

# Dialect change in South-East Norway and the role of attitude in diffusion<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

A common claim in the literature is that the local dialects in South-East Norway are being leveled towards the dialect of the upper social classes in Oslo. A meta-analysis of previous studies on dialect change in this region demonstrates that this assertion is incorrect, and that linguistic features have diffused from the dialect of the *lower* social classes in Oslo. Attitude studies show that people in South-East Norway have strongly negative views on the upper Oslo speech community, and this can largely explain why they do not adopt new linguistic features from this community. Within Oslo, however, linguistic features diffuse from the upper classes down to the lower classes, and the overall picture that can be drawn from these diffusion patterns is that the lower class dialect of Oslo is spreading its features out of the capital at the same time as it is gradually disappearing as a distinct sociolect.

Key words: Norwegian, Oslo, diffusion, dialect, accommodation, attitude.

Short title: Dialect change in South-East Norway

Word count: ca. 11 100

## Abstract

Det er vanleg å hevda at dei lokale målføra i Sørøst-Noreg vert tiljamna talemålet i dei øvre sosiale laga i Oslo. Ein metaanalyse av tidlegare språkendringsundersøkingar i dette området syner at den påstanden ikkje er rett, og at måldrag i staden spreier seg frå talemålet i dei *lægre* sosiale laga i Oslo. Haldningsundersøkingar syner at folk i Sørøst-Noreg tykkjer ille om dei frå dei øvre sosiale laga i Oslo, og då kan dét vera mykje av grunnen til at dei ikkje tek imot nye måldrag frå talemålet deira heller. Men innanfor Oslo spreier måldraga seg frå dei øvre til dei lægre sosiale laga, og hovudbiletet frå desse observasjonane vert då at måldrag frå talemålet i dei lægre sosiale laga i Oslo spreier seg utetter Sørøst-Noreg samstundes som det same talemålet noko om senn vert borte frå hovudstaden.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The typical claim in both the domestic and international literature on Norwegian sociolinguistics is that the local dialects in south-eastern Norway are being leveled towards an East Norwegian spoken ‘standard’ that reflects the official written standard of Bokmål Norwegian (cf. Sandøy 1998: 90, 98–99; Askedal 2005: 1585; Røyneland 2009: 13, 19–20). This spoken ‘standard’ is at the same time the native spoken language of the upper social classes in Oslo (Vanvik 1972: 120; Kristoffersen 2000: 7), and it is generally known as the ‘West End dialect’ in the Oslo region and less precisely as the ‘Oslo dialect’ in other parts of the country. In this article I will refer to this spoken variety as the ‘upper Oslo dialect’, as there are clear disadvantages to using the more common terms ‘Standard East Norwegian’ and ‘spoken Bokmål’.<sup>2</sup> The dialect spoken by the working and lower middle classes in Oslo is generally referred to as the ‘East End dialect’ in Norway, but in this article I will call it the ‘lower Oslo dialect’.

The weaker version of this sociolinguistic claim about ‘standardization’ in South-East Norway is that local dialects in this region are adopting linguistic features from both the upper and the lower Oslo dialect, but that the upper Oslo dialect plays the dominant role in this process (Akselberg 2005: 1716). The stronger version is that new linguistic features in local Norwegian dialects are adopted directly and only from the upper Oslo dialect (Mæhlum 2007b: 242–245, 2009: 17–19). The rationale provided for why the upper Oslo dialect should have such a strong influence on the local dialects is that it is ‘prestigious’ by virtue of being the language spoken by the socioeconomic upper class, and the idea is that speakers of local dialects adopt features from the upper Oslo dialect because they wish to identify socially with members of this ‘prestigious’ speech community rather than with speakers of their own local communities (Papazian and Helleland 2005: 39–41; Mæhlum 2007a: 46, 54–67, 2007b: 238). However intuitive this assumption may seem, it does not square well with actual linguistic data. In a new meta-analysis of all existing 25 studies of dialect change in the south-eastern region of Norway, it is found that none of the observed changes appears to have been adopted from the upper Oslo dialect. Instead it is demonstrated that virtually all of the new linguistic features in these local dialects have come from the lower Oslo dialect (Stausland Johnsen 2015).

The aim of this article is to provide a sociolinguistic account of this linguistic

observation. According to the *gravity model* of linguistic diffusion, the influence of one city upon another is proportional to the relative size of their populations and inversely proportional to the distance between them (Zipf 1949; Trudgill 1974). For the south-eastern region of Norway, this model would therefore predict that linguistic features will spread from the largest city in this area, Oslo, but the model cannot explain which of the two city dialects these features would diffuse from, the upper or the lower Oslo dialect. The central premise of the *communication accommodation theory* will therefore be assumed here, namely that a speaker will seek to converge linguistically to the speech of those interlocutors he has positive attitudes towards, and conversely that the presence of negative attitudes will prevent convergence (Gallois, Ogay, and Giles 2005; Giles and Ogay 2007). Given the observed lack of linguistic convergence between speakers of local south-eastern dialects and speakers of the upper Oslo dialect, the theory thus predicts that speakers of these local dialects hold negative attitudes towards speakers of the upper Oslo dialect. A number of language attitude studies have been conducted in this region, and as this article will demonstrate, the data from these studies show that this prediction holds true. The two sociolinguistic theories assumed here are as a result not only able to account for the patterns of sociolinguistic diffusion in South-East Norway, but these patterns can in turn provide support for the validity of the theories themselves.

This article will also touch upon closely related theories of language diffusion. Under a view advocated by Labov (2001) and Trudgill (2008a, 2014) in recent years, speech convergence is automatic during interactions among people, and their attitudes towards each other play no role. This theory is, however, negated by recent experiments documenting the effect of attitude in speech convergence. The theory can furthermore not account for the phenomenon of ‘hypercorrections’ (or ‘overaccommodation’), in which the speaker adopts features that do not actually occur during interaction, but that the speaker falsely believes are part of the linguistic repertoire of his interlocutors. Hypercorrections modeled on the lower Oslo dialect do occur in the south-eastern dialects of Norway, thus indicating a desire of these speakers to ‘speak like’ those with the lower Oslo dialect.

Under another view, interaction is not a necessary part of the diffusion process. A relatively common claim in the literature on dialect change in Norway has therefore been that features from the upper Oslo dialect spread to the local dialects through media

(Maagerø 1978; Skjekkeland 1979; Mæhlum 1992). This possibility is sometimes rejected by other Norwegian sociolinguists precisely due to the lack of interaction in these situations (Sandøy 1985; Papazian 1997). The influence of media in dialect change is a much debated topic in sociolinguistic theory, but it is quite clear that media has not played any role in the changes observed in the south-eastern dialects in Norway. As mentioned above, these changes are due to diffusion of linguistic features from the lower Oslo dialect, a variety that is practically absent in the media altogether.

It is not a unique phenomenon that the larger region around the capital is adopting linguistic features from the city's lower class dialect. Such diffusion is well known from other countries in Northern Europe like England and Denmark, yet what separates the Norwegian case from these other reports is the nature of the diffusion process within the capital itself. In England and Denmark, the features that are diffusing out of the capital are also diffusing from the lower class dialect to the upper class dialect within the capital. The features that are spreading out of the capital could therefore rather be seen as general 'capital dialect features' rather than 'lower dialect features'. In Norway, on the other hand, features of the lower Oslo dialect are not spreading into the upper Oslo dialect—it is rather the lower Oslo dialect that is rapidly changing to become more and more like the upper Oslo dialect. The lower Oslo dialect is, in other words, dying on its own turf at the same time as it is spreading its features across the larger region around Oslo. Judging by the available literature this scenario seems to be rather unique to Norway, and this stresses the need for future studies of language attitudes and interactions among speakers of the two Oslo dialects.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives the necessary background information about the linguistic varieties discussed in this paper: the local dialects in south-eastern Norway, the upper Oslo dialect, and the lower Oslo dialect. Section 3 presents the main results from the meta-analysis in Stausland Johnsen (2015), in which it is demonstrated that new features in the local south-eastern dialects have spread from the lower Oslo dialect. Section 4 lays out the two main theories of diffusion that I will assume in this paper: the *gravity model* and the *communication accommodation theory*, and in section 5 it is shown how these theories can account for the patterns of diffusion in South-East Norway. Other theories of diffusion are discussed in section 6, where the main point will be to illustrate that they cannot adequately explain the Norwegian case.

