

Stian Hårstad\*

# The Concept of *Halvemål* in Norwegian Linguistics – a Historiographical Account

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ejss-2020-0005>

**Abstract:** This paper explores the historical background and application of the concept *halvemål* in Norwegian linguistics, with particular regard to the disciplines of dialectology and onomasiology. The concept occurs in numerous studies and serves as an apt illustration of how a folk notion may evolve into a recognized scientific term. The paper gives a detailed account of the employment of the term, and shows that its signification differs noticeably in different scholarly contexts. The study further indicates that the concept has been considered “quasi-scientific” by several scholars, possibly because of its background as a lay explanation.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Norwegian field of dialectology prospered from the last decades of the 1800s onwards, and in a 1962 review article, Oskar Bandle, the Swiss Nordist, concludes that the discipline had by then brought forward “rather considerable achievements.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to paying tribute to the inventor of dialect research in Norway, the autodidact Ivar Aasen (1813–1896), Bandle highlights the contributions of Johan Storm (1836–1920), Marius Hægstad (1850–1927), and Amund B. Larsen (1849–1928), all of whom are considered representatives of a predominantly German Neogrammarian tradition (Bandle 1962, 301). How strong the influences from the German academic milieu actually were has since been debated (cf. Venås, 1986; 2001; Jahr 1996; Hovdhaugen et al. 2000; Sandøy 2013). In any case, there is little doubt that many of the fundamental Neogrammarian concepts, such as “sound law” and “analogy,” found their way to Norway, more or less directly from

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank EJSS’ anonymous reviewer for valuable suggestions and ideas.

<sup>2</sup> In original: “recht ansehnliche Leistungen” (Bandle 1962, 289). For the remainder, all translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

---

\*Corresponding author: Stian Hårstad, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway, e-mail: [stian.haarstad@ntnu.no](mailto:stian.haarstad@ntnu.no)

the German equivalents, and rapidly became part of the common linguistic terminology.

A particularly interesting item within the nomenclature of this period, which was *not* imported from the Continent, however, is *halvemål*.<sup>3</sup> This paper attempts to trace the history of the notion and its use in order to clarify how a term possibly based on a *folk explanation* (cf. Malle 2004) can become part of the scientific vocabulary – and eventually enter the common educational discourse. By pursuing this concept in detail, we also gain insight into the sociology of science within this particular field: A notion's impact and penetration depend in general on its propagators' authority, and the inquiry into the use of *halvemål* will subsequently indicate the relative influential force of different academic figures throughout history.

## Method and materials

This account is based on an extensive search of a wide range of texts on Norwegian language, folklore and cultural history in general. In principle, the relevant material is everything that has ever been published on Norwegian linguistics and philology in a broad sense. Needless to say, an exhaustive hunt for one single term in such a vast corpus is impracticable. Undoubtedly, there are occurrences of the term that I have not managed to track down, and which are therefore not considered in this paper. Nonetheless, I would claim that the selection is fairly representative, comprising data from more than 650 unique publications over a period of more than 200 years.

The digital archives of the National Library of Norway<sup>4</sup> have been the essential starting point for my inquiries. Findings there have led me to further ana-

---

**3** In the historical records, the spelling differs between 'Halvemaal' and 'Halvemål' (and the respective variants with a lower-case letter), largely in accordance with the introduction of the letter <â>/<Å> into the official Norwegian orthography in 1917. One singular exception is Søreide (1930), who uses the variant 'halvemål' (<â> for <å>). For the remainder, I use the modern spelling 'halvemål' except when quoting verbatim from sources with another variant.

**4** *The National Library of Norway* is (as of April 2018) in the process of digitizing its entire collection, which comprises all publications covered by The Norwegian Legal Deposit Act. By the time of my search (November 2017–April 2018), the digital archives (available at [www.nb.no](http://www.nb.no)) included ca. 470 000 books and ca. 25 000 journals. To which extent this selection can be said to be representative of the total amount of scholarly texts published in Norway, is a moot point, but I would claim that the digital archives paint a clear picture of the academic discourses in question, although some relevant works are still not included.

logue sources, and additionally I have consulted general digital databases (*Google Scholar*, *Hathi Trust*, *Internet Archive*, *Jurn*, etc.). Thus, my analyses mainly draw on digitized material, but I have also conferred with a large number of texts that are not yet available digitally. As the primary focus has been on the scholarly context, I have more or less ignored instances from newspapers and general magazines. An analysis concentrating more specifically on the folk discourse would certainly be an interesting complement to this study, but here I have focused on texts from renowned academics. I have not, however, included material from the private archives of the scholars in question.

## The term and the linguistic phenomenon in question

Before we turn to the historical use of this signifier and its differing denotations, I will briefly look into the morphological and semantic structure of the term: As a compound it is rather opaque, although most users of Norwegian would comprehend the latter element *mål* as a reference to a variety of speech (similar to “tongue” or “idiom”). The first element and the compound itself, on the other hand, are less transparent: As a simplex, *halve* means “half”/“halve” and can be used as an adjective, a verb and a noun (more or less as in English, although the verbal use is rather uncommon in modern Norwegian). Thus, the literal meaning of the compound *halvemål* would be “half speech” or “halving speech.” However, the form *halve-* as a prefix is atypical, as most compounds would require the monosyllabic variant *halv-*, for example as in *halvtime* (“half hour”), *halvgjort* (“half done”), *halvveis* (“halfway”).<sup>5</sup> This anomalous structure suggests another origin than the common and very productive composition with *halv-*. I will return to the etymological question below.

Disregarding its varied application, the term consistently involves a (socio-) phonetic process that has parallels in a wide range of languages, namely the omission – and subsequently inverse insertion – of a syllable-initial and pre-vocalic aspirate, commonly represented by the grapheme ⟨h⟩ (cf. e. g. Eikel 1953 on German; Häcker 1998 on Scots; Horrocks 2010 on Greek; Milroy 1983 on (modern) English; Scragg 1970 on Old English). Strictly speaking, we are dealing with two

---

<sup>5</sup> There are examples of compounds with ‘halve-’ instead of ‘halv-’ in older literature, e. g. “halvebror” (‘half-brother’) in writer Henrik Wergeland’s (1808–1845) texts, but this is considered to be highly uncommon.

distinct phenomena both typologically and diachronically, but as we shall see, most sources present these processes as largely intermingled. The *h*-deletion is the primary process and can be conceived of as a typical neogrammarian change: a systematic sound alteration without exceptions. The (erratic) *h*-insertion is a secondary process, which is mainly dependent on sociolinguistic conditions such as social stigma. We can assume that the speakers eventually lost their intuition as to which vowel-initial words historically had had an initial [h], and impelled by social sanctions related to the indexicality of the “lost *h*,” they began the process of hypercorrection.

Linguistic literature has assigned a variety of labels to these processes. The deletion process is most often referred to as “*h*-dropping”, “*h*-dropping”, “*h*-elision”, “*h*-fall”, “*psilosis*” and “*H-Schwund*”. For the opposite (hypercorrection) process the terms “*h*-restitution”, “*h*-insertion” and “*h*-adding” are the most frequent. This paper will not deliberate on the phonetic details or try to delimit the articulatory circumstances involved.

## The historical lineage and diffusion of the term

Not surprisingly, the oldest written record of the term appears in Ivar Aasen’s pioneering dictionary *Ordbog over det norske Folkesprog* published in 1850. He provides the following definition: “*Halvemaal* is what one in the region of Sunnmøre calls that distinctive trait when the sound H is omitted in a dialect, for example in *Av* for *Hav*, *Est* for *Hest*.”<sup>6</sup> (Aasen 1850, 155) Most of Aasen’s works build on his extensive compilations of empirical data from local dialects (cf. e. g. Knudsen 1963), and the entry in the 1850 dictionary indicates that the term at that time was well known in some parts of Western Norway.<sup>7</sup> Aasen also included the term in a glossary where he collocated lexemes according to their semantics (published posthumously as *Norsk maalbunad*, Aasen 1925). Here *Halvemaal* is listed under the hypernym “*Speech*” together with a number of other compounds ending with *-maal*. This substantiates the impression that the common user would comprehend the term as a denomination of a variety of speech (see above). Aasen already mentions the phenomenon in his book *Det norske Folkesprogs Grammatik* (1848),

<sup>6</sup> In original: “*Halvemaal kaldes i Sdm. den Egenhed ved et Bygdemaal, at Lyden H bliver udeladt, f. Ex. i Av for Hav, Est for Hest.*”

<sup>7</sup> Aasen was himself born in this region (Ørsta), and thus the term may have been known to him personally long before his data collection during the 1840s.

but without applying the term *Halvemaal*. Interestingly, Aasen here distinctly emphasizes that the *h*-omission is not consistent, but varies even in the core areas (Western Norway):

It is not the case, however, that the H sound lacks completely; but the use of it is careless, such that it is partly omitted, partly employed and partly even added on to words where it does not belong, [examples included]. (That it, as some people have claimed, always gets lost where it should be and is added on where it should not be, is incorrect.) (Aasen 1848, 53–54)<sup>8</sup>

This point is retained, although rephrased, in the revised version of the same book, *Norsk Grammatik* from 1864: “[H]owever, there is hardly any location where it [the sound *h*] lacks completely; there simply is a disarray in the use of this sound, so that it partly lacks and partly is inserted in the wrong place”<sup>9</sup> (Aasen 1864, 113).

Several historical sources show that there has been a considerable awareness of the occasional *h*-omission at least since the 1700s in some parts of Western Norway: The clergyman Hans Strøm (1726–1797) makes notes of it in his pioneering naturalist descriptions from the 1760s, *Physisk og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør* (1762–66, 537). Later, Bishop Jacob Neumann of Bergen (1772–1848) addresses this “serious error” in his 1825 handbook for teachers:

There are areas in Western Norway, where a serious error passes from generation to generation, namely that an *h* is added to the pronunciation of certain words where no *h* should be heard, and the *h* is omitted where it truly ought to be heard [...]. (Neumann 1825, 24)<sup>10</sup>

Neumann further instructs the teachers to counteract the local pronunciation: “This error must be eradicated by the teachers in the schools, whereupon it will gradually vanish.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the folklorist Eilert Sundt (1817–1875), known as Norway’s first sociologist, mentions the *h*-omission in the west — “the so-called *Halvemaal*” — in the popular journal *Folkevennen* in 1863. The poet Magdalene

---

**8** In original: “Det er dog ikke Tilfældet, at H-Lyden ganske mangler; men Brugen av samme er skjødeløs, saa at den deels bortfalder, deels bruges og tildeels endog tilføies saadanne Ord, som den ikke tilhører, [eksempler]. (At den, som nogle have paastaaet, altid bortfalder, hvor den skulde være, og tillægges, hvor den ikke skulde være, er derimod urigtigt.)”

