of the Christmas Meeting in 1888 was the founding of *Føroya Folkaháskúli* ('The Faroese Folk High School') in 1889, which was not run by the Danish government and where Faroese thus could be used as the language of instruction and as a topic of study. Faroese became a general language of instruction in Faroese schools in 1938 and in the *Heimastýrslóg* ('Home Rule Act') from 1948 it is specified that Faroese is the principal language in the Faroes but Danish is to be 'learned well and carefully' ("skal læres godt og omhyggeligt"). But the road to this recognition was long and at times hard (see e.g. the extensive overview in Thomasen 1988 and the discussions in Hagström 1986 and Lenvig 1996b, 1998, 1999).

As mentioned above, Danish was the language of the church in the Faroes from the Reformation (in the 16th century) on. It continued to be virtually the only language in the church until the 20th century (cf. Rasmussen 1987, 1997), despite the attempts of Schrøter mentioned above. Jákup Dahl (1878–44) translated the whole New Testament into Faroese between 1923 and 1936 and it was published as a whole in 1937, more than 100 years after the appearance of the Gospel according to St. Matthew in Schrøter's translation. Schrøter had in fact originally offered to translate the whole New Testament into Faroese for the Danish Bible Society, but he may have lost interest, or the Society did, when it became clear how Matthew's Gospel in Schrøter's translation was received. The whole Bible was published in a Faroese translation in 1961 (a translation by Victor Danielsen (1894–1961) had been issued by the religious group *Brøðrasamkoman* in 1949) and in the same year the first book of Faroese psalms was published by the church (here, too, *Brøðrasamkoman* had been a pioneer with a collection of psalms in 1952, cf. Dahl 1981:100 — see also Funding 1998).

7.4 Historical phonology

In this section we will give an overview of the most important phonological changes that have occurred in Faroese since Old Norse times. We will first deal with changes involving the vowel system, then the consonant system, and end with a description of a few less systematic changes. Since written records of Faroese are very scarce, as already noted (virtually nonexistent between 1400 and 1600 and very incomplete between 1600 and 1800, cf. sections 7.1 and 7.2), we will only rarely have anything to say about the age of the sound changes involved but we will frequently refer to the history of Icelandic and sometimes other (West) Nordic languages and dialects for comparison. For a short overview of phonological changes in Faroese the reader can be referred to Jóansson (1997:44–53 — see also Sandøy 2002).

7.4.1 The vowels

7.4.1.1 Development of Old Norse long vowel system

As described in section 2.3.1 above, vowel quantity in Faroese is positionally determined, the basic rule being that stressed vowels are long if no more than one consonant follows. In Old Norse, on the other hand, vowel length was distinctive. In standardized Old Norse orthography (as well as in many Old Norse manuscripts), an accent over a vowel symbol indicates length. Thus the vowel in the Old Norse infinitive *lýsa* 'light' was long and so was the vowel in the past tense *lýsti*, whereas Modern Faroese has a long vowel (diphthong) in *lýsa* but a short one in *lýsti*, as described in section 2.3.1.

The long monophthongs in Old Norse have typically developed into diphthongs in Modern Faroese, as shown in (24), where the Old Norse vowels are organized according to their phonetic quality and ON stands for Old Norse and MF for Modern Faroese. For ease of reference we first give the most common orthographic symbols (letters) and then the phonetic transcription symbol in brackets. Note that for Modern Faroese we give two variants of each vowel, a long and a short one, since, as noted above, the phonetic quantity of Faroese vowels varies positionally, and the difference in quantity is sometimes accompanied by a qualitative difference, as we have seen (cf. sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 — see also the detailed discussion of Faroese diphthongization in Rischel 1967–1968):

	front				back			
	unround		round		unround		round	
	ON	MF	ON	MF	ON	MF	ON	MF
high	í [i:]	í [ui:/ui]	ý [y:]	ý [ui:/ui]			ú [u:]	ú [u:/y]
mid	é [e:]	æ [æa:/a]	ø [ø:]	ø [ø:/œ]			ó [o:]	ó [ou:/œ]
			(œ)					
low	ǣ [ɛ:]	æ [æa:/a]			á [a:]	á [ɔa:/ɔ]	ǫ [ɔ:]	á [ɔa:/ɔ] ¹³
	(æ)							

¹³ In most cases Old Norse /ǫ/ and /ǣ/ merged. This led in some instances to the merger of word forms that used to be distinct, such as the sg. and pl. forms of *sár* 'wound' (the sg. had /ǣ/ and the pl. /ǫ/).

The different quantity/quality relations in Old Norse and Modern Faroese can be made even clearer by illustrating the point with word pairs as in (25):¹⁴

- (25) ON /i/ [i:] in *vís, víst* ‘wise(f.n.)’, MF [ui:] in *vís*, [ui] in *víst*
ON /ý/ [y:] in *lýsa, lýsti* ‘light(inf., past.)’, MF [ui:] in *lýsa*, [ui] in *lýsti*
ON /ú/ [u:] in *fús, fúst* ‘eager (f.n.)’, MF [u:] in *fús*, [ɤ] in *fúst*
ON /él/ [e:] in *él, éls* ‘(snow) shower(N,G)’, MF [ea:] in *æl*, [a] in *æls*
ON /ø/ [ø:] in *føða, føddi* ‘bear, feed(inf., past.)’, MF [ø:] in *føða*, [œ] in *føddi*¹⁵
ON /ó/ [o:] in *ljós, ljóst* ‘light(f.n.)’, MF [ou:] in *ljós*, [œ] in *ljóst*
ON /é/ [ɛ:] in *ær, ærnar* ‘ewe, the ewes’, MF [ea:] in *ær*, [a] in *ærnar*
ON /ár/ [a:] in *ár, árs* ‘year(N,G)’, MF [ɔa:] in *ár*, [ɔ] in *árs*
ON /ǫ/ [ɔ:] in *sǫr* wounds(pl.)’, MF [ɔa:] in *sár* ‘wounds(pl.)’