The apparent uniqueness of the diffusion processes in and around the capital of Oslo is discussed in section 7. Section 8 summarizes and concludes the paper, and it is argued that sociolinguists should conduct more meta-analyses of dialect change and carry out attitude studies as a mean to explain the observed diffusion patterns.

## 2 NORWEGIAN DIALECTS

### 2.1 South-eastern dialects

The dialects on either side of the inlet extending into Oslo are in general terms often called ‘south-eastern dialects’, but in the dialect literature they are more often labeled the ‘Vika dialects’ after the traditional name of the inlet, *Vika*. The approximate boundaries for this dialect group are given in Figure 1 along with the location of all rural and urban settlements where researchers have studied recent changes to the dialects. This region is relatively populous, with 18.91 % of the total population of Norway, despite covering only 3.38 % of the total land area (*Statistisk årbok 2013*: 80–87).

[Figure 1 about here.]

### 2.2 Upper Oslo dialect

The term ‘upper Oslo dialect’ will be used for the variety spoken natively by the upper and upper middle classes in Oslo. It is also often referred to as ‘educated daily speech’, ‘Standard East Norwegian’, or the ‘West End dialect’ (Vanvik 1972: 120–121; Kristoffersen 2000: 3, 7). The term ‘West End dialect’ is the one used most commonly by the general population in Oslo and areas close to Oslo. In other regions of Norway the dialect is often referred to as simply the ‘Oslo dialect’. The exact origin of the upper Oslo dialect is somewhat murky, but it was clearly formed at the intersection between the written Danish language, spoken Danish, and urban dialects in the south-eastern region of Norway (Kristoffersen 2000: 8). The dialect is largely Danish in its vocabulary and morphology, but more typical of South-East Norwegian in its phonology and prosody (Torp and Falk 1898: 3). The upper Oslo dialect is without comparison the Norwegian dialect that has changed the least during the last 150 years. Its early descriptions from the 1880s are almost as valid today as they were then.

### 2.3 Lower Oslo dialect

The language spoken natively by the working and lower middle classes in Oslo will be called ‘the lower Oslo dialect’. Its authoritative and most comprehensive description is given by Larsen (1907). Working class suburbs which have been incorporated into Oslo have generally adopted the lower Oslo dialect (Birkeland and Møller 1983; Andli 1984). The lower classes have formed the demographic majority in Oslo (Kjelstadli 1990: 19), yet their dialect has nevertheless gradually drifted in the direction of the upper Oslo dialect (Alnæs [1963]: 201–210; Jahnsen 2002: 30; Johannessen 2015: 48). The prevailing tendency is that the traditional features of the lower Oslo dialect that were never in use in the upper Oslo dialect are disappearing (Jahnsen 2002: 30). Analogously with the term ‘West End dialect’ for the upper Oslo dialect, the lower Oslo dialect is most often called the ‘East End dialect’ by people in the Oslo region.

### 3 META-ANALYSIS OF DIALECT CHANGE IN SOUTH-EAST NORWAY

To this date, 25 independent studies of dialect change in the south-eastern Vika region have been conducted. The first ones appeared in the 1940s, and the most recent one came out in 2011. The local dialects that have been the object of these investigations are plotted according to their location in Figure 1. This is a relatively high number of studies, and they are not only spread out over a time span of more than 70 years, but they also cover more or less all of the urban dialects in this region. Taken together, they constitute an excellent basis for a thorough meta-analysis that can reveal what the representative changes to these dialects are, and what the general pattern of their development is. Such an analysis is carried out in detail in Stausland Johnsen (2015), in which all documented changes that meet the following three criteria are linguistically analyzed and discussed:

1. The change has been observed in at least two urban dialects.
2. At least two researches have described the change.
3. The change affects the grammar (i.e. the morphology, phonology, or syntax).

With respect to the third criterion, this means that lexical changes are not included, such as the loss of traditional dialect words or changes to the meaning or pronunciation of specific words in the lexicon.

There are nine linguistic changes in the urban Vika dialects that meet these criteria, three of which are phonological, two are morphological, three are morphophonological, and the final ninth change is syntactic. All of these changes are briefly accounted for in the following subsections and summarized in Table 1 at the end. The full meta-analysis in Stausland Johnsen (2015) carries a full discussion of the changes, an exhaustive list of sources for each change, and a comparison of the relevant features in the Vika dialects with both the upper and the lower Oslo dialect. Readers who are interested in that level of detail are therefore advised to consult Stausland Johnsen (2015).

### 3.1 Phonological changes

The Old Norwegian unstressed vowel *a* in a non-final position is retained as [ɑ] in the urban Vika dialects, except when the vowel is immediately followed by the phoneme /r/, in which case the vowel has been fronted to [æ]. The city dialects of Tønsberg and Fredrikstad differ from the other urban Vika dialects in this regard, in that the vowel has been fronted to [æ] everywhere. It has been observed that the city dialects of Tønsberg and Fredrikstad have undergone a change by which the unstressed [æ] is replaced by [ɑ] except in the position before /r/. In short, the distribution of [ɑ] and [æ] in these two city dialects is now the same as in the other urban Vika dialects. This feature has therefore most likely spread from nearby Vika cities such as Sandefjord, Horten, and Moss (cf. the map in Figure 1). It should be noted, however, that the distribution of [ɑ] in the urban Vika dialects mimics very strongly the distribution in the lower Oslo dialect. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the change observed in the Tønsberg and Fredrikstad dialects is due to the combined effect of influence from both the lower Oslo dialect and the neighboring Vika cities.

In the eastern and north-western Vika dialects the lexical stress is traditionally located on the initial syllable of native words and loanwords alike. The stress in many such loanwords has over the last few decades shifted to non-initial syllables. Non-initial stress in loanwords is the norm in the upper Oslo dialect, and so this change in the Vika dialects could have been adopted from the upper Oslo dialect. But the stress shift also mirrors the development in the lower Oslo dialect, in which this change has been observed since Larsen 1907. It is therefore not possible to determine on linguistic grounds alone where this new feature has diffused from.



The final phonological change observed in the urban Vika dialects is a recent merger of the phonemes /ç/ and /ʂ/. An earlier investigation of this merger in the Oslo dialects revealed that it was more commonly present in the lower Oslo dialect than the upper dialect (Papazian 1994), and a study by Aasen (2004) demonstrated that the merger was more prominent among those Vika dialect speakers who otherwise used linguistic features from the lower Oslo dialect. The data thus indicates that this feature has spread from the lower Oslo dialect into the urban Vika dialects.

### 3.2 Morphological changes

The traditional morphological ending in the definite masculine plural in the urban Vika dialects is [-ənə]. In recent decades, this ending is often found replaced by a new ending [-ɑ], which is the traditional ending in this category in the lower Oslo dialect. The ending [-ɑ] is virtually non-existent in this category in the upper Oslo dialect, in which the ending is [-ənə].

The traditional urban Vika dialects distinguish between two classes of monosyllabic neuter nouns. Which nouns belong to which class is phonologically and semantically arbitrary and thus lexically determined. The distinction between the two classes is manifested in there being two different sets of endings in their plural forms. The exposition in this paragraph will for the sake of clarity focus on the definite ending. In one class the ending is [-ənə], and in the other class the ending is [-ɑ]. The first class has merged with the second class in the modern urban Vika dialects, such that [-ɑ] is now the only ending used for monosyllabic neuter nouns. The same merger was already well under way in the lower Oslo dialect at the time of Larsen 1907, and the merger appears to have been completed by the 1950s. In the upper Oslo dialect, on the other hand, the ending in both classes is [-ənə]. The Vika dialects have in other words lost the ending it shared with the upper Oslo dialect, and as a result moved further away from the morphological characteristics of the upper Oslo dialect. It seems clear, therefore, that this change has its direct origin in the lower Oslo dialect.

