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SLAWA AWEDYK

## PHONEMIC INTERPRETATION OF LOAN-WORDS FROM NORTH GERMANIC LANGUAGES IN POLISH

Abstract. Sława Awedyk, *Phonemic Interpretation of Loan-words from North Germanic Languages in Polish*, *Studia Germanica Posnaniensia*, Adam Mickiewicz University Press, Poznań, vol. XIII: 1984, pp. 125–128, PL ISSN 0137–2467.

There are about 30 borrowings from North-German languages in Polish. They are concerned with broad cultural phenomena of these countries. Phonological analysis of loan-words from North-German languages shows that most of them entered Polish in their written form.

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The borrowings from North Germanic languages are not numerous in Polish; there are about thirty words of Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian<sup>1</sup>, and Swedish origin. Their frequency varies considerably: some like *saga* belong to everyday vocabulary, others like *skua* — to a very specialized one. The North Germanic loan-words may be divided into the following categories (English equivalents will be given when the English form differs from that in Polish):

- (1) literature, mythology  
*runy* "runes", *saga*, *skald*, *troll*, *walkiria* "valkyr(ia)"
- (2) social and political life  
*jarl*, *wiking* "viking", *Althing*, *Folketing*, *Riksdag*, *Storting* (the names of parliaments in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, respectively)
- (3) skiing  
*slalom*, *ski-* (only in compounds like *ski-rodeo*, *mono-ski*, *ski-bob*),

<sup>1</sup> Norwegian loan-words were collected by Eliaz (1979)

*klister, kristiania/krystiania* "a type of ski evolutions", *skiring/skikjøring* "skijoring"

## (4) geography

*fiord, fjeld, gejzer* "geyser", *skarn* "a kind of rock", *malstrom* "maelstrom"

## (5) fauna

*alka* 'auk', *leming, narwal* "narwhal", *ren* "reindeer", *skua*

The loan-words from North Germanic languages present a number of problems. Firstly, due to the similarities between those languages, especially between Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, it is sometimes impossible to establish which language the word was taken from, e.g., *saga* is spelled identically in all four languages. Secondly, due to close graphemic-phonemic correspondences in North Germanic languages, it is difficult to decide whether the word is an oral or no-oral loan (cf. *saga*), except for a small number of cases. On the one hand, *fiord* must have entered Polish through writing: it is pronounced [fjɔrt] (cf. *fiordy* [fjɔrdi] nom.pl.) while the Norwegian pronunciation is [fju:r]. On the other hand, *slalom* [slalɔm] seems to be an oral loan from Norwegian (cf. Norw. *slalåm* [sla:lɔm]), what explain the pronunciation (and spelling) in Polish.

Considering the type of words borrowed from North Germanic languages, we may put forward a hypothesis that they are written borrowings, perhaps with the exception of sport terms. Below the phonemic adaptation of North Germanic loans is presented. We assume the following phonemes for Polish (cf. Awedykowa 1972):

(1) vowels: /i ieuɔaɛõ/

(2) consonants: /p b t d k g f v s z ʃ ʒ ø ʒ x t s d z tʃ dʒ t ø d ʒ r l m n ɲ w j/².

Examples (the arrow reads: "is interpreted as"):

<a>	→ /a/	Pol. <i>alka</i> /alka/ : Norw. <i>alke</i> , Swed. <i>alka</i> , Dan. <i>alk</i> Pol. <i>jarl</i> /jarl/ : Dan., Norw., Swed. <i>jarl</i>
<o>	→ /e/	Pol. <i>fiord</i> /fjɔrd/ : Dan., Norw. <i>fjord</i> , Swed. <i>fjord/fjärd</i> Pol. <i>troll</i> /trɔl/ : Norw., Swed. <i>troll</i> , Dan. <i>trold</i>
<ö, ø>	→ /ɔ/	Pol. <i>malstrom</i> /malstrɔm/ : Norw., Dan. <i>malstrøm</i> , Swed. <i>malström</i>
<i>	→ /i/	Pol. <i>klister</i> /klistɛr/ : Dan., Norw., Swed. <i>klister</i> Pol. <i>ski-</i> /ski/ : Dan., Norw. <i>ski</i>
<i>	→ /i/	Pol. <i>kristiania/krystiania</i> /kristjaɲja/ : Norw. <i>Krystiania</i>
<e>	→ /ɛ/	Pol. <i>ren</i> /rɛn/ : Norw. <i>rein</i> , Dan., Swed. <i>ren</i> Pol. <i>fjeld</i> /fjɛld/ : Dan. <i>fjeld</i>

² The generative phonology model (cf. Hyman 1970) cannot be applied in our analysis (for the criticism of Hyman's approach cf. Linell 1974).