**9** In original: “[I]midlertid er der neppe noget Sted, hvor det ganske mangler; det er kun en Uorden, som er indkommen i Brugen af denne Lyd, saa at den deels mangler og deels indskydes paa urette Sted”.

**10** In original: “Der er Egne paa Vestlandet af Norge, hvor den grove Feil følger fra Slægt til Slægt, at den i visse Ords Udtale lægge et h til, hvor intet h skulde høres, og kaste h’et bort, hvor det netop skulde høres [...]”.

**11** In original: “Denne Feil maa af Lærerne i Skolerne udryddes og vil da efterhaanden falde bort.”

Thoresen (1819–1903) refers to “Southern Sunnmøre’s faulty pronunciation of H”<sup>12</sup> in her book *Billeder fra Vestkysten af Norge* from 1872, without however using the term *halvemål*. Kristofer Randers (1851–1917), on the other hand, uses *halvemål* in his highly popular travelogue *Søndmøre* (1890), labeling it “the most conspicuous peculiarity of the Sunnmøre dialect.”<sup>13</sup>

Several of the early records tend to localize both the linguistic phenomenon and the term to western Norway, predominantly the regions of Sunnmøre, Nordfjord, Sunnfjord and Nordhordland. For instance, Aasen (1848, 54) mentions “Søndmør, Søndfjord og Nordhordlehn”<sup>14</sup> as the core areas for the omission of *h*. The same regions are listed in his *Søndmørsk Grammatik* (Aasen 1851, 13), though somewhat more specified: “in some districts”, “in some places”, “in a large part of the region”.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, a pivotal work like Rygh’s *Norske Gaardnavne*<sup>16</sup> on one occasion mentions “[...] the ‘halvemål’, which originally belongs to parts of Nordfjord and Sunnmøre”<sup>17</sup> (Rygh 1901, 287), thus inferring that this is the hotbed of the phenomenon. However, numerous sources demonstrate that *h*-dropping is known in several parts of Norway — and about the Scandinavian speaking area in general: e. g. Bandle (1973, 104); Björklund (1958, 167); Christiansen (1948, 181); Freudenthal (1870, 56); Hægstad (1900, 53; 1907, 23); Jakobsen (1897, 136); Kristensen (1909, 120); Levander (1928, 30f); Lundell (1878, 81); Matras (1957); Minugh (1985); Pettersen (1975, 299f); Seip (1958, 244); Storm (1908, 149f); Vendell (1894, 122); Widmark (1994, 189). However, only very few of these scholars employ the term *halvemål*.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the main impression from the Norwegian body of literature is that *halvemål* is a characteristic of northwestern Norway.

<sup>12</sup> In original: “Søndre Søndmørs forkerte Udtale af H” (Thoresen 1872, 202).

<sup>13</sup> In original: “Den Søndmørske dialekts [...] mest paafaldende eiendommelighed” (Randers 1890, 15).

<sup>14</sup> Later on, Aasen (e. g. 1884, 113) uses the spelling ‘Nordhordland’.

<sup>15</sup> In original: “i enkelte Bygder”, “paa enkelte Steder”, “i en stor Deel av Distriktet”.

<sup>16</sup> *Norske Gaardnavne* (lit. ‘Norwegian farm names’), the most extensive work on Norwegian toponyms, was initiated by Oluf Rygh (1833–1899). By the time of his death, Rygh had published three and a half volumes in addition to an introductory volume (*Indledning*). Karl Rygh, Amund B. Larsen, Magnus Olsen and Albert Kjær continued his work, and by 1919, 17 volumes were completed. In 1924, Just Qvigstad and Magnus Olsen published an additional volume on Finnmark County, and in 1936, Albert Kjær published an exhaustive index (*Fællesregister*) (cf. Schmidt 1998). In this paper I follow the convention of referring to all volumes with ‘Rygh [year]’.

<sup>17</sup> In original: “[...] det ‘Halvemaal’ som egentlig hører hjemme i Dele af Nordfjord og Søndmør”. As this quotation shows, there is a slight variation in which sub-regions the earliest sources list.

<sup>18</sup> Kristensen (1909), Vendell (1894) and Widmark (1994) use the term, but with explicit reference to the Norwegian academic context.

In 1873, Aasen published an extended and revised edition of his 1850 dictionary, titled *Norsk Ordbog med dansk Forklaring*. There he altered his definition of *Halvemaal* slightly to read: “Term for a dialect with much abbreviated words; in Sunnmøre employed for the omission of the sound ‘H’ [examples as in 1850].”<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, Aasen widens the scope of the term from the *h*-omission alone to a more general truncation, and he includes both a reference to a variety (“a dialect”) and to the phonetic phenomenon. However, he does not mention any additional types of truncation or clipping (like apocope or syncope). As we shall return to below, this notional vacillation recurs throughout the material.

Alongside Ivar Aasen, two scholars stand out as the most significant disseminators of the term in the 1800s: Hans Ross and the above mentioned Oluf Rygh. Ross (1833–1914) was Aasen’s primary adherent, and in his 1895 dictionary *Norsk Ordbog*, which was greatly inspired by Aasen’s methods, Ross exhibits this relationship by adding the subtitle *Addendum to ‘Norsk Ordbog’ by Ivar Aasen*.<sup>20</sup> He makes a lengthy reference to the *h*-omission under the lemma “H, letter” (Ross 1895, 289). Ross also touches upon the sociolinguistic aspect of the phenomenon. He starts out by locating the trait in Sunnmøre, Nordfjord and Nordhordland, but later on he draws parallels to Sweden and England. He also mentions the *h*-insertion in the Oslofjord area. Lastly, Ross refers to Aasen’s publication on the grammar of the dialect of Sunnmøre, *Søndmørsk Grammatik* (1851), where Aasen mentions the “most peculiar omission” of the sound *h* (see above).<sup>21</sup>

Almost concurrently, Oluf Rygh makes his first mention of “halvemål.”<sup>22</sup> In a paper on farm names in the Trøndelag region, he comments:

Around the country one occasionally finds, also in toponyms, scattered examples of ‘halvemål’, or the rather consistently employed speech peculiarity in a part of Nordfjord and Sunnmøre where *h* is added on to words that start with a vowel, and inversely is omitted in words that start with *h* followed by a vowel. (Rygh 1892, 219f)<sup>23</sup>

**19** In original: “Benævnelser på en Dialekt med meget forkortede Ord; saaledes paa Sdm. om den Brug, at Lyden ‘H’ bliver udeladt; f. Ex. i ‘Av’ for ‘Hav’, ‘Est’ for ‘Hest’” (Aasen 1873, 259).

**20** In original: “Tillæg til ‘Norsk Ordbog’ av Ivar Aasen”.

**21** In original: “Den mærkeligste Udeladelse” (Aasen 1851, 13). Ross erroneously refers to page 113, which does not exist. He also refers to the lemma “Halvemaal”, but curiously this article does not exist in this dictionary.

**22** Rygh comments on the occasional omission and insertion of *h* in toponyms already in his 1882 paper on farm names in the Trøndelag region (Rygh 1882, 8), but he does not use the term ‘halvemål’.

**23** In original: “Der forekommer jo af og til, ogsaa i Stedsnavne, omkring i Landet spredte Eksempler paa ‘Halvemaal,’ eller den i en Del af Nordfjord og Søndmør temmelig konsekvent gennemførte Udtaleeieendommelighed, at *h* tilføies foran Ord, der begynde med Vokal, og omvendt sløifes i Ord, der begynde med *h* med efterfølgende Vokal.”

From the following year, 1893, there is documentation of Amund B. Larsen's knowledge and use of the term in an unpublished report from one of his study trips submitted to the academic college.<sup>24</sup>

A few years later, in 1898, Rygh elaborates on the notion in his introductory volume to the momentous work on Norwegian farm names (*Norske Gaardnavne*, see footnote 14 above). Rygh's *Indledning* has been immensely influential in Scandinavian onomastics (cf. Schmidt 1998), and numerous scholars (and laypersons) have subsequently referred to the explanation of *halvemål* that he provides there. Contrary to Aasen's 1873 definition, Rygh describes *halvemål* as a "pronunciation peculiarity," i. e. a phonetic feature (or variable) and not a variety or dialect. Furthermore, Rygh points out that *halvemål* is a "popular name,"<sup>25</sup> and he adds a footnote with some reflections on the possible etymology of the term. He hypothesizes that the term is a paronomasia involving *alvemål*, i. e. "the speech of elves": "a name created in jest or to scorn."<sup>26</sup> This aspect of Rygh's explanation also reappears in multiple sources. It should be noted, that Rygh mainly applies the term in the context of scattered onomasiologic examples of *h*-deletion or *-insertion*, e. g. in his discussion of \**Afdalir* as the possible origin of *Havdøl* in Trøndelag (Rygh 1901, 287), and likewise \**Atlarud* > *Haslerud* (Rygh 1902, 142) and \**Haahaugen* > *Aahaugen* (Rygh 1908, 10).

Interestingly, Hans Ross refers straightforwardly to Rygh's explanation in his "New addendum" to *Norsk Ordbog* published in 1902. Under the lemma *Halvemaal* he states: "may derive from *Alvemaal*: the unifying speech of 'the elves' or 'the fairies' (Oluf Rygh)."<sup>27</sup> He makes the same point in a footnote in the first volume of his *Norske bygdemaal* ("Norwegian rural dialects," 17 volumes published 1905–1909) from 1905: "Is perhaps rather 'alvemaal', cf. *alv*, *alvskoten* [lit. 'shot by elves,' stricken by illness] and other words with 'alv.' In his 'introduction to *Norske Gaardnavne*,' O. Rygh regards this as not entirely unreasonable"<sup>28</sup> (Ross 1905, 29, note 3). In the same publication, Ross elaborates on the motivation of the hypercorrection aspect of the phenomenon:

From books and from benevolent neighbours, they [the country people] have experienced that the sound *h* is missing in their pronunciation of many words. They struggle to pronounce

<sup>24</sup> The report was later printed in *Maal og Minne* 1949–50, pp. 55–59.

<sup>25</sup> In original: "folkeligt Navn" (Rygh 1898, 23).

<sup>26</sup> In original: "et i Spøg eller paa Spot dannet Navn" (Rygh 1898, 23, footnote 4).

<sup>27</sup> In original: "tør være for 'Alvemaal': 'Alvernes', 'Elvernes', Ellefolkets eller 'Huldrefolkets' samlende Maal (Oluf Rygh)" (Ross 1902, 16).