### 3.3 Morphophonological changes

By 'morphophonological change' here is meant apparent phonological changes that are restricted to specific morphological environments. The most important of these changes in the urban Vika dialects is the rampant replacement of the vowels [ɑ] and [æ] with [ə]

in unstressed syllables in a wide array of morphological endings. This change is commonly claimed to have spread from the upper Oslo dialect, yet the lower Oslo dialect exhibits [ə] in exactly the same categories. The clue to where this change in the Vika dialects stems from is provided by comparing the categories that exhibit the vowel change with those that do not. The vowel change to [ə] is consistently lacking when the lower Oslo dialect does not have [ə] in its forms, but it does take place if the ending in the lower Oslo dialect has [ə]. No such correlation can be found when comparing the development in the Vika dialects with the morphological properties of the upper Oslo dialect, since this dialect as a general rule has the vowel [ə] in all unstressed syllables.

Some of the Vika dialects are so-called 'level stress' dialects, whereas others are not. In level stress dialects, the base form of verbs and so-called 'weak' masculine nouns ends either in [-ɑ] or [-ə]. The distribution of these two endings is based on historical principles, and it is no longer determined by synchronic properties. In dialects that are not level stress dialects, the base form in both of these categories ends only in [-ə]. Both of these types of dialects have developed a new system in which the ending [-ɑ] is prominent in weak masculine nouns, whereas [-ə] is favored over [-ɑ] in verbs. This new distribution mimics the traditional distribution in the lower Oslo dialect, but it shares no commonality with the upper Oslo dialect, in which all of these forms end only in [-ə].

Masculine nouns ending in [-ər] and [-ə] have in the traditional Vika dialects definite singular forms in [-ən] and [-ə] respectively. In the lower Oslo dialect, on the other hand, nouns of these types have since the beginning of the 20th century had a shared definite ending in [-ən]. This has now also become the case in the urban Vika dialects, and there is general agreement in the literature that this ending has spread from the lower Oslo dialect.

### 3.4 Syntactic changes

Finally, a syntactic change is also observed in the urban Vika dialects, one in which the interrogative pronoun [vəm] 'who' has replaced the interrogative determiner [vɛkkən] 'which', such that the interrogative [vəm] 'who; which' now fills both roles. As an example, the traditional phrase [vɛkkən bi:] 'which car' is now commonly realized as [vəm bi:]. The use of the interrogative pronoun [vəm] 'who' in both of these functions is an old and characteristic feature of the lower Oslo dialect, whereas it is not known to

occur in the upper Oslo dialect.

### 3.5 Conclusion from the meta-analysis

The nine linguistic changes surveyed above are summarized in Table 1. Two representative sources are provided for each change alongside an indication of where the change has diffused from. As the table clearly indicates, virtually all of the observed changes appear to have spread from the lower Oslo dialect into the south-eastern Vika dialects, and it does not seem to be the case that these local dialects have adopted any features from the upper Oslo dialect.

[Table 1 about here.]

## 4 LINGUISTIC DIFFUSION

Linguistic features often spread from members of one speech community to members of another, a phenomenon referred to as *diffusion*. A related, yet different, phenomenon is when linguistic features are transmitted within a speech community, generally idealized as being transmitted from one generation to the next as part of the language acquisition process. The latter phenomenon is consequently called *transmission*. The difference between diffusion across speech communities and transmission within speech communities is discussed at length by Labov (2007, 2010: 303–366), but this will not be relevant to the discussion here. This paper will only discuss diffusion, as there is no evidence that any of the observed changes in the dialects in south-eastern Norway have occurred as a result of the transmission process. As demonstrated in section 3 above, dialect change in South-East Norway is the direct result of diffusion from the lower Oslo speech community to the local dialects in the Vika region. In the following, I will make explicit what models of diffusion I am assuming for the discussion in this paper.

### 4.1 Gravity model

Viewing linguistic diffusion on a higher geographical level, I will assume that it largely follows the predictions of the gravity model (Zipf 1949: 527–528; Trudgill 1974). According to this model, the probability that a linguistic feature spreads from one speech community to another is proportional to the relative size of these communities and inversely proportional to the distance between them. The model predicts that linguistic features will most often spread from the largest urban center in a given region to another

smaller urban center before disseminating to the rural communities between them. Such features seem in other words to ‘jump’ from one city to the next before spreading outwards, and the theory is therefore most often called the theory of ‘urban jumping’ by Norwegian sociolinguists (Sandøy 1998). It is also often called the ‘cascade model’, as the features appear to spread from the largest city to the next largest city, and so progressively downward like a cascade (Labov 2003).

#### 4.2 Communication accommodation theory

At the level of the individual, it will be assumed here that speakers adopt linguistic features from their interlocutors through social accommodation (Gallois et al. 2005; Giles and Ogay 2007). This theory posits several factors that will affect the likelihood that the speaker will converge to the speech of his interlocutors. More convergence is predicted to occur if the speaker and his interlocutors engage in conversation often, if the speaker thinks favorably of said interlocutors, if the speaker wants his interlocutors to think favorably of him, and if the speaker identifies with his interlocutors. And conversely, less convergence is predicted to take place if the interactions are rare, if the speaker does not think favorably of his interlocutors, and if the speaker does not socially identify with them. Diffusion thus becomes of question of speaker interaction and social attitudes (for recent experimental support for this model of diffusion, cf. e.g. Babel (2012), Pardo, Gibbons, Suppes, and Krauss (2012), Yu, Abrego-Collier, and Sonderegger (2013), and Soliz and Giles (2014)).

#### 4.3 Connection between the two models

It is important to emphasize here that the predictions of the gravity model by and large reflect the outcome predicted by the communication accommodation theory when studying diffusion on a larger scale (Trudgill 1986: 39–40; Labov 1990: 207), at which level we rarely have sufficient information about the social attitudes and social networks of individual speakers. The gravity model is thus a useful, yet rough, proxy for the amount of social interaction among speakers within a larger geographical area, abstracting away from the largely unknown parameters of social attitude and social networks (Trudgill 1974). The gravity model posits, therefore, that urban inhabitants generally interact more often with inhabitants in neighboring cities than they do with people living in the nearby rural areas. Recent studies in human communication networks have demonstrated that

this holds true, and that the gravity model is well suited to describe such interactions (Krings, Calabrese, Ratti, and Blondel 2009). It is reasonable to assume that social interaction follows these patterns because people generally prefer to interact with those they have more socially in common with (cf. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

## 5 LINGUISTIC DIFFUSION IN SOUTH-EAST NORWAY

### 5.1 Model predictions

The gravity model (section 4.1) makes a very clear prediction about the diffusion of linguistic features in South-East Norway. It predicts that such features should diffuse from Oslo, by far the largest city in Norway, down to the smaller cities in the Vika region, and then from these smaller cities out to the rural areas. This prediction fits the observed diffusion process in South-East Norway to a tee (Stausland Johnsen 2015).

At the same time, the gravity model only takes into account parameters such as city size and geographical distance, leaving aside facts about social attitudes and social networks. The city of Oslo is, however, not a homogenous speech community, and there is a long tradition in operating with two separate Oslo dialects correlating with social class: an upper Oslo dialect and a lower Oslo dialect. What the gravity model cannot specify in any greater detail, therefore, is which of these two dialects in Oslo the new features in South-East Norway have diffused from.