Diphthongization of the ON long vowels is a common West-Nordic phenomenon, which happens also in Icelandic and (some) Norwegian dialects. It is difficult to trace this development through the history of Faroese because of the scarcity of linguistic sources (cf. section 7.2 above), but there are examples from the 16th century where the spelling suggests a diphthongal pronunciation of a long variant and a monophthongal pronunciation of a short one, as shown in (26) for instance:

- (26) ON phoneme: MF descendant: early attested examples:
a. /i/ [i:] í [ui:] when long: *Kálvalið* *Kalffueleye* (1584)
b. /á/ [a:] á [ɔ] when short: *Hálvdan* *Holdenn* (1584)

Recall also that Svabo and his followers, who used a phonetically based orthography, frequently indicated in their early 19th century spelling the diphthongization of the descendants of the ON long vowels, as discussed in some detail in section 7.3 above.

The Old Norse diphthongs were always long, but their descendants in Faroese can either be long or short. The basic correspondences are shown in (27) with representative examples (here and elsewhere we disregard dialectal differences and refer the reader to section 6.2):

- (27) Old Norse Modern Faroese
ei [ei:] *bein, beins* ‘bone’ ei [ai:] in *bein*, [ai] in *beins*
ey [ey:] *leysa, leysti* ‘untie’ oy [ɔi:] in *loysa*, [ɔi] in *loysti*
au [au:] *laus, laust* ‘loose(f.n.)’ ey [ɛi:] in *leys*, [ɛ] in *leyst*

There is perhaps some evidence for the change of ON /au/ to its MF equivalence as early as around 1400 in the spelling “ey” for older “au”, although it is always difficult to interpret such evidence (i.e., what is a mere orthographic variant and what is a real indication of sound change?). The development is difficult to trace in detail.

¹⁴ The set of long/short contrasts in Modern Faroese is somewhat incomplete for historical reasons but the examples given should suffice to illustrate the basic points.

¹⁵ Note that Faroese does not have the general merger observed in Icelandic of ON /ø, é/ (frequently represented by “æ, æ”, respectively, in normalized ON spelling). These two ON vowels have developed in different directions in Faroese as shown in this overview.

7.4.1.2 Development of the Old Norse short vowel system

The Old Norse short vowel system can be represented as in (28), where typical descendants of the Old Norse short vowels in Modern Faroese are indicated much as before. Note that the “localization” of the vowel symbols in the table is meant to represent the phonetic quality of the Old Norse vowels but not necessarily their Modern Faroese counterparts:

- (28) Old Norse short vowels and typical Modern Faroese descendants
- | front | | | | back | | | | |
|---------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|
| unround | | round | | unround | | round | | |
| ON | MF | ON | MF | ON | MF | ON | MF | |
| high | i [i] | i [i:/ɪ] | y [y] | y [i:/ɪ] | | u [u] | u [u:/ʊ] | |
| mid | e [e] | e [e:/ɛ] | ø [ø] | ø [ø:/œ] | | o [o] | o [o:/ɔ] | |
| low | | | | | a [a] | a [ea:/a] | ɔ [ɔ] | ø [ø:/œ] |

Here it is important to note that the descendants of the Old Norse short vowels can be either short or long in Modern Faroese, since vowel length in the modern language is positionally determined, as already mentioned. Examples of Old Norse words containing short vowels, together with some Modern Faroese cognates are given in (29):

- (29) ON /i/ [i] in *vita, vissi* ‘know (inf., past)’, MF [i:] in *vita*, [ɪ] in *visti*
ON /y/ [y] in *yfir* ‘over’, *yztr* ‘outermost’, MF [i:] in *yvir*, [ɪ] in *ytstur*
ON /u/ [u] in *duga, dugði* ‘suffice’, MF [u:] in *duga* ‘know’, [ʊ] in *dugdi*
ON /e/ [e] in *frek, frekt* ‘greedy, obstinate(f.n.)’, MF [e:] in *frek*, [ɛ] in *frekt*
ON /ø/ [ø] in *ørendi* ‘errand’, *øx* ‘axe’, MF [ø:] in *ørindi*, [œ] in *øks*
ON /o/ [o] in *þola, þoldi* ‘suffer, endure(inf.,past)’, MF [o:] in *tola*, [ɔ] in *toldi*
ON /a/ [a] in *þak, þaks* ‘roof(N,G)’, MF [ea:] in *tak*, [a] in *taks*
ON /ɔ/ [ɔ] in *ql* ‘ale’, *qld* ‘age, century’, MF [ø:] in *øl* ‘ale’, [œ] in *øld*

After this overview of the development of the vowel system as a whole, we will now give some examples of positionally conditioned changes affecting individual vowels. Since these changes frequently have parallels in the history of Icelandic, we will often refer to Modern Icelandic for comparison.

7.4.1.3 Some positionally conditioned changes involving vowels

Some of the vowel changes that have occurred in the history of Faroese have also occurred in other West-Nordic languages or dialects and could thus be older than the split of West Nordic into dialects, although that need not be the case (see e.g. Chapman 1962 vs. Hreinn Benediktsson 1963; also Hægstad 1942, Hanssen et al. 1975). This includes the **lengthening and/or diphthongization of (back) vowels before /l/ + consonant**:¹⁶

¹⁶ Recall that since vowel length is positionally conditioned in Modern Faroese, such that vowels are typically short before two or more consonants (cf. section 2.3.1 above), the vowels that were affected by this change are short in Modern Faroese. Their phonetic quality is usually taken to suggest, however, that they have developed from long

- (30) ON *ulfr* 'wolf', MF *úlvur* (cf. Mice. *úlfur*)
 ON *folk* 'people', MF *fólk* (Mice. *fólk*)
 ON *sjalfr* 'self', MF *sjálvur* (Mice. *sjálfur*)

In other cases we can find changes that have occurred only dialectally within Faroese and Icelandic but not necessarily in the same fashion. The **development of old /a/ and /e/ before /ng, nk/** is particularly interesting in this respect (cf. "special vowel-consonant combinations" in section 1.2):

- (31) ON /a/ > /e/ before /ng, nk/ in most Faroese dialects:¹⁷
 ON *langr* 'long', MF *langur* [lən̥gʊɹ] (most of Mice. has *langur* [laun̥gʊɹ])
 ON *banka* 'knock', MF *banka* [bən̥ka] (most of Mice. has *banka* [bən̥ka] or [bən̥kʰa])
 ON /e/ > /ei/ MF [ɔi] (or [ɔ]) before /ngi, nki/: ON *drengir* 'boys', MF *dreingir* [d̥rɔiŋgʊɹ] (Mod. Icel. has mostly [ei] (< /e/) before /ng, nk/, e.g. [d̥reiŋjɹ], and never [ɔi] nor [ɔ])

The [ɔi] (or [ɔ]) pronunciation of /ei/ before /ng, nk/ in word forms like *dreingir* is actually a case of a **more general change of /ei/ > [ɔi, ɔ] before velars (and palatals)**. This change is usually indicated in the spelling, cf. *boksl* 'bridle' (ON *beisl(i)*), *rokna* 'compute, reckon' (ON *reikna*), *ogn* 'property' (ON *eign*).¹⁸

As shown in (31), the change of /a/ is not indicated in Modern Faroese spelling (nor in Modern Icelandic). The original [a]-pronunciation is preserved dialectally in both languages, namely south of Skopunarfjørður in Modern Faroese and in North-Western Iceland.