<sup>28</sup> In original: "Er kanskje istadenfor 'alvemaal'; jf. *alv*, *alvskoten* og fleire ord med 'alv'. O. Rygh i si 'indledning til Norske gaardnavne' nemner dette som ikkje heiltupp urimelegt."

the *h* sound: the ones who are scarcely literate manage to insert it in words that in Danish start with *h*, often with some difficulty; the others insert it at random, and mostly in words that don't have their protecting soft aspirate.<sup>29</sup>

Ross also draws parallels with Sweden and England where similar “confusion” occurs alongside “the same witless general belief that people are so intractable that they insist on speaking the direct opposite of what they know to be right.”<sup>30</sup> Ross' commentaries clearly suggest that *halvemål* is a stigmatized feature, and that the aberrant *h*-distribution is commonly considered willful and recalcitrant behavior.

The following year, in 1906, three other prominent linguists employ the term *halvemål* in their publications: The professors Hjalmar Falk and Alf Torp in the second volume of their pivotal *Etymologisk ordbok over det norske og det danske sprog* (“Etymological dictionary of the Norwegian and the Danish language”), and Olai Skulerud, later to become a professor at the University of Bergen, in a treatise on toponyms in southeastern Norway. Falk & Torp (1906, 481) use it in their article on *Ankel* (“ankle”) where the transition *økull* > *høkull* is in question. In his introduction, Skulerud (1906, 1) states that his work is largely based on Rygh's data, and we can assume that Skulerud has taken over the term *halvemål* from Rygh's writings. However, Skulerud's teacher Amund B. Larsen, who originally presented the treatise to the academy's plenary meeting, might also be the source, as he demonstrably was familiar with the term already in the 1890s (see above). None of the entries, like the discussion of *\*Eitrárdalr* as the possible origin of *Hitterdal* (Skulerud 1906, 11), provides a definition or explanation of the term. One might take this as an indication of how well established the term *halvemål* was in philological circles at that time. Another leading Norwegian linguist at the time, Johan Storm (1836–1920), professor of philology at the university in Christiania (Oslo), refers to Ross' writing on *halvemål* from 1905 (cf. Storm 1908, 150), and thus he was evidently familiar with the term. However, as far as I can see, Storm never applied it in his own theorizations. Similarly, Marius Hægstad (1850–1927), professor of Scandinavian linguistics (initially “professor of ‘Landsmaalet’ and

<sup>29</sup> In original: “Men dei [folki i desse bygder] hev av boki og av velviljuge grannar fenge vita, at det vantar ein slik ljød som *h* i deira uttale av mange ord. So strævar dei med aa faa fram ein *h*: dei som er so vidt boklærde fær sett han *til* i dei ordi som i dansk byrjar med *h*, oftast med nokor møda; dei andre set han *til* paa ei von, og mest *der* som dei ikkje hev sin eigen vernande veike andeljød, um dei elles hev denne enno.” (Ross 1905, 29).

<sup>30</sup> In original: “villræde”; “den same vitlause aalmenne trui, at folki er so vrange at dei talar beint imot det som dei veit skulde vera.” (Ross 1905, 30).

its dialects”), addresses the phenomenon in several works (e. g. Hægstad 1907, 23; 1915, 65f; 1917, 126), but without labelling it *halvemål*.

1901 is the first time that *halvemål* appears in a collegiate dictionary, namely Matias Skard’s *Landsmaals-ordlista med rettleiding um skrivemaaten*. His very brief definition is “rural dialect with ‘est’ for ‘hest’ etc.”.<sup>31</sup> *Halvemål* is similarly an entry in Lars Eskeland’s *Norsk rettskrivingsordbok* from 1906: “rural dialect that does not use *h*, or uses it wrongly.”<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, both of these definitions echo Aasen’s 1873 entry by referring to an entire variety and not the phonetic phenomenon itself. Eskeland’s definition is reiterated in several later editions.<sup>33</sup> He also adds *halvemål* to the 1919 fourth edition (first edition 1897) of his *Norsk ordlista* (“authorized for school use by the ministry of church and educational affairs”): “a rural dialect with omitted *h*.”<sup>34</sup> In 1912 Matias Skard publishes another widely used school dictionary, *Nynorsk ordbok* for the high school (“den høgre skulen”). There, the lemma *Halvemaal* is defined as a “rural dialect with peculiar use of *h*.”<sup>35</sup> Again the variety and not the phonetic trait is the main focus. Steinar Schjøtt includes the term in his 1914 *Norsk ordbok* “for school and literary use,” defining it as the “name for a dialect that has lost *h*,” followed by the exact same examples as in Aasen’s 1850 dictionary (Schjøtt 1914, 164). That same year, the term appears for the first time in a schoolbook on grammar, Leiv Heggstad’s *Norsk grammatikk for skule-ungdom*. Under a short clarification of the sound (and letter) *h*, Heggstad adds information about the *h*-omission “in some coastal districts west of the mountains” (1914, 26), followed by *halvemål* – in quotation marks and parentheses. It is not clear from the context whether Heggstad uses *halvemål* to denote the phonetic phenomenon or a variety. This entry was retained in the 1931 revised edition.

Predictably, all of these scholars – Skard, Eskeland, Schjøtt and Heggstad – were students at the university in Christiania (Oslo) in different time periods between ca. 1865 and 1905. That means that they were all affiliated with a philological milieu where *halvemål* circulated as a technical term, and they subsequently contributed to its wider circulation.

<sup>31</sup> In original: “bygdemaal med ‘est’ for ‘hest’ osv.” (Skard 1901, 37).

<sup>32</sup> In original: “bygdemaal som ikkje brukar h, eller brukar han gale” (Eskeland 1906, 24).

<sup>33</sup> The fourth and last edition was published by Severin Eskeland in 1948 (Eskeland and Eskeland 1948).

<sup>34</sup> In original: “eit bygdemaal med burtfallen h” (Eskeland 1919, 23).

<sup>35</sup> In original: “bygdemaal med eiendommelig bruk av h”. The lemma appears also in the second edition from 1921, but without the definition.

*Aschehougs konversationsleksikon* (1920–1925) is the first encyclopedia to enter the term *halvemål*. It is not a separate lemma, but it appears in the article on the region of Nordfjord (Krogvig 1923, column 707), where the local dialects are described as “partly *halvemål*, i. e. they lack *h* or often use it wrongly.”<sup>36</sup> The article is unsigned, but the most likely author is the above-mentioned Hjalmar Falk, who is listed as a main contributor on linguistic matters.

*Halvemål* finds its way into a bilingual dictionary for the first time in 1927, in Ola Raknes’ *English–Norwegian Dictionary*. Raknes employs *halvemål* in two translations of the idiom “to drop one’s h’s” (“ho/han talar ‘halvemål’”, p. 8 and 337). The second time (under the lemma ‘H, h’) he adds an interesting amplification to the translation: “he forgets his h’s (i. e. he has not learnt how to talk properly).”<sup>37</sup> This parenthetical comment indicates the general stigmatization that pervaded *halvemål*. Bjarne Berulfsen, later professor of Scandinavian linguistics at the University of Oslo, published his English–Norwegian dictionary in 1933, where a similar use of *halvemål* can be found: “speaking *halvemål*” is listed as an equivalent to “dropping one’s aitches” and “dropping one’s h’s” (1933, 7 and 125).<sup>38</sup>

In *Gyldendals konversationsleksikon* (Schieldrop 1933), *halvemål* makes its debut as a separate lemma in a general encyclopedia. The short article reiterates comments of several of the sources mentioned above, including the possible association with ‘alvemål’; and that the definition focuses on “a language with strongly truncated words,”<sup>39</sup> which is then expanded on by referring to the *h*-omission in certain dialects, followed by the exact same examples as in Aasen (1850) and Ross (1895). Furthermore, the article states that the phenomenon is widely known, but nevertheless points to the Sunnmøre region as the most prominent area for the phenomenon. The article is unsigned, but it is most probably authored by Didrik Arup Seip (1884–1963), professor of Scandinavian linguistics at the University of Oslo for almost four decades. Seip is listed as a member of the main editorial committee, and in the slightly revised edition from 1959, the signature “D.A.S.” is added to the article. Moreover, the 1959 version makes explicit reference to Ross. Seip’s wording from *Gyldendals konversationsleksikon* later finds its way into several other encyclopedias – with minor revisions. Seip probably also provided the article *halvemål* to the competitor *Aschehougs*

36 In original: “tildels ‘halvemaal’, d.e. de mangler h eller anvender den ofte uriktig”.

37 In original: “han gløymer h’ane (def. han hev ikkje lært å tala fint)” (Raknes 1927, 337).

38 These entries were reiterated until the fourth edition from 1974. In the 1989 edition, “halvemål” was kept only for the lemma ‘H, h’.

39 In original: “et sprog med sterkt forkortede ord” (Schieldrop 1933, col. 983).

*konversasjonsleksikon* (1939–1952). Admittedly, the entry in volume VII (1941) is unsigned, but it resembles the *Gyldendal* version significantly, and in the revised edition from 1957, the signature “D.A.S” is added.

Similarly, *halvemål* has its own article in the one-volume *Nyco konversasjonsleksikon* (Anker and Haffner 1935, col. 508), but this text is considerably shorter and most probably not based on Seip’s original. The same article is retained in the extended *Cappelens Leksikon* from 1939 (Anker and Haffner 1939, col. 630). No author is specified, and in the preface the chief editors merely state that “expert authors” have been engaged from numerous disciplines.

This review demonstrates that by the early 1940s, the notion of *halvemål* had entered the public domain by means of a wide range of authoritative texts: mono- and bilingual dictionaries, school grammars and textbooks, and encyclopedias. Although frequently listed in brackets, the concept is employed as a full-fledged scientific term with a seemingly indisputable place in Norwegian linguistics.

## Selmer (1948) – the sole academic exploration of *halvemål*

As demonstrated above, the Aasen, Ross and Rygh threesome were the main propagators of the term in the 1800s. Several prominent scholars rapidly included *halvemål* in their linguistic vocabulary, and in the first half of the 1900s, the term occurs in numerous dialectological and other philological works. Nevertheless, there is no substantial scientific exploration of the phenomenon itself before Ernst Selmer’s work from 1948. Until then, the notion is basically employed to label any type of *h*-omission (or -insertion). The previously mentioned Amund B. Larsen and his former student Olai Skulerud continue to use the term throughout their careers (cf. e. g. Larsen and Stoltz 1912, 237; Larsen 1926, 54; Skulerud 1922, 375; 1924, 7). Other examples are the philologists Magnus Olsen (1912, 36), Gustav Indrebø (1917, 119; 1931, 41) and Trygve Knudsen (1924, 138), and the dialectologists Eilert Mo (1922), Lars E. Søreide (1930, 36), Halvor Dalene (1947, 106) and Hallfrid Christiansen (1948, 181).