The communication accommodation theory speaks directly to the question of what kind of people in a community a person is more likely to adopt linguistic features from. As reviewed in section 4.2, it posits that the presence or absence of speech convergence to a large extent rests on the speaker's attitudes towards his interlocutors. The gravity model predicts that speakers of urban dialects in the Vika region are most likely to adopt features from the speech communities in Oslo, and the recent meta-analysis in Stausland Johnsen (2015) shows that this is true. The same meta-analysis also demonstrates that all of these features are adopted from the *lower* Oslo dialect, not the upper Oslo dialect (see section 3). In order to account for that fact, the communication accommodation theory would hypothesize that speakers of local Vika dialects feel very differently about the two Oslo dialects and their speakers. The lack of convergence with the upper Oslo dialect predicts that their attitudes towards the upper Oslo dialect and their speakers are significantly more negative than their attitudes towards the lower Oslo

dialect. As will be demonstrated below, this prediction also holds true.

## 5.2 Diffusion from the Oslo dialects and the role of attitude

Quite a few language attitude studies have been performed with speakers of Vika dialects in south-eastern Norway, and a major focus in these studies has been to investigate what these speakers think of the upper Oslo dialect and its speakers. These studies include both ‘verbal guise’ tests, intended to reveal listeners’ subconscious or private attitude towards a speaker and his language, as well as survey questions (open-ended or close-ended) and conversations about language, both of which are typically said to probe people’s awareness of the dialect’s ‘open prestige’ (cf. Garrett 2010). The reason why these studies show a strong interest in this particular question is that they have mostly followed the usual assumption in the sociolinguistic literature in Norway that it is the upper Oslo dialect that is responsible for most of the changes that are occurring in south-eastern dialects (see section 1). As will be demonstrated in the following, speakers of urban Vika dialects have strongly negative views on both the upper Oslo dialect itself and its speakers. Following the core tenets of the communication accommodation theory, I suggest that these social attitudes play a significant role in preventing speakers of urban Vika dialects from converging their speech habits to those of the upper Oslo dialect community.

When it comes to the upper Oslo dialect itself, the only prevailing attitude among people in the Vika cities that in some sense can be considered ‘positive’ is that it is generally perceived to be a ‘proper’ and ‘correct’ dialect (Jensen 2006: 73). This perception is clearly tied to the fact that the upper Oslo dialect is closely linked to the written Bokmål standard (see section 1). Since people generally view the written language as the ‘correct’ form of the language, it follows that the dialect that is most similar to the written language will be considered more ‘proper’ and ‘correct’ than other dialects. This is, however, the only general characteristic given in the literature by urban Vika dialect speakers that is not blatantly negative. The dialect is otherwise described as ‘pretentious’, ‘snobbish’, ‘affected’, ‘hoity-toity’, ‘tiresome’, and ‘annoying’ (Dybvik 1994: 134; Lindbekk 2000: 79, 117; Dahl 2002: 79; Jensen 2006: 73; Lund 2006: 2; Hult 2008: 132). As one informant expresses it, the upper Oslo dialect is simply ‘awful to listen to’ (Kristiansen 1995: 116). A very telling result is given in the language attitude survey conducted by Voje, in which people were asked to judge nine Norwegian dialects

on a scale from ‘ugly’ to ‘nice’ (1979: 213–215). The finding was that the upper Oslo dialect was considered the ugliest dialect of them all (1979: 228). It is likely to be of significant importance to our understanding of these views that the disdain is mutual. In a contemporary survey where speakers of the upper Oslo dialect were given an open-ended question about which dialects they disliked the most, the Vika dialects in south-eastern Norway came out on top (Strømsodd 1979: 78).

The upper Oslo dialect cannot, though, be ‘pretentious’ or ‘snobbish’ in of itself. When people give such characteristics, they are in reality transferring their attitudes about people speaking this dialect over to the dialect itself. Given the clearly negative opinions expressed about the upper Oslo dialect, it comes as no surprise that many negative sentiments are also expressed about its speakers. Dahl writes that ‘most of them agreed that snobbish people from the West End of Oslo are bad’ (2002: 79), and we also get statements such as ‘they are able to really provoke me’ (Hult 2008: 132). As Smith puts it, ‘people speaking the upper Oslo dialect are regarded with suspicion’ (1968: 257), and Gulbrandsen flat out calls them ‘the enemy’ (1977: 15). It is therefore quite risky to use features of the upper Oslo dialect in the local schools or in the workplace. It is simply ‘not popular’ (Smith 1968: 257), and those who nevertheless use such features are easily laughed down, teased, and bullied (Maagerø 1978: 71; Dybvik 1994: 134–135; Imrik 2011: 66, 96). The overall conclusion is that it can be a ‘social burden’ to use upper Oslo dialect forms in Vika cities (Gulbrandsen 1975: 25–26). This is perhaps nowhere more prevalent than in male dominated environments, in which speakers of the upper Oslo dialect tend to be accused of being effeminate and homosexual (Lindbekk 2000: 118).

When people in the Vika cities express such negative views about the upper Oslo dialect and its speakers, then the communication accommodation theory hypothesizes that they are unlikely to converge to their speech habits. As predicted, then, the meta-analysis in section 3 demonstrates that such convergence also does not take place. We could even expect to find that speakers of Vika dialects choose to *diverge* from the upper Oslo dialect, as the theory also posits that speech divergence can take place when interlocutors wish to increase the social distance between them. It is therefore interesting to find that one of the urban Vika speakers in Hult’s study is consciously aware that she is doing just that, saying that ‘I would never shift to this dialect [i.e. the upper Oslo dialect], but I would rather put even more emphasis on the Halden dialect when I am with them

[i.e. with speakers of the upper Oslo dialect]' (2008: 132).

Hardly any surveys have been conducted on what urban Vika speakers think of the lower Oslo dialect or its speakers. This is probably a direct result of the fact that most investigations into the sociolinguistic conditions in the Vika region have not even considered the possibility that the lower Oslo dialect could have had any effect on the dialect changes observed there. In the only survey that exists, the average opinion on the lower Oslo dialect is quite neutral (Lindbekk 2000: 79). This echoes the description given by Smith (1968: 257–258), who states that there is simply an absence of negative attitudes towards the lower Oslo dialect. The only characteristic otherwise given in the literature is that 'some people find it to be 'gangster-like'' (Dahl 2002: 79), a term that is probably meant to be positive when used by youths. Here, too, the attitudes seem to be mutual. In Strømsodd's survey mentioned above, speakers of the lower Oslo dialect express rather neutral views about the Vika dialects (1979: 70, 78).

### 5.3 Where do the negative sentiments come from?

A natural question to ask in this context is where these negative attitudes towards the upper Oslo dialect and its speakers stem from. They could in part be due to the dialect itself. One interesting finding in Kristiansen's survey is that people thought more favorably about the dialect samples they heard that were more similar to their own dialect (1995: 93). Since the lower Oslo dialect is more similar to the Vika dialects than the upper Oslo dialect is, Vika dialect speakers could as a result hold more favorable views about the lower Oslo dialect than the upper Oslo dialect. It is an old insight within the gravity model that diffusion is more likely to occur between similar dialects (Trudgill 1974), and more recent experimental studies also find that speech convergence is more likely to take place between speakers of more similar dialects (Kim, Horton, and Bradlow 2011). This similarity could therefore contribute to the likelihood of urban Vika dialects adopting features from the lower Oslo dialect rather than the upper Oslo dialect.

Overall, however, it is unlikely that these linguistic aspects of the Oslo dialects fully determine the patterns of diffusion in this area. In Voje's survey, for instance, the upper Oslo dialect was considered 'uglier' than many other Norwegian dialects that are even less similar to the Vika dialects than the upper Oslo dialect is (1979: 228). In addition, there is no clear link between identifying another dialect as being different and finding their



speakers to be 'pretentious' and 'snobbish'. These sentiments, which appear to be especially prevalent in the surveys mentioned above, are more likely to stem from social differences between the speech communities, including differences in financial wealth and social behavior. In sum, it seems more probable that there are purely social reasons for these negative attitudes, and that most inhabitants in the Vika region do not identify or wish to identify with members of the upper Oslo speech community. Since these reasons will not have anything to do with language, it is beyond the scope of this sociolinguistic article to investigate this question further.