Although Faroese and Icelandic have some vowel changes in common, it is sometimes possible to find instances where a particular change or development is more general in Modern Faroese than in Icelandic. This is the case with **the change /ve/ > /vö/**, which has occurred quite generally in Faroese after a consonant, whereas we only find sporadic examples of it in Modern Icelandic:

- (32) ON *dvergr* 'dwarf', MF *dvørgur* (Mice. *dvergur*)
 ON *hverr* 'who, each', MF *hvør* (Mice. *hver*)
 ON *kveða* 'make (or sing) a poem', MF *kvøða* (Mice. *kveða*)
 ON *kveld* 'evening', MF *kvöld* (Mice. mostly *kvöld*, but *kveld* also occurs)
 ON *sverð* 'sword', MF *svørð* (Mice. *sverð*)
 ON *þverr* 'difficult', MF *tvørur* (Mice. *þver*)

A development which is quite common in Faroese but does not occur in Icelandic is **the change /e/ > /i/ in the past participle of certain strong verbs**:

vowels and the spelling is also consistent with such an analysis. But "direct diphthongization" (i.e. without preceding lengthening) is also a possibility (cf. Sandøy 1997–98).

¹⁷ A possible development is /ang/ > /aun̥g/, as in Icelandic, and then /aun̥g/ > /eyng/ > /eng/ for most Faroese dialects (cf. Rischel 1967–1968) — the *a*-pronunciation in this context in Suðuroy and Sandoy could then either be a preservation of the original /a/ or a special development from the /aun̥g/-stage.

¹⁸ Recall also the dialectal pronunciation [ɔi] of /ei/ (north of Kaldbaksfjørður on Streymoy), cf. section 6.2.3.1.

- (33) ON *fenginn* 'gotten', MF *fingin* (Mice. *fenginn*)
 ON *genginn* 'gone', MF *gingin* (Mice. *genginn*)
 ON *getinn* 'mentioned', MF *gitin* (Mice. *getinn*)
 ON *lesinn* 'read', MF *lisin* (Mice. *lesinn*)

An interesting difference is found in the **development of the inflectional ending -r** in the two languages. At first sight the so-called **u-epenthesis** affecting this ending by inserting /u/ between a consonant and a word-final /r/ might appear to be more general in Modern Faroese than in Icelandic. This is illustrated in (34) with examples involving the Nsg.m. ending of strong nouns and adjectives.

- (34) ON *hestr* 'horse', MF *hestur* (Mice. *hestur*)
 ON *vinr* 'friend', MF *vinur* (Mice. *vinur*)
 ON *feitr* 'fat', MF *feitur* (Mice. *feitur*)
 ON *fugl* 'bird', MF *fuglur* (Mice. *fugl*)
 ON *vagn* 'wagon', MF *vognur* (Mice. *vagn*)
 ON *íss* 'ice', MF *ísur* (Mice. *ís*)
 ON *stóll* 'chair', MF *stólur* (Mice. *stóll*)
 ON *steinn* 'stone', MF *steinur* (Mice. *steinn*)

If we study the examples in (34), we see that the **-ur**-ending is more common in Modern Faroese than it is in Modern Icelandic. It even occurs in words where there was no word-final **-r** in Old Norse, e.g. where it was lost (as in *fugl*, *vagn*) or assimilated to a preceding consonant (as in *íss*, *stóll*, *steinn*).¹⁹ Hence one could argue that we have here a case of analogical change (generalization of the **-ur**-ending) in Faroese rather than a sound change (change of the environment where the /u/-insertion rule applies or applied in Faroese).

7.4.1.4 Umlaut in Faroese

As is well known, alternations like the following in Old Norse are attributed to so-called **u-umlaut**:

- (35) *dalr* – *dolum* 'valley(Nsg, Dpl)', *annarr* – *önnur* 'other(m., f.)', *kalla* – *kollum* 'call(inf., 1pl.)'

By definition, **u-umlaut** is caused by an unstressed /u/ and the examples in (35) illustrate the most common type in Old Norse, namely the case where the round /u/ [u] "affects" the unround /a/ [a] and "makes" it round, turning it into /o/ [ɔ]. The so-called **u-umlaut** is a pre-Old Norse process, however, and its effect can even be seen in Old Norse cases where a Proto-Nordic unstressed /u/ had been lost (or syncopated), such as in the plural of strong neuter nouns or in the singular of certain strong feminine nouns:

¹⁹ This does not happen, however, in words with a bisyllabic stem, which have no Nsg. ending in Modern Faroese: *himin* (ON *himinn*) 'sky', *spegil* (ON *spegill*) 'mirror', *heiðin* (ON *heiðinn*) 'heathen', *litil* (ON *lítill*) 'little'.

- (36) *barn* – *børn* (<**barnu*) ‘child(NAsg., NApl.)’, *ffjall* – *ffjöll* (<**ffjallu*) ‘mountain(NAsg., NApl.)’
ørk (<**arku*) ‘ark, sheet’ (cf. Gsg. *arkar*), *støng* (<**stangu*) ‘pole’ (cf. Gsg. *stangar*)

Many of the Old Norse *u*-umlaut alternations are preserved in Modern Faroese, both before an unstressed /u/ and where the /u/ has been lost, as illustrated in (37):

- (37) *dalur* – *dølum* ‘valley(Nsg., Dpl.)’, *barn* – *børn* ‘child(NAsg., NApl.)’, *ørk* ‘ark’

As can be seen here, the /u/ which has been “inserted” before the *-r* in the Nsg. by the *u*-epenthesis mentioned above (as in *dalur*) does not “cause” *u*-umlaut. We will come back to this below.