Ernst W. Selmer (1876–1968), professor of Germanic philology and general phonetics at the University in Oslo, in 1948 published the first – and as yet only – scientific study of *halvemål* as an articulatory phenomenon. Selmer was a prominent phonetician and served as head of the department of phonetics for more than 40 years (Jahr 2009). His work on *halvemål* is part of a 120-page treatise

called *Sunnmøre-Studier* (lit. “Studies from the region of Sunnmøre”) containing the subsections “Musical and dynamic accent”, “Halvemål” and “The crossed d (ø).”<sup>40</sup> Selmer primarily undertakes experimental phonetic analyses of the phenomenon (kymographic measuring), but he also delivers an interesting theoretical discussion of *h*-omission and “false *h*-prosthesis”<sup>41</sup> in general. Moreover, he carries out what we today would call a *folk linguistic* survey on *halvemål* in the region of Sunnmøre. By questioning pupils, teachers and “other interested parties,” Selmer contributed some interesting insights into the status of the *halvemål* spoken at that time, although he judged the results to be “rather meager, both quantitatively and qualitatively” (Selmer 1948, 87). Nevertheless, he shows that the notion is still well known, although the actual phonetic trait is reported to be on the decline in most areas. The informants also report substantial differences between the generations, and there are several signs that the feature carries a certain stigma.

## Post-war linguists and *halvemål*

It is difficult to estimate the impact of Selmer’s work on fellow linguists in Norway, but the references made to his *halvemål*-treatise in the subsequent decades are scant. One of the few can be found in the relatively lengthy encyclopedia article *halvemål* in volume 5 of *Norsk allkunnebok* (Sudmann 1948–1964). The author was Magne Oftedal (1921–1985), at that time a university fellow in general linguistics, later professor of Celtology at the University of Oslo. Oftedal’s definition starts out rather conventionally by mentioning both *halvemål* and *alvemål* and focusing on the variety: “*halvemål* or *alvemål* is the term for dialects where the sound *h* either is not used or is used differently from the standard language.”<sup>42</sup> In the following wording, however, Oftedal appears considerably more nuanced than many of his predecessors. He points out that the *h*-omission may be gradual and not regular, and that the speech rate and intra-sentential placement may impinge on the *h*-quality. Interestingly, he emphasizes, much like Aasen (1848, see above), that the omission and insertion of *h* do not occur systematically or invariably: “[T]he com-

<sup>40</sup> In original: “Musikalsk og dynamisk aksent – Halvemål – Den stungne ø”.

<sup>41</sup> In original: “falsk h-protese” (passim).

<sup>42</sup> In original: “*halvemål* el. *alvemål* er nemning på målføre der lyden *h* enten ikkje vert nytta el. vert nytta på annan måte enn i normaltalemål.” (Sudmann 1953, col. 734).

mon belief that many consistently say *øy* for *høy* and *høy* for *øy*, [is not correct]”.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, Oftedal refers to Selmer (1948) for further reading.

The term *halvemål* continued to be used among distinguished post-war Scandinavian philologists, notably by Per Nyquist Grøtvedt (1954, 179; 1969, 125; 1970, passim), Ragnvald Iversen (1954, 58; 1957, 170), Per Hovda (1961, passim), Einar Lundebj (1981, 73; 1995, 28), Egil Pettersen (1975, 299f) and Kjell Venås (2002, 194). The dialectologists Olav T. Beito (1963, passim), Gunnvor Rundhovde (1964, 28), Kåre Elstad (1982, 76), Arnold Dalen (1997, 198), Audun Fitje (1995, passim) also used the term, as did sociolinguists like Helge Sandøy (1987, 104; 1990, 69; 2011, 218) and Randi Solheim (2010, 277) and onomasiologists including Tom Schmidt (1981, 414), Eivind Vågslid (1974, passim; 1978, 112f), Peter Hallaråker (2000, 148), Inge Særheim (2001, 368), Berit Sandnes (2003, 49), Kristoffer Kruken (2006), Frode Korslund (2006), Margit Harsson (2008, passim) and Kåre Hoel (2014). Although he was not primarily a linguist, the literacy historian Jostein Fet (2003, passim; 2010, 138) could be added to this list.

The fact that several sub-disciplines within Norwegian linguistics and philology have employed the term indicates the prevalence of the concept, and this also clarifies why it is found in many textbooks and general reference books throughout the latter part of the 20th century.

The introductory chapter of the primary school dictionary *Ordliste for grunnskolen* (Bakke and Dalene 1968) includes *halvemål* among the dialectal characteristics (“målmerker”) that the pupils are supposed to be able identify in their own dialect. The short explanation provided (“omission or incorrect insertion of the *h*-sound”<sup>44</sup>) is omitted in the 1975 edition. This and subsequent editions (1982 and 1987) give the following instruction: “The few technical terms we use, you should look up in other reference books.”<sup>45</sup> Evidently, *halvemål* is among the “technical terms” that can be readily found elsewhere.

In his 1969 textbook on “Nynorsk” in upper secondary school (*Nynorsk i gymnasiet*), Magne Thingelstad uses *halvemål* as a term. He briefly explains the phenomenon (“loss of the *h*-sound”) and further points to parallels in the Romance languages and English Cockney. This explanation is retained in the 1977 revised edition.

<sup>43</sup> In original: “[D]en vanlege trua at mange konsekvent seier *øy* for *høy* og *høy* for *øy*, [er ikkje rett]”.

<sup>44</sup> In original: “bortfall el. feil plassering av *h*-lyden” (1968, 16).

<sup>45</sup> In original: “De få fagorda vi bruker, får dere slå opp i andre handbøker.”

Apparently, the most recent textbook that includes *halvemål* is *Språkboka for den videregående skolen* (Nøklestad and Tveterås 1999).<sup>46</sup> Here *halvemål* is listed among several other dialectal characteristics in a chapter on Norwegian dialects: “In some dialects in Western Norway and also other parts of the country, the *h* occasionally falls away initially”<sup>47</sup> (1999, 171).

Didrik A. Seip’s article on *halvemål* is replicated in several encyclopedias throughout the post-war period. It appears for the last time in *Gyldendals store konversasjonsleksikon* in 1972 (Bull et al. 1972). For the joint project *Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store norske leksikon* (1978–1981) the lexicographer Dag Gundersen (1928–2016) authored a new article based on Seip’s text. His article was retained in the second and third editions (1988 and 1997), and most recently it went online in the Internet versions from 2000 onwards. The current entry in the online version of *Store Norske Leksikon*<sup>48</sup> still has Gundersen’s signature:

*Halvemål* are dialects that omit initial pre-vocalic *h*, for example *av* for *hav* and *est* for *hest*, and conversely insert *h* in words where it does not belong, for example *høy* for *øy*. The phenomenon is known from several English and Swedish dialects. In Norway this is primarily found in the Sunnmøre region and in parts of the Nordfjord, Sunnfjord and Nordhordland regions. Etymology: possibly originally *alvemål*, i. e. the tongue used by the elves.<sup>49</sup>

Although the wording differs slightly from that of Seip, we can see that the authoritative definition of this concept has been almost identical for more than 80 years. It highlights the variety (and not the phonetic trait itself); provides examples that date back to Aasen; draws parallels to other languages; localizes the phenomenon to parts of northwestern Norway, and it includes a note on the possible etymology involving elves.

<sup>46</sup> Needless to say, a huge number of textbooks for different types of schools were published throughout this period, and it is unfeasible to examine all of them with an eye to the *halvemål* concept. Nevertheless, the digital archive at the National Library indicates that only very few textbooks included the term in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, some random checks indicate that the phenomenon in itself is omitted from the books from this period. This tendency is in harmony with the general development of the national curriculum of Norwegian as a L1, which from the 1980s onwards has placed less importance on traditional philological topics (cf. e. g. Madsen 1999).

<sup>47</sup> In original: “I nokre vestnorske dialektar og elles i landet fell h-en av og til bort i framlyd”.

<sup>48</sup> Web access: <http://snl.no/halvemål>, last update August 8, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> In original: “Halvemål er dialekter som utelater *h* i fremlyd foran vokal, for eksempel *av* for *hav* og *est* for *hest*, og omvendt setter inn *h* i ord der den ikke hører hjemme, for eksempel *høy* for *øy*. Fenomenet er kjent fra flere engelsk og svenske dialekter. I Norge finnes dette mest på Sunnmøre og i litt av Nordfjord, Sunnfjord og Nordhordland. Etymologi: kanskje egentlig *alvemål*, det vil si det mål som alvene brukte.”

Similar definitions can be found in several dictionaries from the 1970s onwards. *Tanums store rettskrivingsordbok* denotes *halvemål* as a linguistic term for a “dialect where *h* is not pronounced before a vowel”<sup>50</sup> (Sverdrup et al. 1985, 166). A very similar definition occurs in the widely used *Escolas ordbok* (Taule 1988). The editions from 1996 and 1998 (Bokmål and Nynorsk respectively) retain the entry, as do the 2005 editions.

The widely used – and highly authoritative – dictionaries *Nynorskordboka* (Hovdenak et al. 1986) and *Bokmålsordboka* (Landrø and Wangensteen 1986) both include the lemma *halvemål* with a definition that echoes Seip’s and Gundersen’s texts<sup>51</sup>: “possibly originally ‘alvemål’. Linguistics: dialect that omits initial pre-vocalic *h*, and conversely often inserts it where it does not belong.”<sup>52</sup> These definitions have been maintained in the digital versions of both dictionaries (<http://ordbok.uib.no>). An almost identical definition is listed in the general dictionary *Norsk ordbok* (1996) and reiterated in the 2005 edition.

The *halvemål* entry in the monumental *Norsk ordbok: ordbok over det norske folkemålet og det nynorske skriftmålet*<sup>53</sup> strongly resembles the definitions mentioned above. The entry draws on Aasen, Ross and Rygh and further presents *halvemål* as a linguistic term for “language use where the words are truncated through the elimination of initial pre-vocalic *h*.”<sup>54</sup> However, it is worth noticing that this definition employs the notion “language use”<sup>55</sup> instead of “dialect” or “variety of speech.”

Interestingly, this aspect has been at the core of the definition of *halvemål* in most of the dictionaries published by the Norwegian Academy for Language

50 In original: “Dialekt der *h* ikke uttales foran vokal”.

51 Both dictionaries were prepared by the Norwegian department of lexicography (*Norsk leksikografisk institutt*) at the University of Oslo, where Dag Gundersen served as a professor from 1985. Although he was not part of the editorial staff, the prefaces of both volumes indicate that Gundersen was involved in the editing. *Bokmålsordboka* states that Gundersen (among others) has “read the manuscript and made corrections and many remarks and suggested improvements” (1986, V–VI).

52 The translation reflects both *Nynorskordboka* (1986, 254) and *Bokmålsordboka* (1986, 215). The only significant difference between the two (except for the language variant itself) is that *Nynorskordboka* applies *halvemål* in the spelling of ‘it does not belong’: <an hikkje øyrer eime> for <han ikkje høyrer heime>.