## 6 OTHER THEORIES OF DIFFUSION

As seen in section 5 above, the gravity model and the communication accommodation theory seem especially well suited to explain the observed pattern of diffusion in South-East Norway. There are, however, some similar theories of diffusion that differ from these models in specific ways. Two of these theories will be addressed below, one of them because it has been recently suggested by some of the main proponents of the gravity model and the communication accommodation theory, and the other because it has been a commonly suggested theory in Norwegian sociolinguistics.

### 6.1 The 'interaction only' model

As explained in section 4.2, the communication accommodation theory stipulates that convergence in speech depends on the amount of personal interaction speakers have, and what kind of attitudes speakers have towards each other. In section 5.2 I highlighted how the existing studies in language and social attitudes in south-eastern Norway strongly support the idea of this theory that negative attitudes prevent convergence. Ideally, one would also want to see that dialect speakers in the Vika region interact significantly more often with speakers of the lower Oslo dialect than they do with speakers of the upper Oslo dialect, since the communication accommodation theory would also stipulate a correlation between speech convergence and personal interaction. The reason for not attempting to find such a correlation in the discussion above is simply that the available literature provides almost no information about the kind of social networks speakers of the Oslo dialects and Vika dialects find themselves in, and so we are not able to make any such correlations. At the same time, it is highly reasonable to expect that there would also be a very strong positive correlation between positive attitudes and personal interaction,

since one would assume that people's social attitudes towards others largely determine the frequency with which they interact with them (Labov 2001: 191; Holmes and Kerswill 2008: 275). After all, most of our daily verbal interaction with others is strictly voluntary and driven by our desire to engage with certain people we think favorably of.

In another version of the communication accommodation theory advocated by Labov (2001) and Trudgill (2008a, 2014), it is claimed that speech convergence is automatic, and that social attitude plays a very minor role at best (2001: 19–20, 506; 2008a: 251–252, 2014: 215). Linguistic accommodation is therefore “purely a matter of who interacts most often with whom” (Trudgill 2008a: 251, 2014: 215, 220). As mentioned above, we do not have sufficient information about the social networks in South-East Norway to verify whether interaction patterns alone are sufficient to account for how language diffuses in this part of the country. It would also at the same time be very difficult to demonstrate that interaction is the only relevant factor, since one would under normal circumstances expect that frequent interaction among individuals presupposes positive attitudes. Despite these difficulties, some recent studies indicate that people's attitudes towards others play an independent role in speech convergence. In Pardo, Gibbons, Suppes, and Krauss's study of speech convergence among roommates in college, a significant correlation is found between speech convergence and the roommates' own estimate of how close they were to each other, but no correlation is found between the amount of time they spent together in the same room and the extent of convergence in their speech (Pardo et al. 2012: 195–196). In a study of sound change in Glasgow, Scotland, convergence to London speech was found to correlate with Glasgow viewers' emotional engagement with characters in soap operas based in London, whereas no such correlation was found when looking at how much time they spent watching television altogether (Stuart-Smith, Pryce, Timmins, and Gunter 2013: 528; Stuart-Smith 2014: 254). In other studies, speech convergence is found even in perceptual experiments where there is no interaction involved at all (Goldinger and Azuma 2004), and recent experiments demonstrate that the amount of convergence under such conditions is affected by the subjects' attitude towards the speakers (Babel 2012; Yu et al. 2013).

The inability of interaction alone to account for language convergence can also be seen in sociolinguistic experiments conducted in south-eastern Norway. In a study by Hoftvedt (1979) a group of lower Oslo dialect speakers were recorded while interacting

with a speaker of the upper Oslo dialect in a formal setting. The results show that the speakers shifted almost entirely to the upper Oslo dialect (1979: 102–105). The experimental design was later replicated by Sørensen (1998) with speakers of the Moss dialect (cf. the map in Figure 1), but in this case the speakers rarely adopted morphological traits unique to the upper Oslo dialect during their interactions (1998: 79–82, 87–88). This does not mean, however, that no accommodation took place in this latter experiment. There was in fact extensive accommodation to those features of the upper Oslo dialect that *also* belong to the lower Oslo dialect (1998: 78–79, 82–87). During these interactions, then, it appears as if the Moss dialect speakers were only willing to incorporate features from their interlocutor’s speech that they knew existed in the lower Oslo dialect. It is not clear how a theory of ‘automatic accommodation’ can account for such findings. Using a concrete example from these two experiments, there are no internal linguistic motivations why speakers of the Moss dialect are unwilling to change the definite singular feminine ending from the [-ɑ] of the Moss dialect to the [-ən] of the upper Oslo dialect when speakers of the lower Oslo dialect are perfectly willing to do so under the same conditions (Hoftvedt 1979: 105; Sørensen 1998: 79–80). Assuming that attitude plays a role in accommodation, however, the speakers of the Moss dialect seem to demonstrate a selective willingness to accommodate to the linguistic features of the lower Oslo dialect and a similar unwillingness to do the same with features of the upper Oslo dialect, a scenario that mirrors both the linguistic and the attitude data otherwise gathered from the Vika region (see sections 3 and 5.2).

The evidence from all of these studies clearly points to social attitude being a significant factor in speech convergence, and so it seems unlikely that language accommodation is “purely a matter of who interacts most often with whom”.

Turning to the real world of dialect change in cases of dialect contact, there is one phenomenon that appears to support the idea that social attitude is important also here, and that is the phenomenon of ‘hypercorrections’. In the most well-known type of hypercorrections, the starting point is a general correspondence  $x - y$  between dialects  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . In a process in which speakers of dialect  $\alpha$  accommodate speakers of dialect  $\beta$ , they might seek to replace  $x$  with  $y$  even in cases where dialect  $\beta$  does not have  $y$ . In these cases, speakers of dialect  $\alpha$  have overgeneralized the  $x - y$  correspondence and applied it to word forms where the correspondence does not hold. The suggestion that

accommodation is simply an automatic consequence of interaction cannot easily account for such hypercorrections, since speakers in this case have ‘accommodated’ to forms that cannot actually have occurred during their interactions with speakers of the other dialect (Auer and Hinskens 2005: 356–357). Instead, speakers have ‘accommodated’ to forms that they falsely believe are part of their interlocutors’ grammar, a phenomenon referred to as ‘overaccommodation’ in the communication accommodation literature (Gallois et al. 2005: 126–127, 141; Giles and Ogay 2007: 298). Such hypercorrections modeled on the lower Oslo dialect do occur in the south-eastern dialects of Norway (Stausland Johnsen 2015), thus indicating that a socially motivated intention to accommodate to speakers of the lower Oslo dialect has taken place in this region.

While hypercorrections of the type explained above are a case of overgeneralization in convergence, hypercorrections can also be an overgeneralization in *divergence*. In this case, too, one starts with a general correspondence  $x - y$  between dialects  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . But in this case, speakers of dialect  $\alpha$  seek to increase the distance between the two dialects, and so they replace their own instances of  $y$  with  $x$  to ensure that no  $y - y$  correspondence takes place at all between the two dialects. In this case, speakers of dialect  $\alpha$  have falsely assumed that if their  $x$  corresponds to  $y$  in dialect  $\beta$ , then that dialect’s  $y$  must in turn always correspond to their  $x$ . Automatic accommodation through interaction cannot explain why such replacements would take place, partly because the forms the speakers are innovating do not actually exist in the other dialect, and also because there is no clear motivation within this approach why they would stop using their own forms in the first place. Assuming that social attitude plays a significant role in this process, the incentive for speakers to innovate these forms is easier to understand. As phrased within the communication accommodation theory, “the motive behind divergence is [...] the desire to emphasize distinctiveness from one’s interlocutor, expressively highlighting contrasting group identities” (Soliz and Giles 2014: 108). Speakers of dialect  $\alpha$  thus want to avoid being associated with speakers of dialect  $\beta$ , and they want to signal to speakers of either dialect that they do not belong to the same social community (Kühl and Braunmüller 2014: 32–33; Hinskens 2014: 112–114).