In Faroese the umlauted vowel appears as /o/ [o:, ɔ] when a nasal follows:²⁰

- (38) *mann* – *monnum* ‘man(Asg., Dpl.)’, *land* – *lond* ‘land(NAsg., NApl.)’
samur – *somum* ‘same(Nsg.m., Dpl.)’, *stong* ‘pole’

It is of some interest to compare the *u*-umlaut alternations in Modern Faroese to those found in Modern Icelandic. First, it could be mentioned that the special development of the umlaut vowel before a nasal is not found in Icelandic:

- (39) *dalur* – *dølum* ‘valley(Nsg., Dpl.)’, *mann* – *mönnum* ‘man(Asg., Dpl.)’
barn – *börn* ‘child(NAsg., NApl.)’, *land* – *lönd* ‘land(NAsg., NApl.)’

Second, as illustrated by the Nsg. *dalur* in (39), the epenthetic /u/ does not trigger *u*-umlaut in Modern Icelandic any more than it does in Modern Faroese. In other cases, however, unstressed /u/ generally does trigger *u*-umlaut in Modern Icelandic. This is not the case in Modern Faroese, on the other hand, where *u*-umlaut frequently does not occur at all where one would expect it, or one can either have umlauted or non-umlauted forms. Thus we do not as a rule find umlauted forms in the past tense plural of verbs in Modern Faroese whereas we do in Modern Icelandic (and did in Old Norse). This is illustrated in (40):

- | | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | | ON | MF | MIce. |
| (40) | <i>kalla</i> ‘call’ | 1pl.past: <i>kølluðum</i> | <i>kallaðu</i> | <i>kølluðum</i> |
| | <i>fremja</i> ‘make, do’ | 3pl.past: <i>frømdu,</i> | <i>framdu</i> | <i>frömdu</i> |

Verb forms like (pl.) *høvdu* ‘had’, *søgdu* ‘said’ and *løgdu* ‘laid’ are exceptional in this respect in Faroese. In Dpl. forms the *u*-umlaut applies without exception in Modern Icelandic (and did in Old Norse), where the conditions for its application are met, but in Modern Faroese it is quite common to get doublets, as shown in (41):

- | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| (41) | | ON | MF | MIce. |
| | <i>armur</i> ‘arm’ | Dpl.: <i>ørnum</i> | <i>armum/ørnum</i> | <i>örnum</i> |
| | <i>spakur</i> ‘quiet, calm’ | Dpl.: <i>spøkum</i> | <i>spakum/spøkum</i> | <i>spökum</i> |
| | <i>grannur</i> ‘thin’ | Dpl.: <i>grønnum</i> | <i>grannum/grønnum</i> | <i>grönnum</i> |

²⁰ Note that the phonetic value of the /o/ here is presumably closer to that of the original ON /q/ than the value of the MF /ø/ (and Icelandic /ö/) is.

Similar doublets can be found in the N/Asg. of strong feminine nouns in Modern Faroese, but again not in Icelandic:

- | | | | |
|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| (42) | | MF | MIce. |
| | ‘ark’ | <i>ørk/ark</i> | <i>örk</i> |
| | ‘matter’ | <i>søk/sak</i> | <i>sök</i> |

The *u*-umlaut is “obligatory” in Faroese, however, in the Npl. and Apl. of strong neuter nouns, where it distinguishes between the sg. and pl. forms, as it also does in Modern Icelandic (and other Scandinavian languages):

- | | | | | |
|------|--------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| (43) | | MF/MIce. | MF | MIce. |
| | N/Asg. | <i>barn</i> ‘child’ | N/Apl.: <i>børn</i> (* <i>barn</i>) | <i>börn</i> |
| | N/Asg. | <i>land</i> ‘land’ | N/Apl.: <i>lond</i> (* <i>land</i>) | <i>lönd</i> |

In this connection it is interesting to note that a similar sg./pl. alternation has developed in Faroese words like *bræv* ‘letter’ (ON and MIce. *bréf*), *knæ* ‘knee’ (ON *kné*, MIce. *hné*), *træ* ‘tree’ (ON and MIce. *tré*). All these words are pronounced with an [ea:] in the sg., which is the standard pronunciation of the long variant of /a/. Hence they have developed an analogical /ø/ [ø:] in the plural, which is also indicated in the spelling:

- (44) *bræv* – *brøv* ‘letter(sg.,pl.)’, *knæ* – *knø* ‘knee(sg.,pl.)’, *træ* – *trø* ‘tree(sg.,pl.)’

There is some dialectal variation in this, however. Thus the sg. and pl. of *bræv* ‘letter’ are identical in Suðuroy.

As can be seen from the preceding overview, *u*-umlaut does not appear to be a productive process in Modern Faroese phonology, whereas it may very well be in Modern Icelandic (see e.g. Anderson 1974, Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1981 and references cited there). This should not come as a surprise when we note that the descendant of the unstressed /u/ that triggered *u*-umlaut is rarely a clearly rounded vowel in Modern Faroese and frequently indistinguishable from an unstressed /i/ in Modern Faroese dialects (cf. e.g. Hagström 1961 and the discussion in section 6.2.5 above).

Modern Faroese also shows, of course, various paradigmatic alternations that were caused by so-called *i*-umlaut. These alternations involve both the inflectional and the derivational morphology of Faroese. Most go back to alternations found in Old Norse, although the actual phonetic alternations are different today because of the development of the Faroese vowel system. This can be seen from the overview given in (45), which contains a few illustrative examples of vowel alternations standardly attributed to *i*-umlaut (see e.g. Andreasen and Dahl 1997:37–8, Henriksen 1983b:11–12):

- (45) a ~ e *taka* ‘take(Inf.)’ – *tekur* ‘takes(3sg.)’, *val* ‘choice’ – *velja* ‘choose’
e ~ i²¹ *segl* ‘sail(noun)’ – *sigla* ‘sail(verb)’

²¹ Ralph (1983) argues that the change /e/ > /i/ may be of a different nature than the other instances of *i*-umlaut since it affected a front vowel.

o ~ y	sonur ‘son’ – synir ‘sons’, krov ‘carcass’ – kryvja ‘cut up’
u ~ y	tungur ‘heavy’ – tyngri ‘heavier’
á ~ æ	báðir ‘both(m.pl.)’ – bæði ‘both(n.pl.)’, hár ‘hair’ – hærður ‘hairy’
ó ~ ø	bók ‘book’ – bækur ‘books’, stórur ‘big’ – størri ‘bigger’
jó ~ ý	bjóða ‘offer(imp.)’ – býður ‘offers(3sg.)’, ljós ‘light(noun)’ – lýsa ‘light(verb)’
ú ~ ý	mús ‘mouse’ – mýs ‘mice’, hús ‘house(noun)’ – hýsa ‘house(verb)’
jú ~ ý	djúpur ‘deep’ – dýpi ‘depth’
ey ~ oy	deyvur ‘deaf’ – doyva ‘deafen’

The latter vowel symbol of each pair represents the (descendant of the) “umlauted” vowel. Note that the phonetic relationship between the “umlauted” and “non-umlauted” variants are different in Modern Faroese and Old Norse. The reader can verify this by consulting the discussion of the development of the Faroese vowel system in sections 7.4.1.1 and 7.4.1.2 above.