53 Twelve volumes comprising more than 330 000 lemmata were published in the period 1939–2016. The major part of the dictionary (the interval *i–åværig*) is digitally available from <http://no2014.uio.no>.

54 In original: “målbruk der orda er avstytte ved at *h* fell bort i framlyd framfor vokal” (Vikør 2002, col. 1357).

55 The Norwegian word is ‘målbruk’ (Vikør 2002, col. 1357).

and Literature (Norw. “Det Norske Akademi for Språk og Litteratur”) from the 1977 *Riksmålsordboken* onwards. There *halvemål* is defined as a “dialect phenomenon” and not a variety of speech (Guttu 1977, 256). The exact same wording is maintained in *Aschehoug og Gyldendals store norske ordbok* (Guttu 1991, 231), which to a large extent is based on the 1977 publication. Furthermore, *Norsk illustrert ordbok* (Guttu 1993), *Norsk ordbok med 1000 illustrasjoner* (Guttu 2005) and *Kunnskapsforlaget's store norske ordbok* (Guttu 2017) all include this definition.<sup>56</sup> The digitalized dictionary *Det Norske Akademis ordbok* (NAOB) adopted the same article with some minor changes.<sup>57</sup>

## The etymological background of *halvemål*

As indicated above, some scholars have touched upon the etymology of the term, but no one has discussed it extensively. Oluf Rygh's (1898) brief comment on the possible link to the (unattested) Norse *alfamál* (“elves’ speech”) in his seminal introduction to *Norske Gaardnavne* is frequently passed on in the literature and appears to be the general recognized explanation. *Norsk ordbok* additionally mentions *halve* as a possible primary signification of the first element (Vikør 2002, col. 1357).<sup>58</sup> However, most sources seem to favor the association with *alfr* (“elf”), and as we have seen, this connection is incorporated in several digital dictionaries and the most used Norwegian web-based encyclopedia.

The prominent philologist Magnus Olsen (1878–1963) is among the proponents of Rygh's idea (cf. Olsen 1912, 36; 1951; 175). Olsen elaborates on the possible connection to the mythological creature *alfr* (“elf”, “fairy”), which is known from both Old Norse poetry (*Poetic Edda*) and later folklore. In Norse mythology the *alfr* was an anthropomorphic figure that belonged to the underworld (cf. e. g. Holtsmark 1990, 77). As Ármann Jakobsson (2015, 216) rightly points out, *alfr* in

<sup>56</sup> The publishing house *Kunnskapsforlaget's* dictionaries were digitalized from 2005 on (<http://ordnett.no>).

<sup>57</sup> The online version of *Det Norske Akademis ordbok* was completed in 2017 and comprises more than 225 000 lemmata. It is based on the four-volume *Norsk Riksmålsordbok* (1937–57) and its two supplementary volumes from 1995. *Halvemål* is not a lemma in the original dictionary. The 1995 entry curiously defines the term as “(Norwegian) dialect where h has fallen away [etc.]” (Noreng et al. 1995, col. 1160). This definition was not transferred to the online version.

<sup>58</sup> The article is authored by Olaf Alménningen and includes a reference to professor Reidar Djupedal (1921–1989). In personal communication with me (August 2018), Alménningen reports that Djupedal noted this assumption on a document that was submitted to *Norsk Ordbok*, but he never published on the topic.

medieval textual sources is a fairly broad term that denotes not only a specific race or species or even categories of elves, but is used for all paranormal figures that are superior to humans. The *Prose Edda* (Snorri Sturluson's work) distinguishes between the *ljósalfar* ("light elves") and the *dökkalfar* ("dark elves", also *svartal-far* "black elves"), where the first type is characterized by its benevolence and beauty, and the latter by its grimness and animosity towards humans. However, it seems unlikely that this categorization was generally accepted in medieval Scandinavia, and there are many indications of a prevalent ambiguity about whether *alfar* were good or evil (Ármann Jakobsson 2015, 216). The later ballad tradition (ca. 1350–1550) maintains this vagueness regarding the elves' relationship with humans, but nevertheless consolidates the belief that these creatures have the power to intervene in the earthly realm, be it with a helping, bewildering or hindering purpose.<sup>59</sup> The best-known ballad dealing with elves is arguably "Olav Liljekrans" (Eng. "Olav lily-lei"), which has its parallels in several parts of Europe (Jonsson 1992). A central motif in this text is precisely how elves might inflict injury on mankind by causing illnesses and evils (Bø 1977, 250f).<sup>60</sup>

Given this background we might assume that the term (*h*)*alvemål* is meant to suggest a type of speech that is being meddled with by supernatural creatures, the elves. A somewhat ingenious aspect is that the term itself can be considered a product of the tampering: The insertion of an *h*-sound thus materializes the denotation of the allegedly paranormal phenomenon. Conceivably, this explanation was intended as a joke, as Rygh proposes.

An additional link to the elves' speech is based on the insight into the *alfamål* from the poem *Alvíssmál* ("Talk of Alvíss") in the *Poetic Edda*. Here the dwarf Alvíss comes to Thor and accounts for how diverse mythological beings (among them the *alfar*) express themselves in their surroundings. The crucial point is that these beings use different types of *heiti* or *kenning* — poetic synonyms — for different objects, earthly as well as celestial (cf. e. g. Grundtvig 1870, 235). The euphemistic circumlocution that characterizes "classical" elves' speech has also been considered a distinguishing trait of "modern" *halvemål*: The folklorist Svale Solheim (1940, 126) suggests that *halvemål* has been used by fishermen to conceal local names and thereby make it harder for outsiders to obtain the tricks of the trade.<sup>61</sup> Older sources reveal that this type of *taboo language* has been employed

<sup>59</sup> Moreover, elf-like creatures appear with several other names (*hulder*, *tuss*, *haugkall* etc.) in different folk tales and legends.

<sup>60</sup> The Danish version of the ballad is titled *Elverskud* ("elf-shot"), which is a well-known notion in Norwegian folklore, cf. e. g. Lid (1921) on *alvskot* as a name for a medical condition.

<sup>61</sup> In original: "Det ligg nær å slutta at halvemålet her er brukt medviti til å 'drapera' namna så ikkje utanforståande skulle ha så lett for å skjøna samanhengen."

in the Norwegian Sea area for a long time (cf. e. g. Strøm 1762–66, 536; Jakobsen 1897, 82f.), but Selmer (1948, 102) does not support the idea that the *h*-omission is a part of this. Olsen (1951, 175, footnote) further makes a brief comment on how the physical or phonetic nature of *halvemål* relates to elves by assuming that *alfamål* “has been spoken in such a way (with a whisper or inhaled speech or mumbling voice) that *h*-sound had to fall away.”<sup>62</sup> We might view Olsen’s bold theory in relation to the folklore notions of *elveblest* and *alvegust* (lit. “elves’ puff” and “elves’ gust”), which were widely used appellations for different illnesses (mainly skin eruptions) that were supposedly instigated by the breath of elves (or other creatures from the underworld).<sup>63</sup> The folk literature contains some accounts of the whispering noises expressed by elves (cf. e. g. Feilberg 1910, 112f.), but even if a feeble link between elves and aspirate sounds does exist, further support of *h*-omission or *h*-insertion as a traditional characteristic of the mythological elves’ speech is difficult to find.

The other imaginable etymological strand, *halve*, is grounded on the concrete truncation of words. Several sources suggest that the term *halvemål* is commonly conceived of as a variety where words are “halved” (e. g. Støyva 1994). Even though the elision only concerns one initial phoneme, the folk perspective is that the result is incompleteness or defectiveness. Selmer (1948, 102) reasons that a concept grounded on truncation is illogical considering that *h*-insertion is at least as frequent as the omission. However, we might assume that the main aspect of the “halving” is the rendering corrupt or imperfect rather than the concrete cur-tailing.

In a humorous verse on the Norwegian language dispute, Idar Handagaard (1874–1959) waggishly collocates *halve maal* and *halvemaal* to allude to the contamination of the Danish-Norwegian language (1924, 29).<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the author Anders Hovden (1860–1943) refers to *halvemål* with the denotation “incorrect and bad language” in a private letter to Ivar Aasen in 1893.<sup>65</sup> This disapproving aspect

62 In original: “[Det gamle \**alfamål* ] har været talt på en slik måte (med hvisken, eller med innåndingstale, eller med mumlestemme?) at *h* der måtte bli borte.”

63 In modern Norwegian *elveblest* is still used as a medical term for hives (urticaria).

64 The first verse of the text “Skraklehanar paa spel” (Handagaard 1929, 29–30) goes: “Halve maal og halvemaal // det er no i vinden. // Skraklehanar held eit skraal // og sit høgt paa pinnen.” [“Half speech and ‘halvemaal’ // that is all the rage. // Crackling roosters clamoring // sitting high on the perch.”] “Skraklehane” [lit. ‘crackling rooster’] is a colloquial term for a hybrid between black grouse and capercaillie (‘cock of the woods’). In a text on Arne Garborg’s efforts in the Norwegian language dispute in the late 1800s, Eskeland (1921, 23) similarly denotes the antagonists of the *Landsmål* movement as *halvemaal-menner* (lit. ‘*halvemål* men’).

65 In original: “[...] det er dessverre et ’halvemål’ fra formens side” (Hovden 1996, 120).

is also reflected in the traditional notion *det rånge målet* (lit. “the wrong speech”), which has been used pejoratively for the *h*-omitting varieties (Støyva 1994; Dvergstad 1996, 13). Likewise, the term *kråkemålet* (lit. “crows’ speech”) occurs as a synonym for *halvemål*, accentuating its incompleteness and inappropriateness (cf. e. g. Ølmheim 1980, 406; Sandøy 1990, 69).

Similar notions exist in Swedish, where *halfstal* (“half-speech”, Vendell 1894, 122), *alvä ård* (*h*-less variant of *halfva ord*, “half words”), *halvördä* and *halvördt* (“half-worded”) have been used in reference to *h*-omission (cf. Rietz 1862–67, 238; Gustavson 1991, 312 and 314).<sup>66</sup>

To summarize, we can argue that the provenience of *halvemål* is rather muddled, and to establish an undisputable etymology is impossible. An original construction where “*alv-*” (*alfr*) is the root of the prefix is plausible both in view of the many other compounds with “*alve-*” and the parallel notion *dverg(a)mål* (*dvergmåa/-måli*, lit. “dwarfs’ speech”, i. e. “echo”). The motivation for this signification would be the folk belief that elves may interfere in peoples’ lives, as well as in human language. The variant with *h* would quite simply be the *halvemål* speakers’ pronunciation of *alvemål* (\**alfamål*). However, there is little evidence that the variant ‘*alvemål*’ has been used orally to any great extent: A search in the vast material that *Norsk Ordbok* is based on, renders only one hit, which is a written source from 1984. Even though the connection to the *alfr*-element is possible, it is, admittedly, rather far-fetched. Thus, the *alvemål* hypothesis might just as well be the product of an academic flight of fancy on Oluf Rygh’s part, subsequently reinforced by Hans Ross and Magnus Olsen, and disseminated by a large number of scholars.