All taken together, the evidence from sociolinguistic and sociophonetic experiments on the one hand and hypercorrections in dialect change on the other provides strong support for one of the central premises of the communication accommodation theory,

namely that social attitude plays a significant role in determining how much a speaker is likely to converge to the speech of his interlocutors.

## 6.2 Diffusion through media

The flip side of the ‘interaction only’ model accounted for above is the idea that interaction is not needed at all in order to account for linguistic diffusion through accommodation. Under this view, linguistic features can diffuse from the speech used in media such as television and radio to the speech of viewers and listeners, despite the fact that these viewers and listeners are not actively taking part in any interaction with the speakers. It has been suggested quite frequently in the literature on Norwegian sociolinguistics that features of the upper Oslo dialect are diffusing through media to the local dialects, both in the south-eastern region of Norway and elsewhere (e.g. Maagerø 1978: 333–334; Skjekkeland 1979: 41; Mæhlum 1992: 81–89, 166–169). Other Norwegian sociolinguists reject such a scenario precisely due to the lack of interaction (Sandøy 1985: 248; Papazian 1997: 175).

As would be expected, the proponents of the ‘interaction only’ model maintain that media is an irrelevant factor in dialect change (Labov 2001: 228; Trudgill 2014). Others have claimed to find evidence that media can bolster and speed up ongoing grammatical changes in the local dialects (Stuart-Smith et al. 2013). And indeed, as reviewed in the previous section, experiments have demonstrated that speech convergence can take place without any interaction between speakers and listeners. But it is important to emphasize in this context that this effect appears to be quite limited, in that there is no evidence for the notion that media can be responsible for diffusing new linguistic features other than new words and phrases (Trudgill 1974, 2014; Stuart-Smith et al. 2013).

Irrespective of how great the influence from media can be with respect to dialect change, it is quite clear that it cannot have played any significant role in the diffusion of new features to local dialects in south-eastern Norway. As seen in section 3, the new features in these south-eastern dialects have diffused from the lower Oslo dialect, but this dialect is at the same time heavily marginalized in television, film, radio, and printed media (cf. e.g. Papazian 1997: 174). It appears sporadically as the speech of simple-minded and tragicomic characters in situation comedies (e.g. ‘Fleksnes’ and ‘Mot i brøstet’) and feature length comedies (e.g. ‘Olsenbanden’ and ‘Elling’). Otherwise, it is as

good as absent. The upper Oslo dialect and the related Bokmål standard dominate very strongly in the media, and the reason why media has been seen as the catalyst of dialect change in many sociolinguistic studies in Norway is probably because it used to be taken for granted that only this language variety was sufficiently ‘prestigious’ enough to influence local dialects.

## 7 WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT DIFFUSION IN SOUTH-EAST NORWAY?

### 7.1 Comparison with other countries in Northern Europe

The meta-analysis of dialect change in South-East Norway reported in section 3 demonstrates that new linguistic features in the dialects of this region have diffused from the lower class dialect of the capital city, and not from the upper class dialect. That features from an urban lower class dialect diffuse outwards is far from unique to Norway. It is well documented that similar diffusion processes occur in other Northern European countries. In Denmark, for instance, linguistic features of the lower Copenhagen dialect are diffusing across the country (Kristensen 2003; Kristiansen 2003), and in England features of the working and lower middle class dialect in London are spreading across the region, creating a variety generally called ‘Estuary English’ (Przedlacka 2002; Altendorf 2003). In Denmark and England, however, the features of the lower class dialects that are diffusing across the regions around the capitals are also diffusing into the capital’s upper class dialects (Wells 1994; Fabricius 2002; Trudgill 2002, 2008b; Kristensen 2003), and this can be put in connection with the general finding that linguistic innovations in major cities tend to take place in the working and lower middle classes, from where they spread into the speech of the upper classes (Labov 2001: 500–502, 508–510). A different way of phrasing what is going on in Denmark and England, then, is that the features that are spreading to the local dialects outside of the capitals are simply components of more general ‘capital speech’ (cf. Maegaard, Jensen, Kristiansen, and Jørgensen 2013: 8). This is, however, *not* what is happening in south-eastern Norway. As already noted in sections 2.2 and 2.3, features unique to the lower Oslo dialect are gradually being replaced by features from the upper Oslo dialect, and there are no clear indications that any features from the lower Oslo dialect are diffusing into the upper dialect (cf. also Stausland Johnsen 2014). This development has progressed so far that some opt to classify the lower Oslo dialect as a ‘dead’ dialect today (Stjernholm 2014). What is

special about the situation in south-eastern Norway, then, is that a lower class city dialect is spreading its features across the region at the same time as it is ‘dying’ on its own turf.

## 7.2 Diffusion, attitude, and accommodation in the Oslo speech communities

In line with the methodology applied in section 5, I will again assume that the patterns of linguistic diffusion across communities are largely determined by who speakers interact with and what attitudes they have towards them. As is the case with the south-eastern region of Norway in general, we also have no information from the sociolinguistic literature about social networks and interaction patterns within and across the speech communities in Oslo. But since these interaction patterns can be assumed to strongly correlate with people’s attitudes (cf. section 6.1), we should be able to learn much about social networks and attitudes from attitude studies alone.

Since linguistic diffusion within Oslo goes from the upper dialect into the lower dialect, the prediction from the communication accommodation theory would be that there is an apparent asymmetry in what kind of attitudes the speakers of these two dialects have towards each other. Among speakers of the upper Oslo dialect we expect to find predominately negative attitudes towards the lower dialect and its speakers, while more neutral or positive attitudes should prevail the other way. The prevailing assertion in the sociolinguistic literature is that such a scenario holds true. As an example, Wiggen claims that speakers of the lower Oslo dialect “enjoy[...] a rather low status within the Oslo speech community” and that they “have had to bear much ridicule by some members of the trend-setting middle and higher social strata of the capital” (1995: 51). There is not much empirical data from attitude studies that can shed light on this widely held belief, although the available data do support it. The findings from the only two studies that exist will be summarized in the following.

In Strømsodd’s study mentioned in section 5.2 in which people in Oslo were asked an open-ended question about their least favorite dialect, only a small minority in both dialect groups answered with the Oslo dialect they themselves did not speak, i.e. speakers of the lower dialect answered ‘the upper Oslo dialect’ and vice-versa (1979: 78). When asked a similarly open-ended question about their favorite dialect, again only a small minority gave vague responses such as ‘Oslo’ (1979: 70). But when respondents are asked to determine what the most important difference between the two dialects is, the

responses pointing out that the lower dialect is ‘ugly, vulgar, wrong, and careless’ greatly outnumber those that claim the upper dialect is ‘pretentious and affected’, thus suggesting an apparent asymmetry in negative attitudes towards the two varieties (1979: 104). In the other existing study, Aaserud (2000) did a verbal-guise experiment (cf. section 5.2) in which one girl read a text sample in the upper Oslo dialect and another girl read the same sample in the lower dialect. Two groups of high school students speaking either dialect were then asked to rate the girls reading the text samples on scales of perceived intelligence, education, correctness, maturity, and coolness. As one would expect from the close connection between the upper Oslo dialect and the official Bokmål standard (cf. section 1), both groups rated the girl speaking the upper dialect as speaking more correctly and being more intelligent and educated than the other girl. One would assume, however, that the more relevant attitudes among high school students with respect to accommodation are how mature and cool the person they are listening to sounds. On these two scales, however, the rated difference between the two girls is less pronounced. The student group from the upper Oslo dialect community finds the girl speaking the lower dialect to be less cool, whereas the student group from the lower Oslo dialect community finds both girls to be similarly uncool (2000: 91, 94). With respect to maturity, both student groups find the girl speaking the lower dialect to sound more childish, but the difference between the ratings of the two girls is not very great (2000: 111, 114). Although these two studies do lend support to the notion that the lower Oslo dialect is less prestigious in the relevant sociolinguistic sense within the Oslo community, more attitude studies are sorely needed in order to establish more firmly what speakers of the two Oslo dialects think of each other. As the lower Oslo dialect is gradually disappearing as a distinct sociolect in Oslo, such studies will unfortunately be difficult to carry out in practice in the future.