7.4.2 The consonants

7.4.2.1 Some losses

One of the most obvious changes affecting the consonant system is the **loss of Old Norse /p/**. In most words ON /p/ has developed into /t/, which is a common Scandinavian change, and there is some evidence that this change (/p/ > /t/) occurred before 1400 in Faroese (cf. Matras 1960). In a few words, however, ON /p/ has developed into /h/ in Faroese, mostly in “small” words that are normally unstressed, cf. adverbs such as *har* ‘there’ (< *þar*), conjunctions such as *hóast* ‘although’ (cf. *þó at*, *þótt*) and pronominal forms like *hetta* ‘this’ (< *þetta*), although this is by no means a general rule for pronouns (cf. Far. *tað*, ON *þat*). But this change has also happened sporadically in a few nouns, such as *Hósvík* (< *Þórsvík*), *hósdagur* (< *Þórsdagur*) — even *Hórisgøta* (< *Þórisgata*) and *Hórðará* (< *Þórðará*). A schematic overview is given below (see also Hamre 1944, Barnes 1985 and Petersen 2004).²²

As is well known, the Mainland Scandinavian languages typically have /d/ in the small words. A few examples are given in (46) to illustrate these changes (compared to Modern Danish):

(46)	ON	MF	MDa		ON	MF	MDa
	þak	tak	tag	‘roof’	þessi	hesin	denne ‘this’
	þurr	turrur	tør	‘dry’	þar	har	der ‘there’
	þat	tað	det	‘that, it’	þótt	hóast	‘though’
	þeir	teir	de	‘they(m.)’	Þórsdagur	hósdagur	torsdag ‘Thursday’
	Þórshöfn	Tórshavn (place name)			Þórsvík	Hósvík (place name)	

The fate of the voiced variant of the dental fricative, namely /ð/, is somewhat more complex and is not always indicated by the spelling (cf. also the discussion of “ð” in Faroese spelling in

²² There is some evidence that the change /t/ > /h/ in pronominal forms was at least dialectally more widespread in older forms of Faroese. Thus Svabo mentions forms like *hað* (or “*heá*”) for *tað* (end of 18th century) and *han* for *tann* is apparently found in Tarnovius (17th century, cf. Hamre 1944:36–37).

7.3 above). The spelling does, however, often indicate when /ð/ has developed into a stop, as illustrated in (47):

(47)	ON	MF	
	krafði	kravdi	‘demanded’ (past sg. of <i>krevja</i>)
	høfuð	høvd [hœd:]	‘head’
	høfðu	høvdu [hœd:u]	‘had’ (past pl. of <i>hava</i> ‘have’)
	dauðligir	deyðligur	‘lifeless, dead’ (cf. also <i>deyðiligur</i> ‘mortal, fatal’)
	byggð	bygd	‘place where people live, village’
	løgðu	løgdu	‘laid’ (past pl. of <i>leggja</i>)

As indicated above, *-vd-* sometimes assimilates to [d:] in Modern Faroese, but not always (not in *kravdi* ‘demanded’, for instance — assimilation across a morpheme boundary as in *høvdu* ‘had’ is probably an exception). Assimilation of /ð/ to a following /g/ and /k/ has also occurred, but it is not indicated in the spelling:

(48)	<i>steðga</i> [steg:a] ‘stop’	<i>maðkur</i> [ma ^h k:u:] ‘worm’
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The fact that we get preaspiration (and a long stop) in *maðkur* ‘worm’ is consistent with the assumption that assimilation to /kk/ is involved (rather than, say, devoicing of /ð/ > [h]) since a long /kk/ typically gives rise to a preaspirated [h^hk:], cf. section 2.4.3 above.

In a few cases an *-ð-* in the spelling indicates a different development of Old Norse /ð/, such as in the combination *-ðr-*:

(49)	<i>veðrið</i> [veð:ɪ] ‘the weather’	<i>veðrar</i> [veð:ɪa:] ‘rams’
------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------------

In most instances, however, Old Norse /ð/ has simply been lost in Faroese. This deletion of /ð/ is not indicated in the modern orthography, as discussed at length in 7.3.2 (see also 1.3). Thus the *ð* in the following words does not represent any sound at all, as the phonetic transcription shows:

(50)	<i>garður</i> [gæa:ɹu:] ‘farm, stone wall’	<i>herðar</i> [he:ɹa:] ‘shoulders’
	<i>borð</i> [bø:ɹ] ‘table’	<i>jørð</i> [jø:ɹ] ‘earth’

As Hamre (1944) points out, one can find spellings like “*gaarss ennde*” ‘end of a wall’ (for modern *garðs endi*) in the oldest *jarðabækur* or cadastres, suggesting that the /ð/ had already been lost when these were written (the oldest ones are from the late 16th century, as discussed in section 7.2.3). Although these cadastres also contain spellings like e.g. “-*gierde*”, “-*gaard(t)*”, “-*fiord(t)*”, “-*iord*”, etc., these can have been influenced by Danish, as the books are mainly written in Danish. Hence Hamre (1944:39) concludes that /ð/ had already disappeared in words of this sort in the 16th century (see also the discussion in Weyhe (2003a:150–151) of the rhyme “*vare*” (for *vardi*) and “*gare*” (for *garði*) in a ballad and Petersen’s (2003) comments on this).