The explanation involving the “halving” (i. e. truncation) might appear far less exotic, but considering the parallels from Swedish, which indicate that the signification “truncated, deficient, curtailed language” has been widespread, makes this hypothesis more plausible. Gun Widmark (1994, 190f) proposes that *h*-omission and “false restitution” historically was prevalent in large parts of the Scandinavian-speaking area, an assumption that is further corroborated by the fact that similar notions have been circulating in different regions.

Moreover, the co-occurrence of similar terms also suggests that the provenience of *halvemål* might be a scholarly context and not primarily based on a folk etymology. One could presume that terms involving the *half*-element were exchanged in oral communication (and even in written texts which have later gone missing or remained unexplored) between (pre-)dialectologists and other

<sup>66</sup> Like *halvemål*, *halvördt* is also registered with multiple significations: “curtailed language”, “depraved language”, “dirty language” etc. (Gustavson 1991, 314).

academics. However, it would be very hard to establish the facts in this matter, considering that the relevant sources are very scant.

## The application of the term – epistemic aspects

Lastly, I will turn to the scientific application of the term, with regards to its differing epistemic status. As we have seen above, the notion *halvemål* might originate from a *folk explanation*, i. e. a picturesque term (cf. Harré 1970, 47). We can postulate that this folk notion once entered the common language because it was conceived of as useful, even if it was also considered a misnomer (assuming that elves have never existed). In the 1850s, the term entered the academic context, and already around the turn of the century it was established as a scientific term in the linguistic milieu at the only Norwegian university at that time, the Royal Frederick University in Christiania (Oslo). This does not mean that all early Norwegian linguists employed it, Johan Storm and Marius Hægstad are examples of prominent professors who did not, but for many others the notion seems to have been the natural choice. However, as mentioned earlier, the signification has varied noticeably since Aasen's days, and the term's employment as a scientific concept is equally inconsistent.

The most frequent occurrence of the term in the academic literature is as a parenthetical synonym for “*h*-omission” and similar notions<sup>67</sup> – often in quotes. Amund B. Larsen, for instance, is consistent in his use of quotation marks, as is Gustav Indrebø.<sup>68</sup> Hans Ross and Olai Skulerud mostly use quotes, but there are a few exceptions to this. In several cases an additional “so-called” is included, possibly to emphasize the folk character of the term: e. g. “det såkalte ‘halvemaal’” (Falk and Torp 1906, 481), “det sokalla ‘halvemål’” (Bjørlykke and Liset 1935, 10), “de såkalte halvemål” (D. A. Seip in Werenskiold and Winsnes 1941, col. 651), and “såkalla ‘halvemål’” (Skjerpe 1979, 89). Interestingly, this dissociating conduct can be found throughout the entire period. A small number of scholars use the term more straightforwardly and mostly without any such reservation. Most notably the onomasiologist Eivind Vågslid who applies the term throughout his writings.

<sup>67</sup> These notions are often multiword phrases like “when *h* falls away”, “occasions where *h* is left out”, “omission of the sound *h*”, etc. No single-word terms are used as frequently as *halvemål* in the material I have analysed.

<sup>68</sup> However, Indrebø uses the notion without quotation marks in his commentaries in Christie (1938, 196).

Another recurring pattern is that *halvemål* is used as a denominator of the phonetic substitution phenomenon (the actual *h*-omission and *h*-insertion) far more often than as the name of a variety. As shown above, the latter use is predominant in texts meant for a broader audience (dictionaries, textbooks and encyclopedias). Thus, the many dictionaries that explicitly label *halvemål* as a linguistic term for a variety are – strictly speaking – inaccurate since the prevailing scientific use primarily denotes the phonetic phenomenon *per se*.

Furthermore, the literature shows that *halvemål* has been employed both as a descriptive term and as an explanatory concept. Thus, the notion has been applied on two different epistemic levels. The first application is the prevailing one, and examples can be found in texts from several different linguistic disciplines and scholars. Instances of the second type occur most often in academic texts by authors who are not primarily linguists, even though there are also examples from linguistics studies. As already mentioned, the multi-volume work *Norske Gaardnavne* contains several instances of onomastic details that are explained as “due to *halvemål*” or “caused by *halvemål*” (e. g. Rygh 1908, 39 and Rygh 1910, 111). This idea has been passed on to several works on local and social history (mainly authored by historians) where toponyms are reviewed, often with explicit reference to Rygh (and his successors). Some illustrative examples are: “This variant must have its cause in *halvemål*” (Slyngstad 1951, 39); “The *H* has fallen away by way of the so-called *halvemål*” (Rynning 1968, 172); “The fact that *h* is missing in this dialect [...] is a result of *halvemål*” (Rød 1994, 332); “[...] here, *halvemål* must have rendered the name unclear” (Krogsæter 1995, 147).<sup>69</sup> In these cases, the concept *halvemål* is ascribed an agency that in itself instigates linguistic change. Consequently, a taxonomic principle appears in the guise of a causal principle (cf. Harré 1970, 203) and thus provides the concept with added explanatory power. We can observe the same mode of thought in Korlund (2006, 53): “The alternation between variants with and without *h* results from the *halvemål* phenomenon.”<sup>70</sup> With explicit reference to Rygh (1898) the writer here appoints *halvemål* the active vehicle in a linguistic process rather than employing the notion as mere description. Several of these scholars touch upon (more or less overtly) the sociolinguistic conditions that may explain the motivation behind the *h*-substitution. As we have seen, Ross mentioned this already in his 1895 publication, and aspects of the social stigma associated with the erroneous distribution of *h* – and the general awareness of it – can be found in several sources.

<sup>69</sup> In original: “Denne forma må ha sin grunn i halvemål”; “H-en er bortfalt ved det såkalte halvemål”; “At h er borte i dialekta [...], er utslag av ’halvemål’”; “[...] her måtte halvemålet ha gjort namnet utydeleg.”

<sup>70</sup> In original: “Vekslingen mellom formene med og uten h skyldes fenomenet halvemål”.

## Concluding remarks

What I have been examining here, is the history of a linguistic term that most probably has its origins in a language-related *folk explanation*. Even though the etymology is blurred, we can regard the notion as a popular attempt at describing a linguistic conduct that has been known for hundreds of years.

As prominent scholars – chiefly affiliates of the philological environments in Oslo – applied the term over time, it earned the status of a scientific term and eventually spread to the public educational discourse. Moreover, the term was included in several seminal textbooks related to Scandinavian linguistics (e. g. Christiansen 1948 and Beito 1963) and hence appears as a key term in the dialectology and onomastics fields.

At the present time *halvemål* features in most digital dictionaries and encyclopedias, commonly categorized as linguistic terminology. What is striking with the scholarly application of the term, however, is the recurring effort to keep the term at a certain distance by framing it with different modifiers, such as “so-called,” inverted commas, or brackets. This conduct indicates that many scholars have disavowed the term, at least partially, even though *halvemål* has belonged to the linguistic terminology for 150 years. Nevertheless, it has subsisted as a *quasi-scientific* concept, occurring in a wide range of papers and theses. Most recently, it has been included in the new four-volume language history *Norsk språkhistorie* (2016–2018),<sup>71</sup> and then chances are good that *halvemål* will endure well into the 21st century, albeit tucked away in brackets.

## Literature

Anker, Øyvind & Haffner, Rolf (Eds.) 1935: *Nyco konversasjonleksikon*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag.

Anker, Øyvind & Haffner, Rolf (Eds.) 1939: *Cappelens Leksikon*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag.  
 Jakobsson, Ármann 2015: “Beware of the Elf! A Note on the Evolving Meaning of Álfar”. In: *Folklore*, 126:2, 215–223, DOI: 10.1080/0015587X.2015.1023511.

Bakke, Karl & Dalene, Halvor 1968: *Ordliste for grunnskulen*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag.

<sup>71</sup> In volume IV of *Norsk språkhistorie*, titled *Tidslinjer* (“Timelines”) (Nesse 2018), “*halvemål*” is employed in two chapters: Once in round brackets and inverted commas in the chapter on the Viking Period (by Michael Schulte), and once with the modifier ‘såkalla’ (“so-called”) in the chapter on the High Middle Ages (by Odd Einar Haugen). Furthermore, it is included in the index of technical terms with the following definition: “Dialect with omission of initial pre-vocalic *h* [examples provided]” (p. 755).