The linguistic observation made over the years in Oslo is that features diffuse from the upper dialect into the lower dialect, and as addressed above, this indicates that speakers of the lower dialect are asymmetrically accommodating speakers of the upper dialect during interactions due to a corresponding asymmetry in their attitudes. This asymmetry in accommodation is not a novel observation. Already Larsen (1907) noted that ‘virtually all’ speakers of the lower dialect would or could accommodate upwards when interacting with speakers of the upper dialect. He suggests further that this has



been a major pathway for how linguistic features from the upper Oslo dialect have entered the lower dialect. The working and lower middle classes, he says, are largely bidialectal or often speak an 'intermediate' dialect (1907: 19–20, 24). Later studies corroborate Larsen's observations. When speakers of the lower Oslo dialect interact with speakers of the upper dialect in more formal situations, they largely shift their dialect from the lower to the upper variety (Hoftvedt 1979). No studies have demonstrated that accommodation also takes place in the opposite direction, and it is unclear how much knowledge speakers of the upper dialect even have of the linguistic features of the lower dialect. While Larsen (1907: 31) claims that everyone in Oslo is 'more or less familiar' with the lower dialect, Helland (1917: 277) asserts that speakers of the upper dialect are quite ignorant about the linguistic features of the lower dialect, and that they 'as a rule' would fail if they were given a sample of the lower Oslo dialect and asked to determine if the linguistic forms in it were correct or not.

## 8 CONCLUSION

A common claim in the literature on Norwegian sociolinguistics is that the local dialects in South-East Norway are being leveled towards an East Norwegian spoken 'standard' that reflects the official written standard of Bokmål Norwegian. As this spoken variety is the native dialect of the upper social classes in Oslo, I have called this variety the 'upper Oslo dialect' in this paper (cf. section 1). What is characteristic about much of this literature, however, is that little or no linguistic data is presented to support that claim. In some cases, no references and hardly any data are given to back up the claim at all (e.g. Sandøy 1998; Mæhlum 2009), while in other cases, the literature refers to the overview articles in Vikør (1999) and Skjekkeland (2000) (e.g. Askedal 2005; Røyneland 2009). In these overview articles, however, only a select few studies of dialect change are included as part of the material, with no justification for why exactly those few studies were chosen as being representative. As an example, of the 25 existing studies on dialect change in the south-eastern region of Norway (cf. section 3), only one is included in the overview article by Vikør (1999), and none are included by Skjekkeland (2000). When only a couple of studies are selected among a large group of available ones, then this selection runs the risk of being biased, in that the researcher inadvertently selects those few studies which support his own view, while neglecting those that may contradict it

(Nickerson 1998). Whether or not this selection is biased, another potential problem with only selecting a couple of studies is that their results are not necessarily reliable due to sampling errors and random fluctuations in the real data. The results from a single study can, in other words, be due to chance. A common method applied to avoid both of these problems is to perform a meta-analysis of all existing studies. On the one hand it obliterates the danger of ‘cherry-picking’ among the available studies, and on the other hand an analysis of a larger body of studies can control for random variation in the data (cf. Hunter and Schmidt 2004: 21).

As mentioned in section 3, there are as many as 25 independent studies of dialect change in the south-eastern dialect group known as the Vika dialects. This is a very high number of sociolinguistic studies for what is a small geographic area. A third compelling reason to perform a meta-analysis in a case like this with many existing studies is that more can be gained from synthesizing and organizing the data and results from the available studies than from undertaking yet another separate investigation of the same topic (Hunter and Schmidt 2004: 16; Card 2012: 4). To my knowledge, no such meta-analyses have previously been conducted on sociolinguistic change in Norway, and they also seem to be very rare in the field of sociolinguistics as a whole. As this article is able to illustrate, such meta-analyses are highly useful for evaluating the validity of sociolinguistic theories, and it underscores the need for more studies of this kind to be conducted in our field. Despite the common claim referred to above that the local south-eastern dialects in Norway are leveling towards the upper Oslo dialect, a meta-analysis of all 25 existing studies reveals that this is factually incorrect (see section 3). No new linguistic features in these dialects appear to have spread from the upper Oslo dialect. Instead, virtually all of them seem to have diffused from the dialect of the lower social classes in Oslo, the ‘lower Oslo dialect’. Establishing through such meta-analyses what the empirical data actually tells us is important, since sociolinguistic theories can only be as correct as the linguistic data they are based on. As an example of this, consider the commonly posited claim in Norwegian sociolinguistics that the upper Oslo dialect is ‘prestigious’ to speakers of other local dialects by virtue of being the language of the socioeconomic upper class in the capital, and that speakers of these local dialects choose to adopt features from the upper Oslo dialect because they wish to identify socially with members of this ‘prestigious’ speech community (see section 1). This sociolinguistic

theory ends up being vacuous, because it already assumes that features of the upper Oslo dialect diffuse to the local dialects in this manner, an empirical assumption that a careful linguistic meta-analysis reveals to be incorrect.

In south-eastern Norway, linguistic features diffuse outwards from the lower Oslo dialect. A sociolinguistic account of this phenomenon should therefore attempt to explain both how and why this diffusion process occurs. As the meta-analysis of dialect change in this region shows, the features diffuse according to the predictions of the gravity model, in which features spread from large cities to smaller cities before they spread further to rural areas. It thus appears as if these features ‘jump’ from one city to the next before the rural communities between those cities adopt the same features. I have further assumed in this paper that diffusion occurs through social accommodation, and predominately during face-to-face interactions. Following one of the core tenets of the communication accommodation theory, a speaker’s attitudes towards his interlocutors play a major role in determining how much the speaker is willing to accommodate to their speech habits. The theory would therefore predict that speakers of local dialects in south-eastern Norway hold more negative attitudes towards members of the upper Oslo speech community than towards members of the lower Oslo community. In short, attitudes are predicted to correlate with diffusion patterns. This prediction is confirmed with respect to this region of Norway. Attitude studies demonstrate that people here have strongly negative views of both the upper Oslo dialect and its speakers, at the same time as they hold rather neutral opinions about the lower Oslo dialect (see section 5).

The patterns of diffusion are quite different within the city of Oslo itself. Whereas the lower Oslo dialect is the Oslo variety that is spreading its features out of the city to the local dialects, it is the upper Oslo dialect that is spreading its features inside the city. This results in the curious scenario in which the lower Oslo dialect is spreading its features out of the city at the same time as it is gradually disappearing as a distinct variety within the city by adopting features from the upper dialect. This phenomenon appears to be quite unusual compared to the processes observed in other countries (cf. section 7.1). Recast in traditional sociolinguistic terms, the lower Oslo dialect is ‘prestigious’ outside of Oslo, but ‘non-prestigious’ within Oslo. If diffusion is expected to correlate with social attitudes, we would expect to see this asymmetry mirrored in the attitudes of people living in Oslo. Although very few studies have been conducted to test this, the available

data from attitude studies in Oslo support this view, and it has been noted over the years that speakers of the lower Oslo dialect are especially willing to accommodate to the speech of members of the upper social classes (see section 7.2).

