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Language policies and language use in Norwegian higher education

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Outline of presentation

- Laws, regulations and language policies in Norway
- Actual language use in Norwegian higher education institutions
- Strategic conflict of interest
- Language attitudes
- Concluding comments



Laws, regulations and language policies

- *Norsk i hundre!* (2005; Language Council of Norway)
- *Language policy platform for higher education* (2006; Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions)
- Report no. 35 (2007-2008) to the Storting on national language policies (*Mål og mening*) → **Ministry of Culture**
- Report no 14 (2008-2009) to the Storting on internationalisation of education (*Internasjonalisering av utdanning*) → **Ministry of Education and Research**



→ **A strategic conflict of interest**



Laws, regulations and language policies

Follow-up to Report no. 35...

- amendment to the *Norwegian Act relating to universities and university colleges* states the following:

§ 1-7. Responsibility for the maintenance and further development of Norwegian specialised language

Universities and university colleges have the responsibility to maintain and further develop Norwegian specialised language (LSP) (my translation)





Actual language use in Norwegian HE education institutions

- major higher education institutions have established local policies
 - general in nature
 - in line with the policies of the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions
 - focus on **domain loss** and **parallel language use**

Progression

bachelor



master



phd &
research

Language

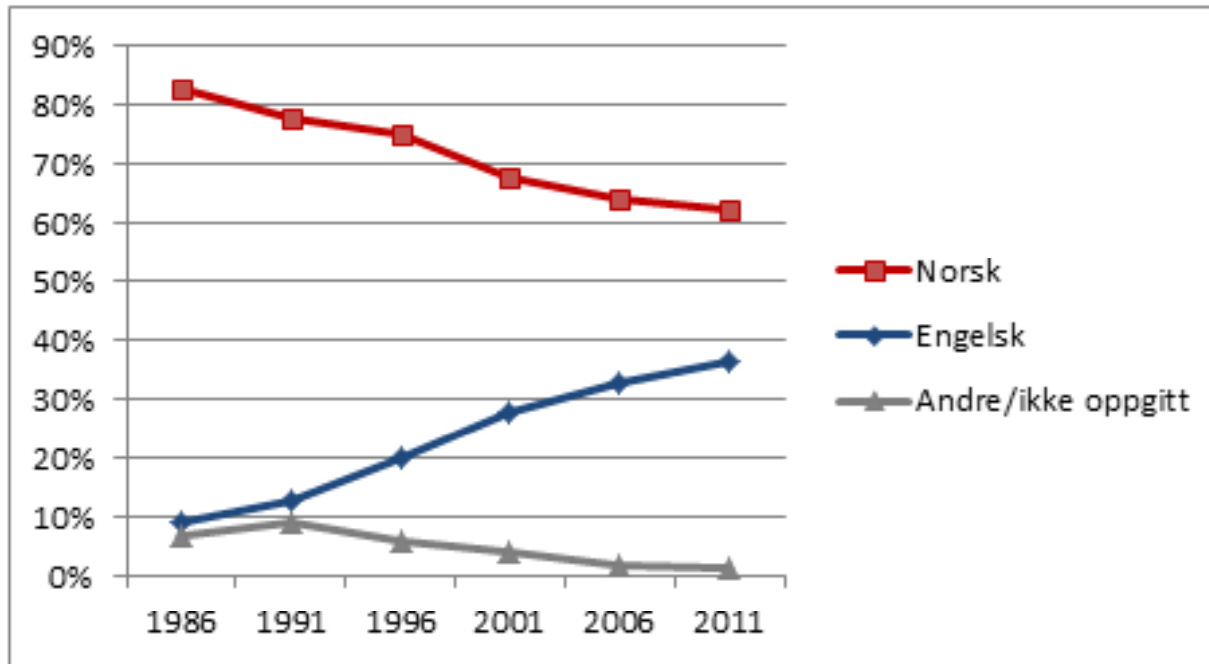
mother tongue



English

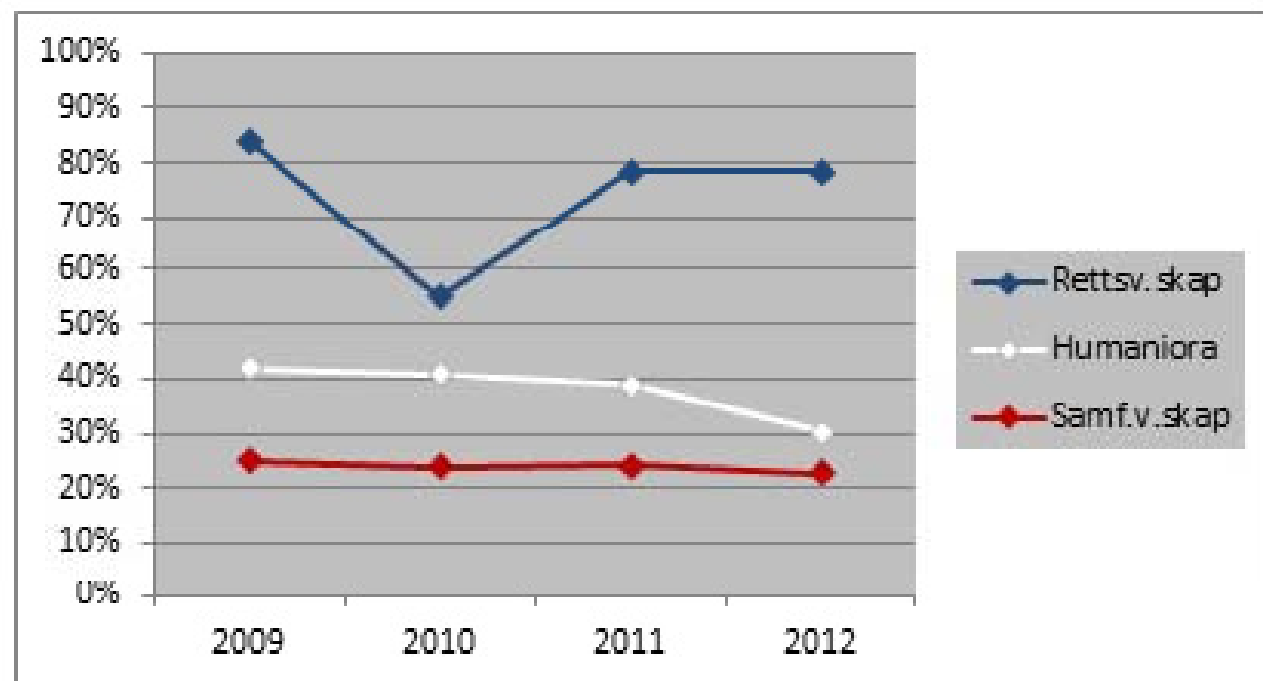
(http://www.uhr.no/ressurser/temasider/sprakpolitisk_plattform)

Main language used in master theses (1986-2011)



The use of Norwegian in phd dissertations (2009-2012) for