<u>	→ /u/	Pol. <i>runy</i> /runt/: Dan., Norw. <i>rune</i> , Swed. <i>runa</i>
<t>	→ /t/	Pol. <i>troll</i> /tról/ Pol. <i>klister</i> /klistɛr/
<d>	→ /d/	Pol. <i>fiord</i> /fjórd/ Pol. <i>skald</i> /skald/: Norw. Swed. <i>skald</i> , Dan. <i>skjald</i>
<k>	→ /k/	Pol. <i>alka</i> /alka/ Pol. <i>klister</i> /klistɛr/
<g>	→ /g/	Pol. <i>saga</i> /saga/: Dan., Icel., Norw., Swed. <i>saga</i> Pol. <i>gejzer</i> /gejzɛr/: Swed. <i>geyser</i> , Icel., Norw. <i>geysir</i>
<s>	→ /s/	Pol. <i>saga</i> /saga/ Pol. <i>klister</i> /klistɛr/
<f>	→ /f/	Pol. <i>fiord</i> /fjórd/
<v>	→ /v/	Pol. <i>narwal</i> /narval/: Dan., Norw. <i>narhval</i> , Swed. <i>narval</i> Pol. <i>walkiria</i> /valkirja/: Dan., Norw. <i>valkyrie</i> , Swed. <i>valkyria</i> /valkyrja
<m>	→ /m/	Pol. <i>malstrom</i> /malstróm/ Pol. <i>leming</i> /lɛming/: Dan. <i>lemming</i> , (Norw. <i>lemen</i> , Swed. <i>lämmel</i> )
<n>	→ /n/	Pol. <i>narwal</i> /narval/
<l>	→ /l/	Pol. <i>runy</i> /runt/ Pol. <i>leming</i> /lɛming/ Pol. <i>jarl</i> /jarl/
<r>	→ /r/	Pol. <i>runy</i> /runt/ Pol. <i>troll</i> /tról/
<j>	→ /j/	Pol. <i>jarl</i> /jarl/ Pol. <i>fiord</i> /fjórd/

The analysis of the phonemic interpretation of North Germanic loan-words in Polish reveals three types of paradigmatic interpretation of non-oral loans (cf. Fisiak 1968):

(1) simple, e.g., <a> → /a/ (Pol. *alka*: Norw. *alke*)

(2) divergent, e.g., <i> ↗ (i) (Pol. *wiking*: Norw. *viking*)

↘ (i) (Pol. *kristiania* (kristja ŋja) Norw. *Kristiania*)

(3) convergent, e.g., <ö, ø> ↘ (o) Pol. *malstrom*: Norw. *malstrøm*)

<o> ↗ (o) (Pol. *fiord*: Norw. *fjord*)

In the syntagmatic interpretation, simple identification, i.e. one-to-one correspondence between the number of graphemes and phonemes in a word, is found in almost all the cases. Perhaps the only example where doubled graphemes are interpreted as a single phoneme is *leming* (lɛming) (cf. Dan. *lemming*).

The number of borrowings from North Germanic languages is comparatively small in Polish and therefore any general conclusions must be hypothetical. It

seems, however, that the interpretation of ⟨ö, ø⟩ as ⟨o⟩ like in *malstrom* indicates that the word is a non-oral borrowing (cf. Dan., Norw. *malstrøm*, Swed. *malström*). The graphemes ⟨ö⟩ and ⟨ø⟩ represent a front rounded vowel, and if *malstrom* had been an oral borrowing, one would expect rather (*malstrəm*) than (*malstrem*) in Polish (cf. Pol. *freblówka* „kindergarten”, a hybrid the first part of which comes from a German name *Fröbel* [frø:bel]; similarly Pol. *lizeska* „a jacket worn by women” from French *liseuse* [lizøz]).

The above analysis of the phonemic interpretation of North Germanic loan-words in Polish seems to support our hypothesis that the majority of loan-words from North Germanic languages were borrowed in their written forms.

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