- Bandle, Oskar 1962: "Die norwegische Dialektforschung. Ein Überblick über ihre Geschichte und ihre heutige Situation". In: *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung* 29, 4. 289–312.
- Bandle, Oskar 1973. *Die Gliederung des Nordgermanischen*. (Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie 1). Basel-Stuttgart: Helbing & Lichtenhahn.
- Beito, Olav T. 1963: *Norske målføretekster*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Berulfsen, Bjarne 1933: *Engelsk–norsk*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Björklund, Stig 1958: "Gammelt och nytt i älvdalsmålet". In: *Älvdalens sockens historia* 5. (Ed.) S. Solders. Stockholm: Fritzes. 149–193.
- Bjørlykke, Jakob & Liset, Olav 1935: *Soga um Sande og Rovde. Vol. I*. Sande/Rovde: Sande og Rovde Sogenemnd.
- Bull, Francis, Eskeland, Arnold & Tandberg, Erik (Eds.) 1972: *Gyldendals store konversasjonsleksikon*. Third edition. Oslo: Gyldendals Norsk Forlag.
- Bø, Olav 1977: *Norsk folkediktning VII. Folkeviser II*. 4. edition. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Christiansen, Hallfrid 1948: *Norske dialekter III: De viktigste målmerker og deres rådedom*. [Oslo:] Tanum.
- Christie, Wilhelm F.K. 1938: *Norsk Dialekt-Lexicon: og nokre folkeminne og brev*. (Ed.) Gustav Indrebø. Bergen: Bergens Museum.
- Dalen, Arnold 1997: [Review of A. Fitje: *Målføret i Gloppen* (1995)]. In: *Svenska landsmål och svenskt folkliv* 120, 323. 197–201.
- Dalene, Halvor 1947: "Bymål og bygdemål i ytre delen av Telemark fylke". In: *Maal og Minne*. 85–116.
- Dvergsdal, Daniel 1996: *Jølstramålet*. Jølster: Jølster mållag.
- Eikel, Fred jr. 1953: "H-Schwund: A Linguistic Impasse." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 52(2). 221–225.
- Elstad, Kåre 1982: *Borgfjerdingsmål 1–2*. Oslo: Novus.
- Eskeland, Lars 1906: *Norsk rettskrivingsordbok*. Kristiania: Olaf Norlis Forlag.
- Eskeland, Lars 1919: *Norsk ordlista*. 4. edition. Kristiania: Olaf Norlis Forlag.
- Eskeland, Lars 1921: "Arne Garborg og maalreisingi". In: *Arne Garborg – 25. Januar 1851 – 25. Januar 1921*. (Eds.) O. Hoprekstad et al. Bergen: Lunde & Co. 16–24.
- Eskeland, Lars & Eskeland, Severin 1948: *Norsk rettskrivings-ordbok*. 4. edition. Oslo: Fonna Forlag.
- Falk, Hjalmar & Torp, Alf 1906: *Etymologisk ordbok over det norske og det danske sprog. Vol. 2 N–Ø*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Feilberg, H. F. 1910: *Bjærgtagen. Studie over en gruppe træk fra nordisk alfetro*. København: Schönbergsske Forlag.
- Fet, Jostein 2003: *Skrivande bønder. Skriftkultur på Nord-Vestlandet 1600–1850*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Fet, Jostein 2010: "Magiske formlar frå Hornindalen". In: *Maal og Minne* 2. 134–155.
- Fitje, Audun 1995: *Målføret i Gloppen. Norske studiar VII*. Oslo: Målførearkivet ved Universitetet i Oslo.
- Freudenthal, Axel O. 1870. *Om svenska allmogemålet i Nyland*. Helsingfors.
- Grundtvig, N. F. S. 1870: *Nordens Mythologi eller Sindbilled-Sprog*. 3. edition. København: J.H. Schubothes Boghandel.
- Grøtvedt, Per Nyquist 1954: *Skriftspråktradisjon ved Hallvardkirken og Mariakirken i Oslo*. Oslo: Jacob Dybwad.
- Grøtvedt, Per Nyquist 1969: *Skrift og tale i mellomnorske diplomer fra Folden-området 1350–1450. Bind I: Nordre og Østre Folden (med Båhuslen)*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

- Grøtvedt, Per Nyquist 1970: *Skrift og tale i mellomnorske diplomer fra Folden-området 1350–1450. Bind II: Vestre og Indre Folden*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Gustavson, Herbert 1991: *Gotländsk ordbok. På grundval av C. och P. Säves samlingar. 1. bandet: A–N*. Visby: Ödins Förlag.
- Guttu, Tor (Ed.) 1977: *Riksmålsordboken*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Guttu, Tor (Ed.) 1991: *Aschehoug og Gyldendals store norske ordbok*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Guttu, Tor (Ed.) 1993: *Norsk illustrert ordbok*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Guttu, Tor (Ed.) 2005: *Norsk ordbok med 1000 illustrasjoner*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Guttu, Tor (Ed.) 2017: *Kunnskapsforlagets store norske ordbok*. 3. edition. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Häcker, Martina 1998: “Why is there no /h/-dropping in Scots? Loss and insertion of /h/ as a contact phenomenon”. In: *Tendenzen europäischer Linguistik: Akten des 31. Linguistischen Kolloquium*, Bern 1996. (Ed.) J. Strässler. 71–76. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Hallaråker, Peter 2000: *Offisielle stadnamn i Møre og Romsdal*. Volda: P. Hallaråker.
- Handagaard, Idar 1924: *Norsk leid*. Oslo: Norsk bokhandel.
- Harré, Rom 1970: *The Principles of Scientific Thinking*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Harsson, Margit 2008: “Frå Oddsruð til Auserød – om lydlege endringar i gamle rud-namn”. In: *Namn frå by og bø. Veneskrift til Tom Schmidt*. (Eds.) M. Harsson & T. Larsen. Oslo: Institutt for lingvistiske og nordiske stadium, Universitetet i Oslo. 41–56.
- Heggstad, Leiv 1914: *Norsk grammatikk for skule-ungdom*. Kristiania: Olaf Norlis forlag.
- Hoel, Kåre 2014: *Bustadnavn i Østfold. 12: Rødenes og Rømskog*. Oslo: Solum.
- Holtmark, Anne 1990: *Norrøn mytologi. Tru og mytar i vikingtida*. 2. edition. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Horrocks, Geoffrey 2010: *Greek. A History of the Language and its Speakers*. 2. edition. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hovda, Per 1961: *Norske fiskeméd. Landsoversyn og to gamle médbøker*. Oslo/Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.
- Hovden, Anders 1996: *Ivar Aasen i kvardagslaget*. Oslo: Anders Hovden-fondet / Det Norske Samlaget.
- Hovdenak, Marit et al. (Eds.) 1986: *Nynorskordboka. Definisjons- og rettskrivingsordbok*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Hovdhaugen, Even, Karlsson, Fred, Henriksen, Carol & Sigurd, Bengt 2000: *The history of linguistics in the Nordic countries*. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica.
- Hægstad, Marius 1900: *Hildinakvadet med utgreiding um det norske maal på Shetland i eldre tid*. Videnskabselskabets Skrifter. II. Historisk-filosofiske Klasse. 1900. No. 2. Christiania.
- Hægstad, Marius 1907: *Vestnorske maalføre fyre 1350. I. Nordvestlandsk*. Videnskapselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1907. No. 1. Christiania: Jacob Dybwad.
- Hægstad, Marius 1915: *Vestnorske maalføre fyre 1350. II. Sudvestlandsk*. 1. Rygjamaal. Videnskapselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1914. No. 51. Kristiania: Jacob Dybwad.
- Hægstad, Marius 1917: *Vestnorske maalføre fyre 1350. II. Sudvestlandsk*. 2. Indre Sudvestlandsk, Færøymaal, Islandsk. Videnskapselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1916. No. 41. Kristiania: Jacob Dybwad.
- Indrebø, Gustav 1917: *Fagrskinna*. Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søn.
- Indrebø, Gustav 1931: *Gamal norsk homilieboek*. Oslo: Jacob Dybwad.
- Iversen, Ragnvald 1954: “Noen folkeetymologier i østnorske stedsnavn av finsk opphav”. In:

- [*Festskrift till*] Elias Wessén. 15. april 1954. Lund: Blom. 53–59.
- Iversen, Ragnvald 1957: *Med munn og penn. Forelesninger og studier*. Trondheim: Norges Lærerhøgskole.
- Jahr, Ernst Håkon 1996: “Nynorsk språkforskning – en historisk oversikt”. In: *Studies in the development of linguistics in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Papers from the conference on the history of linguistics in the Nordic countries*, Oslo, November, 20–22, 1994. (Eds.) C. Henriksen et al. Oslo: Novus forlag. 84–101.
- Jahr, Ernst Håkon 2009: “Ernst W. Selmer”. In: *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, online: [https://nbl.snl.no/Ernst\\_W\\_Selmer](https://nbl.snl.no/Ernst_W_Selmer).
- Jakobsen, Jakob 1897: *Det norrøne sprog på Shetland*. København: W. Prior.
- Jonsson, Bengt R. 1992: “Sir Olav and the Elves: The Position of the Scandinavian Version”. In: *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 48. 65–90.
- Knudsen, Trygve 1924: “Om Tønsbergs bymål”. In: *Festskrift til Amund B. Larsen på hans 75-års fødselsdag*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug. 130–142.
- Knudsen, Trygve 1963: “Sprogforskeren Ivar Aasen”. In: *Maal og Minne*. 135–153.
- Korlund, Frode 2006: “Hurðaldalr eller Urðaldalr?” In: *Nytt om namn* 43. 53–55.
- Kortner, Olaf, Munthe, Preben & Tveterås, Egil (Eds.) 1978–1981: *Aschehoug og Gyldendals store norske leksikon*. 12 volumes. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Kristensen, Marius 1909: “Bidrag til dansk sproghistorie, I–X”. In: *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 25. 119–146.
- Krogsæter, Johan 1995: *Stadnamn frå Sunnmøre. Ei artikkelsamling*. Ålesund: Nytt i ukas forlag.
- Krogvig, Anders (Ed.) 1923: *Aschehougs konversationsleksikon*, Vol. 7. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Kruken, Kristoffer 2006: Noreg i 1743. In: *Nytt om namn* 43. 46–49.
- Landfald, Aagot & Paulsen, Kjell M. 1996: *Norsk ordbok*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS.
- Landrø, Marit I. & Wangensteen, Boye (Eds.) 1986: *Bokmålsordboka*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Larsen, Amund B. & Stoltz, Gerhard 1912: *Bergens bymål*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Larsen, Amund B. 1926: *Sognemålene*. Oslo: Dybwad.
- Levander, Lars 1928: *Dalmålet. Beskrivning och historia*. Vol. II. Uppsala: Appelbergs.
- Lid, Nils 1921: “Um finnskot og alvskot. Eit område av norsk sjukdomsmagi”. In: *Maal og Minne*. 37–72.
- Lundeby, Einar 1981: “To gårdsnavn i Hobøl. Haskilt og Igsi”. In: *Maal og Minne* 1–2. 72–76.
- Lundeby, Einar 1995: *Østfoldmål*. Gressvik: Østfold mållag.
- Lundell, J. A. 1878: “Landsmålsalfabetet”. In: *De Svenska Landsmålen och Svenskt Folkklif*. 11–158.
- Madsen, Kjell-Arild 1999: “Oppbrudd eller kontinuitet? Norskfaget i Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen (L97)”. In: *Både — og. 90-tallets utdanningsreformer i historisk perspektiv*. (Eds.) A. O. Telhaug & P. Aasen. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag. 158–176.
- Malle, Bertram F. 2004: *How the Mind Explains Behavior: Folk Explanations, Meaning, and Social Interaction*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Matras, Christian 1957: “Rygir, Sygnir og Hørðar í Føroyum”. In: *Varðin* 32. 28–32.
- Milroy, James 1983: “On the sociolinguistic history of /h/-dropping in English”. In: *Current topics in historical linguistics*. (Ed.) M. Davenport. Odense: Odense University Press. 37–53.
- Minugh, David 1985: “As old as the ‘ills: Variable loss of h in Swedish dialects”. In: *NOWELE* 6(1). 23–43.
- Mo, Eilert 1922: “Korkje Unn eller Ane”. In: *Maal og Minne*. 181.