In recent years, however, some prominent scholars have cast doubt on the role played by attitude in accommodation (Labov 2001; Trudgill 2008a, 2014). According to their view, accommodation is a mechanic and automatic consequence of personal interaction, and so the amount of linguistic accommodation between individuals is expected to follow directly from the amount of interaction they have with each other. This theory is a simpler theory than the standard view that both interaction and attitude play a role in diffusion, and from a methodological point of view it is therefore a better theory, all other things being equal (cf. Gauch 2012: 174–197). As a result, it deserves to be taken very seriously and rigorously tested. A number of recent experiments designed to test the role of attitude are nevertheless able to demonstrate that social attitudes play an independent role in accommodation, an effect that is most clearly seen in those experiments where there is no interaction going on at all (see section 6.1). Also in the ‘real world’ of dialect change, it does not seem as if this simpler model is able to account for the relatively frequent phenomenon of ‘hypercorrections’, in which speakers of a dialect apparently ‘accommodate’ to non-existent forms of another dialect, and which for that reason could not have occurred during their personal interaction. All taken together, then, it seems clear that attitude is crucially needed in a theory of linguistic accommodation in order to explain language change. It is quite likely, then, that the symmetry seen between diffusion and attitude in south-eastern Norway is causally linked.

In sum, we find through experimental studies that social attitude plays a role in linguistic accommodation, and empirical studies of attitude and dialect change demonstrate that diffusion patterns and language attitudes are correlated. As just mentioned, this supports the idea that the two are causally linked. The practical consequence of this causal correlation is that we both can and should investigate people’s attitudes when coming up with explanations for empirically observed diffusion patterns. There is no denying that the interaction process itself is a very important factor in linguistic accommodation and diffusion. Yet for two good reasons, I suggest that sociolinguists should conduct attitude studies prior to interaction studies as a mean to explain diffusion. First, attitude largely determines the interaction, in that positive

attitudes promote interaction, while negative attitudes prevent it (see section 6.1). Under normal circumstances, then, one would expect that the general findings from an interaction study would mirror those of an attitude study. The second reason is that attitude studies are easier to perform. Mapping the interactions among individuals is both time-consuming and labor-intensive, and it raises certain ethical questions when an accurate mapping of these interactions requires a questionable amount of intrusion and monitoring of people's daily lives and personal relationships.

In conclusion, this article has demonstrated the usefulness of conducting meta-analyses of existing studies of dialect change, in that it needs to be clearly established through empirical investigations and linguistic analyses what the actual sociolinguistic data is. When trying to account for this data within sociolinguistic theory, this article has highlighted the symmetry between people's attitudes towards other speech communities and the probability of linguistic diffusion from those communities. Following the communication accommodation theory and findings from recent sociophonetic experiments, the correlation between these two can be assumed to be causal in nature. It brings promise, therefore, that future meta-analyses and attitude studies can provide considerable insight into the nature of dialect change and linguistic diffusion.

## NOTES

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2. The problem with calling this spoken language a ‘standard’ is that there is no clear consensus in the literature on what is meant by the term ‘standard’ in this context, and if there even is a ‘standard’ spoken language in Norway at all (Enger 2009). The term ‘spoken Bokmål’ is unfortunate because ‘Bokmål’ is the name for an officially regulated written standard that lacks a regulated or sanctioned spoken variant.

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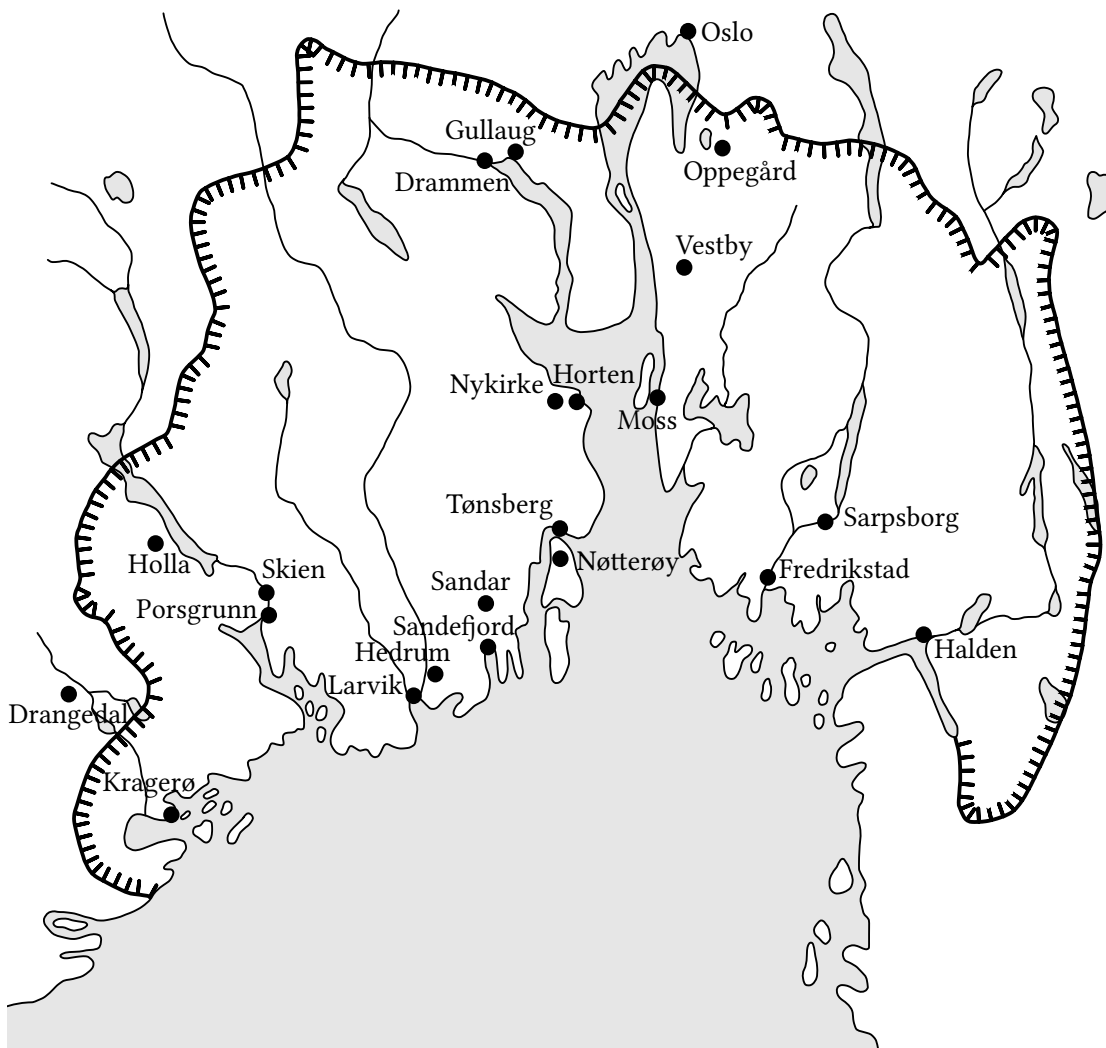
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**Table 1:** Documented changes in south-eastern Vika dialects

Linguistic change	Sources	Diffused from
[æ] > [ɑ] in unstressed syllables	Gulbrandsen 1975; Lund 2006	Urban Vika
Stress shift in loanwords	Kristiansen 1995; Aasen 2004	Lower Oslo/Upper Oslo
Merger of /ç/ and /ʃ/	Hult 2008; Imrik 2011	Lower Oslo
M.PL.DEF. [-anə] > [-ɑ]	Andersen 1982; Aasen 2004	Lower Oslo
Merger of neuter categories	Gulbrandsen 1975; Lindbekk 2000	Lower Oslo
[æ/ɑ] > [ə] in unstressed syllables	Maagerø 1978; Sørensen 1998	Lower Oslo
Loss of level stress	Gulbrandsen 1975; Elseth 1982	Lower Oslo
M.SG.DEF. [-ən̩/-ə[n̩]] > [-æn̩]	Gulbrandsen 1975; Dybvik 1994	Lower Oslo
Merger of interrogatives	Dalene 1947; Dybvik 1994	Lower Oslo





**Figure 1:** Vika region  
(from Stausland Johnsen 2015)