- law (blue)
- humanities (white)
- social sciences (red)





Strategic conflict of interest

In Report no 14 (2008-2009) to the Storting on internationalisation of education **internationalisation** is a strategic goal (Ministry of Education and Research):

internationalisation of higher education will promote quality in teaching, professional development and institution building...





Language attitudes

- **Language attitudes in the Nordic community are in general biased towards English** (Jensen et al 2009; Kristiansen & Vikør 2006)
 - In higher education: lecturers and students own attitudes reflect a strong belief in own English competence (Jensen et al 2009)
 - Students believe there is no difference in learning outcome irrespective of teaching language (Airey 2009)
- **Still: learning outcomes are to some extent hampered by teaching in a foreign language.** Students:
 - **ask and answer fewer questions**; and students who take notes have difficulties following the lecture (Airey 2009)
 - **need more time to understand an English text** when English is not their mother tongue (Karlsgren & Hansen 2003; Hellekjær 2005)
 - **understand more when they read a text in their mother tongue** compared with English (Söderlundh 2004)
 - **remember 25 % less when they read texts in English** compared with texts in their mother tongue (Guldbrandsen et al 2002)



What does the future hold...?

Unless we are able to

- i. change language attitudes and/or
- ii. show how the students' learning outcome is influenced by teaching language

...we are increasingly heading towards English as the preferred teaching language, and as the language used for administration purposes in Norwegian higher education...

At present the *major* challenge is thus not whether we should develop Norwegian terminology or not,

➤ but **to what extent we want to maintain Norwegian as the language for communication in higher education.**



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