- [NAOB =] Det Norske Akademi for Språk og Litteratur 2018: *NAOB — Det Norske Akademis ordbok*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget. Digital version: <http://www.naob.no>.
- Nesse, Agnete (Ed.) 2018: *Norsk språkhistorie. IV Tidslinjer*. Editors-in-chief: H. Sandøy & A. Nesse. Oslo: Novus.
- Neumann, Jacob 1825: *Haandbog for Lærere i Omgangsskoler*. Bergen: J. Neumann.
- Noreng, Harald, Knudsen, Trygve & Sommerfelt, Alf 1995: *Norsk riksmålsordbok. 5. Første tilleggsbind*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Nøklestad, Hans O. & Tveterås, Alf 1999: *Språkboka for den videregående skolen*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Olsen, Magnus 1912: *Stedsnavnestudier. Kristiania*: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Olsen, Magnus 1951: *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*. Vol. 2. Oslo: Dybwad.
- Pettersen, Egil 1975: *Språkbrytning i Vest-Norge 1450–1550*. Vol. 1. Bergen/Oslo/Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Raknes, Ola 1927: *Engelsk–norsk ordbok*. Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Randers, Kristofer 1890: *Søndmøre. Reisehaandboog*. Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyer.
- Rietz, Johan E. 1862–67: *Svenskt dialektlexikon: ordbok öfver svenska allmogespråket*. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag.
- Ross, Hans 1895: *Norsk Ordbog. Tillæg til 'Norsk Ordbog' af Ivar Aasen*. Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyer.
- Ross, Hans 1902: *Norsk Ordbog. Nyt Tillæg til 'Norsk Ordbog' af Ivar Aasen*. Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyer.
- Ross, Hans 1905: *Norske bygdemaal. Fyrste bolken*. Videnskabs-Selskabets Skrifter. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 2. Kristiania.
- Rundhovde, Gunnvor 1964: *Hamre bygdesoge I: Målet i Hamre*. [Hamre:] Hamre folkeopplysningsråd.
- Rygh, Oluf 1882: *Oplysninger til trondhjemske Gaardnavne*. Det kgl norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter. Throndhjem: Interessentselskabets bogtrykkeri.
- Rygh, Oluf 1892: *Oplysninger til trondhjemske Gaardnavne II*. Det kgl. Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter. Throndhjem: Kongelige norske Videnskabers Selskab.
- Rygh, Oluf 1898: *Norske Gaardnavne: Oplysninger samlede til Brug ved Matrikelens Revision. Forord og indledning*. Kristiania: W.C. Fabritius & Sønner.
- Rygh, Oluf 1901: *Norske Gaardnavne: Oplysninger samlede til Brug ved Matrikelens Revision. 14: Søndre Trondhjems Amt*. Kristiania: W.C. Fabritius & Sønner.
- Rygh, Oluf 1902: *Norske Gaardnavne: Oplysninger samlede til Brug ved Matrikelens Revision. 4: Kristians Amt*. Kristiania: W.C. Fabritius & Sønner.
- Rygh, Oluf 1908: *Norske Gaardnavne: Oplysninger samlede til Brug ved Matrikelens Revision. 13: Romsdals Amt*. Kristiania: W. C. Fabritius & Sønner.
- Rygh, Oluf 1910: *Norske Gaardnavne: Oplysninger samlede til Brug ved Matrikelens Revision. 11: Søndre Bergenshus Amt*. Kristiania: Cammermeyers Boghandel.
- Rynning, Lorents 1968: *Bidrag til norsk almennings rett. Bind II*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Rød, Per O. 1994: *Singsåsboka. Bind II*. Støren: Midtre Gauldal kommune.
- Sandnes, Berit 2003: *Fra Starafjall til Starling Hill. Dannelse og utvikling av norrøne stedsnavn på Orknøyene*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature.
- Sandøy, Helge 1987: "Dialektane våre". In: *Vårt eget språk. Bind 2: Talemålet*. (Ed.) E. B. Johnsen. Oslo: Aschehoug. 60–173.
- Sandøy, Helge 1990: "Vestlandet – der fjordane batt folket saman". In: *Den store dialektboka*.

- (Ed.) E. H. Jahr. Oslo: Novus forlag. 63–87.
- Sandøy, Helge 2011: *Romsdalsk språkhistorie. Frå runer til sms — og vel så det*. Oslo: Novus.
- Sandøy, Helge 2013: “Perspektiv på norsk talemålsforskning siste 100 år”. In: *Talemålsforskning i Norden dei siste 100 åra*. (Eds.) L. Elmevik & E. H. Jahr. Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur. 79–108.
- Schildrop, Edgar B. (Ed.) 1933: *Gyldendals konversationsleksikon*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Schjøtt, Steinar 1914: *Norsk ordbok med ordtyding paa norsk-dansk*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Schmidt, Tom 1981: *Fagordliste for norsk namnegransking*. Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for namnegransking.
- Schmidt, Tom 1998: “Oluf Ryghs Norske Gaardnavne”. In: *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa fra 1750 til 1995. Vol I*. (Eds.) E. B. Johnsen & T. B. Eriksen. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. 410–414.
- Scragg, Donald G. 1970: “Initial h in Old English”. In: *Anglia* 88. 165–196.
- Seip, D[idrik] A. 1958: “Den etterhengte artikkel i nordisk”. In: *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* XVIII. 231–261.
- Selmer, Ernst 1948: *Sunnmøre-studier*. Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1948. No. 2. Oslo: Jacob Dybwad.
- Skard, Matias 1901: *Landsmaals-ordlista med rettleiðning um skrivemaaten*. Kristiania: Aschehoug.
- Skard, Matias 1912: *Nynorsk ordbok for rettskriving og literaturlæse*. Kristiania: Aschehoug.
- Skjerpe, Jon Magne 1979: “Nokre gardsnamn frå Heskestad i Dalane”. In: *Maal og Minne* 1–2. 84–95.
- Skulerud, Olai 1906: *Om vin-navnenes behandling i fogderiene Nedre Telemarken og Bamle af Bratberg Amt*. Christiania: Jacob Dybwad.
- Skulerud, Olai 1922: *Tinnsmålet. Fyrste bolken: Ljodlære*. Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Skulerud, Olai 1924: “Sør-austlandske målføre etter samlingar av Johan Storm”. In: *Festskrift til Amund B. Larsen på hans 75-års fødselsdag*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug. 1–72.
- Slyngstad, Arnfred 1951: *Skjergardsnamn frå Sunnmøre*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Solheim, Randi 2010: *Sosial smeltedigel — språklege legeringar: om talemålsutviklinga i industrisamfunnet Høyanger*. Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk.
- Solheim, Svale 1940: *Nemningsfordomar ved fiske*. Oslo: J. Dybwad.
- Storm, Johan 1908: “Norsk Lydskrift med Omrids af Fonetiken, Andet Afsnit”. In: *Norvegia. Tidsskrift for det norske Folks Maal og Minder*. Vol. 1. 133–180.
- Strøm, Hans 1762–66: *Physisk og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør, beliggende i Bergens Stift i Norge: oplyst med Landkort og Kobberstykker*. Vol. I–II. Sorøe.
- Støyva, Roger Jan 1994: “Halvemålet”. In: *Gamle ord og uttrykk frå Breim*. (Ed.) N. Jordanger. Breim: Nemnda for ‘Gamle ord og uttrykk frå Breim’. 162–171.
- Sudmann, Arnulf (Ed.) 1953: *Norsk allkunnebok. V. bandet*. Oslo: Fonna forlag.
- Sundt, Eilert 1863: “Sprogets Folke-Skikke” [unsigned]. In: *Folkevennen*. 92–99.
- Sverdrup, Jakop, Sandvei, Marius & Fossetøl, Bernt 1985: *Tanums store rettskrivingsordbok*. Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.
- Særheim, Inge 2001: *Namn og gard. Studium av busetnadsnamn på -land*. Tidvise skrifter 38. Stavanger: Høgskolen i Stavanger.
- Søreide, Lars E. 1930: *Nordfjordmålet. Norske maalføre XII*. Oslo: Norli.
- Taule, Ragnvald 1988: *Escolas ordbok*. Oslo: Escola Forlag.
- Thingelstad, Magne 1969: *Nynorsk i gymnaset. Arbeidsbok for sidemålsopplæringa*. Oslo: Det

- Norske Samlaget.
- Thoresen, Magdalene 1872: *Billeder fra Vestkysten af Norge*. København: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag.
- Venås, Kjell 1986: "Om utviklingslære og junggrammatikk i Noreg". In: *De nordiske skriftspråkenes utvikling på 1800-tallet 3: Ideologier og språkstyring: rapport fra et symposium på Schæffergården ved København 2.–5. oktober 1985*. Nordisk Språksekretariats rapporter 7. Oslo: Nordisk språksekretariat. 84–92.
- Venås, Kjell 2001: "Nokre merknader om det norske stoffet i The history of linguistics in the Nordic countries av Even Hovdhaugen, Fred Karlsson, Carol Henriksen og Bengt Sigurd". In: *Norsk lingvistisk tidsskrift* 19. 229–262.
- Venås, Kjell 2002: *Norske innsjønamn IV: Telemark fylke*. Oslo: Novus.
- Vendell, Herman 1894: *Ordbok öfver Pedersöre-Purmo-målet i Österbotten*. (Bidrag til kännedom af Finlands natur och folk. Vol. 56). Helsingfors: Finska Vetenskaps-Societeten.
- Vikør, Lars S. (Ed.) 2002: *Norsk ordbok: ordbok over det norske folkemålet og det nynorske skriftmålet. Vol. 4: Gisle – harlemmerolje*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Vågslid, Eivind 1974: *Stadnamntydingar 2*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Vågslid, Eivind 1978: "Rangt tydde stadnamn". In: *Maal og Minne 1–2*. 109–132.
- Werenskiold, Werner & Winsnes, Andreas H. (Eds.) 1941: *Aschehougs konversasjonsleksikon*. Vol. VII. Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co.
- Widmark, Gun 1994: "Birkasvenskan – fanns den?" In: *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 109. 173–216.
- Ølmheim, Per Arvid 1980: "Talemål og skriftmål". In: *By og bygd i Norge: Sogn og Fjordane*. (Ed.) N. Schei. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag. 399–409.
- Aasen, Ivar 1848: *Det norske Folkesprogs Grammatik*. Kristiania: Det kongelige norske Videnskabs-Selskab.
- Aasen, Ivar 1850: *Ordbog over det norske Folkesprog*. Kristiania: Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabs-Selskab (Carl C. Werner & Co.).
- Aasen, Ivar 1851: *Søndmørsk Grammatik*. Eegsæt: Mauritz A. Aarflot.
- Aasen, Ivar 1864: *Norsk Grammatik. Omarbeidet Udgave af 'Det norske Folkesprogs Grammatik'*. Christiania: Mallings Forlagsboghandel.
- Aasen, Ivar 1873: *Norsk Ordbog med dansk Forklaring*. Christiania: Mallings Boghandel.
- Aasen, Ivar 1925: *Norsk maalbunad. Samanstilling av norske ord etter umgrip og tyding*. (Ed.) Sigurd Kolsrud. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.