Similarly, **the intervocalic spirant /g/ and the word-final spirant /g/ after a vowel were lost** and this is not indicated in the spelling either. Hence we can have homophones of the following kind that are spelled differently (cf. also section 1.3 for a synchronic discussion):

- (51) *laða* [lɛ:a] 'pile up, stack' *laga* [lɛ:a] 'make, arrange'
lað [lɛa:] 'stack(noun)' *lag* [lɛa:] 'layer'

7.4.2.2 Glide insertion

The picture is further complicated by the process of **glide insertion**. By this process a glide has been inserted to break up instances of "hiatus" (i.e. vowel+vowel combinations). The rules operate equally when this hiatus has been created by the loss of an intervocalic /ð/ or the intervocalic voiced spirant /g/ (which does not exist in Modern Faroese, cf. section 2.4.1). This process is discussed in detail from a synchronic point of view in section 2.3.5 and we refer the reader to that discussion here. Since the inserted sounds are typically represented in the phonetically based orthographies used in the early 19th century (cf. section 7.3 above), we know that the process had begun before that time.

7.4.2.3 Verschärfung

Another important change characteristic of Faroese is the rise of the so-called **Verschärfung** exemplified in (52) (for a synchronic description see section 2.3.6):²³

- | | |
|---|--|
| (52) ON | MF |
| <i>róa</i> 'row', imp. <i>ró!</i> | <i>rógva</i> [ɹɛǵva], <i>rógv!</i> [ɹɛǵv] |
| <i>búa</i> 'live', <i>bú</i> 'home' | <i>búgva</i> [bʊǵva], <i>búgv</i> [bʊǵv] |
| <i>níu</i> 'nine' | <i>níggju</i> [nuǰʒ:u] |
| <i>Jeremias</i> (the prophet) | <i>Jeremíggjas</i> [-muǰʒ:as] ²⁴ |
| <i>nýjar</i> 'new(pl.f.), sg.f. <i>ný</i> | <i>nýggjar</i> [nuǰʒ:aɹ], <i>nýggj</i> [nuǰʒ:] |
| <i>deyja</i> 'die', <i>ey</i> 'island' | <i>doyggja</i> [ðɔǰʒ:a], <i>oyggj</i> [ɔǰʒ:] |
| <i>haugar</i> 'burial mounds', Asg. <i>haug</i> | <i>heyggjar</i> [hɛǰʒ:aɹ], <i>heyggj</i> [hɛǰʒ:] |
| (MIce. <i>deig</i> 'dough') | <i>deiggja</i> [ðɔǰʒ:a] 'knead', <i>deiggj</i> 'dough' |

As can be seen here, the Verschärfung examples are mainly of two kinds:

- (53)a. After ON /ú, ó/ we get /gv/ in Modern Faroese
 b. After high front vowels, or diphthongs that end in high front elements (glides), we get /ggj/

If this process did not begin until ON /ó/ had developed into a diphthong ending in a high back element ([u], or rather the glide [w]), the generalization is that a high back element gives a /gv/ and a high front element ([i] or [j]) gives /ggj/.

The details of this development cannot be traced, but there is some evidence that it began in the "silent" period 1400–1600 (cf. Matras 1952:177). It seems likely that it began in disyllabic

²³ It is admittedly debatable whether Verschärfung should be included with "consonantal" changes. But if the presence of a glide is a prerequisite for Verschärfung, as argued by Petersen (1993a), for instance, then it does not seem unreasonable to include it here, although the nature and development of the (preceding) vowel is crucial.

²⁴ This form of the prophet's name suggests an early entrance into the language, cf. also the name *Líggjas*, whereas names (or forms) like *Elias* and *Mattias* also exist in the modern language.

forms since monosyllabic ones are preserved longer without Verschärfung, as shown by Matras (1952) and Petersen (1993a, 1994a). Thus monosyllabic forms where the spelling suggests no Verschärfung can be found in the oldest written documents whereas Verschärfung is typically indicated in corresponding bisyllabic ones. Interesting statistics are given by Petersen (1993a) for Verschärfung examples in *Sandoyarbók* (Jóannes í Króki, early 19th century, cf. 7.3):

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|---|
| (54) | disyllabic | monosyllabic |
| Sandoyarbók: | <i>moidgjar</i> 225 exx. | <i>moidgj</i> 5 exx., <i>moi</i> 40 exx. |
| MF | <i>moyggjar</i> 'maidens' | <i>moyggj</i> 'maiden' (rarely <i>moy</i>) |
| Sandoyarbók: | <i>sjægvur</i> 393 exx. | <i>siægv</i> 49 exx., <i>siou</i> 83 exx. |
| MF | <i>sjógvur</i> 'sea' | <i>sjógv</i> 'sea(Asg.)' |

As shown here, Jóannes í Króki consistently indicates Verschärfung in the bisyllabic forms, but in the monosyllabic ones spelling suggesting no Verschärfung is more common, although the monosyllabic forms generally have Verschärfung in Modern Faroese. Recall also the spelling *Gjov* for *Gjógv* in some of the old written sources (cf. 7.2.3), also suggesting that monosyllabic forms may have resisted Verschärfung longer than the bisyllabic ones (see also Matras 1952:179).

It should be pointed out, however, that Verschärfung is still not found in some monosyllabic words where the conditions would seem to have been met, such as the pronoun *tú* 'you' and the conjunction *tí* 'for, because'. But although it is not found in the words *jú* 'yes' and *nú* in Modern Faroese, it is, or was, found dialectally in these, cf. that Svabo writes *jygv* and *nygv* for *jú* and *nú* (Matras 1952:179).

As mentioned by Matras (1952) and Petersen (1993a), Verschärfung has some parallels in other Germanic languages and dialects, as evidenced, for instance, by Modern Icelandic *höggva*, Danish *hugge*, Gothic *haggwan* 'cut, hew' vs. German *hauen* and English *hew*.

7.4.2.4 Parallel development within West Nordic?

Some of the changes affecting Faroese consonants have also occurred in other West Nordic languages or dialects, such as Icelandic, for instance, but not always to the same extent or in the exact same fashion (cf. Chapman 1962, Hreinn Benediktsson 1963, Sandøy 2001a — see also section 7.7.3). One such change is the **deletion of the voiced spirant (approximant) /v/ in initial position before /r/**, which also occurs in Icelandic:

- | | | | | |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| (55) | ON | MF | MIce. | |
| | <i>vreiði</i> 'wrath, anger' | <i>reiði</i> | <i>reiði</i> | (vs. Dan. <i>vrede</i>) |
| | | (also <i>vreiði</i>) | | |

Similarly, the following **changes involving /l,n,r/** have also occurred in similar (but not always identical) fashion in the history of Icelandic and can be found in some West Norwegian dialects too (and even to some extent in Shetland and Orkney Norn, cf. Hægstad 1942, Chapman 1962, Barnes 1998b, Sandøy 2001a and references cited there).²⁵ As can be seen from the fol-

²⁵ As for Norn, Barnes (1998b) argues that some of these changes may have been localized to West Shetland.

lowing examples, these changes are usually not indicated in the modern spelling, but evidence for them can frequently be seen in the spelling of older manuscripts:

- (56)a. /ll/ > /dl/: *allir* [aðlɪɹ] 'all', *kalla* [kʰaðla] 'call'
 b. /nn/ > /dn/ after the diphthongs /ai/ and /oi/ (ON /ei/ and /ey/, resp.):
seinni [saiɲni] 'later(m.)', *oynni* [oiɲni] 'the island(D)'
 c. /rl/ > /dl/: ON *varla*, MF *valla* [vaɖla] 'hardly';
 ON *jarl*, MF *jall* [jaɖl] 'earl';
 ON *karl* 'old man', MF *kallur* [kʰaðluɹ]
 d. /rn/ > /dn/: *horn* [hɔɖn] 'horn'

Some similarities and differences between these processes in Faroese and Icelandic are listed in (57):

- (57)a. The change /ll/ > /dl/ does not as a rule affect loanwords in either language, cf. e.g. *ball* 'ball', which is [ɸal:] in both languages. This indicates that it is not productive anymore (or at least not to the same extent).
 b. In Suðuroy the change /nn/ > /dn/ has also occurred after the ON monophthongs /á, ú, í, ó/, e.g. in words like *ánni* 'the river(D)' (from *á* 'river'), *frúnni* 'the lady(D)' (from *frúgv* 'lady'), *kvínni* 'the pen(D)' (from *kvíggi* 'pen'), *krónni* 'the pub(D)', as mentioned in sections 1.3 and 2.4.6 above. — In Icelandic this change does not usually affect the definite article, as it does in these Faroese examples. Thus Mice. *seinni* 'later' is [seiɲni] but *eynni* 'the island(D)' is [ein:i].
 c. Note that ON /rl/ is usually represented as -ll- in Modern Faroese spelling when it is affected by the change /rl/ > /dl/. Preservation of the [rl]-pronunciation is indicated by the spelling -rl-. Thus we have *perla* [pʰerla] 'pearl', for instance. In Modern Icelandic the pronunciation [rɖl] is the most common variant for most ON /rl/-sequences but [ɖl] also occurs in some words. Thus we can have *kerling* [cʰerɖling] or [cʰerɖling] 'old woman', for instance. The [rl]-pronunciation is dying out in Icelandic and only sporadically preserved in the language of the oldest generation in South East Iceland (see e.g. Kristján Árnason and Höskuldur Thráinsson 2003 and references cited there; also Sandøy 2001a:131ff.).
 d. In a document from 1584 we find the spelling *Hodttne* for *horni* 'horn(D)', which indicates that the change /rn/ > /dn/ had already taken place (at least dialectally) by that time. — In Modern Icelandic an [rɖn]-pronunciation of ON /rn/-sequences is very common.

A change that has occurred dialectally in Western Norway and Icelandic (in most dialects of Icelandic by now) but generally in Faroese is /hv/ > /kv/. It is not indicated in modern Faroese and Icelandic spelling:

- (58) ON *hver* 'who' MF *hvør* [kʰvø:ɹ] (Mice. *hver* [kʰvɛ:r], [xvɛ:r])
 ON *hvalur* 'whale' MF *hvalur* [kʰvɛa:lɹ] (Mice. [kʰva:lɹ], [xva:lɹ])

Two kinds of evidence for the change /hv/ > /kv/ can be found in old manuscripts, namely the spelling "kv" (or "qv" or the like) for old /hv/ and, conversely, the spelling "hv" (or "hu" or the

like) for old /kv/ (sometimes referred to as "inverted", "reverse" or "backward spelling"), indicating coalescence. Thus one can find "hv-" spellings of words like ON *kveld* 'evening' and *kveða* 'say; chant' in the so-called *Lundarbók* ('Lund manuscript'), which contains *Seyðabrævið* 'The Sheep Document' and is believed to be from the early 14th century. It has been suggested that this manuscript, or a part of it, was written by a Faroese scribe, but this is by no means certain (see e.g. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2000:97–99 and references cited there). But it could be noted that the earliest evidence in Icelandic manuscripts for the change /hv/ > /kv/ is considerably younger than this (and the earliest known instances of the alliteration of old /hv/ with old /kv/ are from the 18th century, cf. e.g. Gunnar Karlsson 1965).

The development of preconsonantal initial /h/ in other combinations is more varied in the West Nordic languages. It has, for instance, been deleted from /hl/, /hr/ and /hn/-sequences in Modern Faroese,²⁶ but is preserved in such sequences in Icelandic, at least in the form of devoicing of the sonorants in question (cf. e.g. Höskuldur Thráinsson 1980 and references cited there). This change is indicated in modern Faroese spelling:

- (59) ON *hlutr* 'thing, lot' MF *lutur* (Mice. *hlutr* [ly:tʰɹ])
 ON *hníga* 'sink down' MF *níga* (Mice. *hníga* [ni:ya])
 ON *hrístast* 'shake' MF *ristast* (Mice. *hrístast* [ristast])

Deletion of initial /h/ in the sequences /hl-/, /hn-/ and /hr-/ has occurred in the Nordic languages (with the Icelandic exception just noted). Deletion of /h/ from /hj/-sequences also occurs in most of the Nordic languages. It is frequently also deleted in Faroese (but "preserved" in the form of the devoicing of the /j/ in Icelandic). Here, however, the spelling does not indicate the loss in Faroese (nor does it in this connection elsewhere in Scandinavian):

- (60) *hjarta* [jaɹta] 'heart' (Mice. [ɸaɹta])
hjálpa [jɔɸpa] 'help' (Mice. [ɸaulpa])
Hjalmar [jalmaɹ] (name) (cf. Mice. *Hjálmar* [ɸaulmar])

As mentioned in the discussion of palatalization above (sections 1.3, 2.4.2 and 2.4.5), initial /hj/ has sometimes developed in the same way as initial /kj/, namely it has undergone palatalization. Thus the following words have the same initial sound, as indicated by the phonetic transcription:

- (61) *hjallur* [tʰɸaɖluɹ] 'outhouse for drying and storing'
kjallari [tʰɸaɖlaɹ] 'cellar, basement'

The extensive palatalization which occurs in Faroese, giving rise to the affricates [tʰɸ] and [ɖɸ], which presumably did not exist in Old Norse, is in fact one of the most important developments of the Faroese consonant system. It has, however, been discussed in considerable detail in chapters 1 and 2 above (mainly in sections 1.3 and 2.4.2) and we refer the reader to that discussion

²⁶ Note that in many instances where Modern Icelandic has /hn-/, Old Norse had /kn-/ and this is still preserved in Faroese, cf. words like ON *knifr* 'knife', Mice. *hnifur*, MF *knivur*.

here. Detailed study of the spelling of older Faroese documents might shed some light on its age, origin and productivity through the ages, as will the treatment of loanwords where the conditions for its application would seem to be met (cf. section 2.4.2).

Many other phonological processes affecting consonants in Faroese have already been discussed in some detail in sections 1.3 and 2.4 above since they are still productive in Modern Faroese, such as the **devoicing of sonorants** (before /p,t,k,s/), **deaspiration** and **preaspiration of stops**, etc. Some have also been discussed in the chapter on dialectal differences, such as the deaspiration (or **lenition**) of stops after long vowels (cf. section 6.2.1.3). We refer the reader to these sections for further discussion since we have nothing to add about the diachrony of these processes. But as is well known, these processes are also found in Icelandic, and preaspiration of stops and devoicing of sonorants is also found in Norwegian dialects (see e.g. Chapman 1962, Hreinn Benediktsson 1963, Pétur Helgason 2002 and references cited there).

7.4.2.5 Metathesis

Finally, it should be pointed out that **metathesis of consonants**, especially involving /l/ and /r/, is extremely common in Faroese. It is generally indicated in the spelling, but this does not hold for the metathesis of /skt/-sequences found in the inflection of adjectives and verbs (see section 2.4.9). Some examples are given in (62)–(63) (see also Petersen 1999b):

(62)	ON	<i>tafl</i>	MF	<i>talv</i> ‘chess’	(cf. Mlce. <i>tafl</i>)
	ON	<i>efra</i>	MF	<i>erva</i> ‘the upper’	(cf. Mlce. <i>efra</i>)
(63)	ON		MF		Mlce.
	sg.m.	<i>ferskr</i> ‘fresh’	<i>feskur</i> [fɛskʊɹ]		<i>ferskur</i> [fɛ(r)skʏr]
	sg.n.	<i>ferskt</i> ‘fresh’	<i>feskst</i> [fɛkst]		<i>ferskt</i> [fɛ(r)st]
	inf.	<i>þreskja</i> ‘thresh’	<i>treskja</i>		<i>þreskja</i>
	past	<i>þreskti</i> ‘threshed’	<i>treskti</i> [tʰɛksti]		<i>þreskti</i> [θɛresti]

As indicated here, the velar consonant does not undergo metathesis in the /skt/-sequences in Icelandic but is normally deleted (see also Petersen 1999b).

Note that the type of metathesis illustrated in (63) is still “alive” and productive in the sense that it accounts for morphophonemic alternations as indicated. There are no alternations involved in the first type, on the other hand. It is a historical change that has already occurred some time ago. In a morphophonemically based orthography like Hammershaimb’s it is therefore natural to indicate the first but not the second one in the spelling (cf. the discussion in section 7.3 above). As in the case of other diachronic changes of Faroese, we cannot date this metathesis with any precision, but it may be noted that it is represented in orthography of the early 19th century writings. In Schrøter’s translation of *Færeyinga saga*, for instance, it says about Sigmund that he was “Frágjeramäður ... á ... Alvi” where the ON text says “frágjörðamaðr ... á ... afl”, i.e. ‘exceptional in strength’ (*Færeyinga saga* 1832:52).

7.5 Historical morphology

7.5.1 Introduction

In general, the inflectional system of Modern Faroese is simpler than that of Old Norse. If we compare the inflectional systems of the modern Scandinavian languages to that of their Old Norse ancestor, we see that the morphological system of Faroese has changed more than that of Icelandic but less than that of Danish, for instance.

In the following sections we will give some examples of morphological changes in Faroese. As before, the overview will necessarily involve comparison with Old Norse and we will occasionally draw parallels with the development in Icelandic or contrast the development in Faroese with that of Icelandic. Only rarely will we have any information to offer on the time of change in Faroese. In the occasional comparison with other languages below, there is obviously no room for a detailed comparative or contrastive historical morphology (for some relevant discussion see Lockwood 1983 and O’Neil 1978). We will for the most part disregard dialectal differences in the inflectional system and refer the reader in that connection to section 6.3 above and to the extensive overview in Weyhe 1996b, which contains interesting historical information too detailed to rehearse here (including sections on the inflectional morphology of 19th century Faroese).

7.5.2 Changes in the inflection of nouns

As discussed extensively in sections 3.2 and 5.4.1 above, the genitive seems to be on its way out of the nominal inflection in Faroese. We refer the reader to this discussion for an overview of the situation today and we will not go into it further here. As Weyhe (1996b) remarks, the genitive seems to have represented a problem for writers of Faroese grammars for quite some time, although many are conservative in their presentation and do not discuss the possibility that the status of the genitive is changing. Hammershaimb (1891) does however put the Gpl. form of nouns in parentheses in his paradigms (except for *bóndi* ‘farmer’ and *frændi* ‘uncle, relative’) but not the Gsg. In his comment on the inflection of adjectives (where he generally puts the Gsg. and Gpl. forms in parentheses), he says that the Asg. form of adjectives is sometimes used ‘as in Danish’ when the adjective modifies a noun in the Gsg., such as *gamlan mans* for *gamals manns* ‘an old man’s’ (Hammershaimb 1891:LXXXIV).

In the following paradigms we will contrast selected Old Norse examples with their Modern Faroese counterparts. Some of the key differences are highlighted by boldface. The paradigms are meant to be representative for each class and we will, for the most part, let them speak for themselves and only occasionally comment on particular cases. As the reader will see, some of the differences result directly from the phonological development of Faroese discussed in the preceding section, but other changes are of a more purely morphological nature.