The role of 'family' in intergenerational transmission of Shetland dialect vocabulary

Edit Bugge

1. Introduction

The theme for this essay is the co-variation between family background and knowledge of Shetland dialect words. I will examine data from a socio-lexical survey of 47 Shetlanders' recognition of Shetland dialect vocabulary. Thereafter I will discuss tendencies in a qualitative survey of 30 Shetland school pupils' notions of and attitudes towards Shetland dialect. When examining the two surveys, I will focus on two questions: 1) Is there a co-variation between test score and family affiliation in the collected data from the word recognition survey? 2) Do the informants in the school interviews refer to their families when discussing their own language or their individual linguistic strategies?

2. 'Family' and 'parental background' in dialectology and sociolinguistics

The concept of 'family' and the category of 'parental background' hold an important place in the methodical traditions in dialect research, where the geographical or social background of correspondent's parents has been used both as a selection criterion and as a social variable. Parental background is central in William Labov's delimitation and operationalisation of the category 'social class', where the informants' class background is defined by their father's profession (Labov 1966)[1]. In a number of dialect surveys informants are divided into groups according to their parents' geographical background, categorizing parents as either 'locals' or 'incomers'. This approach is used by James M. Scobbie in a study of interspeaker variation in Shetland (Scobbie 2005), and in a number of Norwegian dialect studies (Jensen 1961; Haugen 2004; Hernes 2006; Papazian 1999; Sævik 2000; Ulset 2002; Aasmundtveit 2008). The methodical tradition for using parental background as a selection criterion or as a social variable is based on an assumption of a predictable correspondence between parental background on the one hand, and language use on the other hand. It also reflects a sociolinguistic preconception of adult and elderly speakers as

[1] The same delimitation of social class is found in for example Sandal 1976; Kristoffersen 1978; Goksøyr 1980; Elseth 1982; Gabrielsen 1991; Sævik 2000).

Bugge, Edit. 2010. 'The role of "family" in intergenerational transmission of Shetland dialect vocabulary'. In Millar, Robert McColl (ed.) 2010. *Northern Lights, Northern Words. Selected Papers from the FRLSU Conference, Kirkwall 2009*. Aberdeen: Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ireland, 70-97. ISBN: 978-0-9566549-1-5

stable carriers of language, focusing only on the linguistic variation in the youngest age group. In surveys where informants are divided into groups based on whether or not they have local-born parents, the local-born parents themselves are usually treated as a linguistically homogenous group.

There are two theoretical principles underlying the use of parental background in the selection and categorisation of informants in dialect research. Firstly, the tradition is founded on the idea that the parents are the most important role models in the early language acquisition of their children, and assuming that this early influence has a fundamental and lasting impact on the language of the individual speaker. Dialect researchers have often based their knowledge of this early linguistic influence on information about the informants' parents. The operationalisation of the category of parental background in dialect research and sociolinguistics suggests a preconception of predictable, stable and measurable mechanisms in the linguistic transmission and socialisation in the family institution, through which we may be lead to believe that the tradition is based not only on an established correlation but even an established causal relation in interfamily intergenerational language transmission. However, I am not convinced that this implicit presumption has the necessary empirical foundation. So far I have not found surveys of monolingual, relatively monodialectal families in Shetland or Scandinavia where inter-speaker variation among adult speakers has been compared with the inter-speaker variation of their own children, concluding that children are linguistically more similar to their own parents than they are to other adults in the same language community.

The second principle which may have contributed to the methodological tradition of using parental background in the selection and categorisation of informants in dialect research may be related to a Western cultural model where genetic kinship is central to local, ethnic and national affiliation. The presumption that only authentic locals use the authentic dialect, and that this authenticity depends on the speakers family background, will also be discussed later in this essay, in relation to my school interviews from Shetland.

When presenting the data from my small survey, I will start by focusing on the correlation between passive dialect vocabulary and family affiliation among 36 informants belonging to ten families in Whalsay and central Mainland. Studying only the passive dialect vocabulary in a fairly diglossic community such as Shetland, this is a survey where we could

expect a high degree of co-variation between informants' family background and their test score.

3. Research on vocabulary loss

When planning my word recognition survey in Shetland, I used older Norwegian and Shetland surveys on vocabulary loss as a model. *Orddaude* 'word loss' was a topic in a number of Norwegian MA theses from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s. In Shetland, similar surveys have been done by John Graham in the 1970s (Graham 2004 : xvii), and by Gunnel Melchers (Melchers 1983: 18−20) and Greger Nässén in the 1980s (Nässén 1989). The purpose of these surveys is to give an indication of the direction and speed of the changes in the local vocabulary. Figure 1 displays a possible interpretation of the model of the transmission of dialect vocabulary, underlying traditional word death surveys:

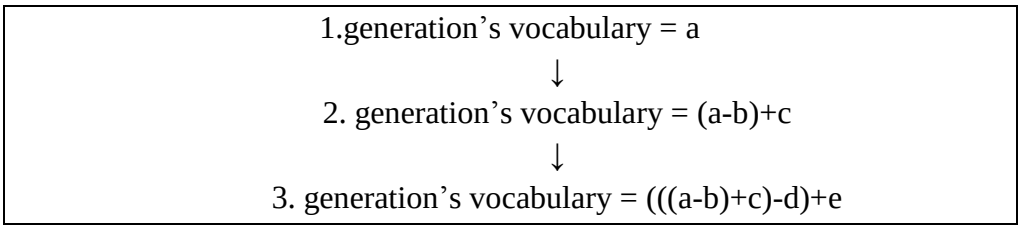

Fig.1: Possible understanding of (one-way) intergenerational transmission of dialect vocabulary.

In the model illustrated in figure 1 it is assumed that a certain generation 1 had control of a certain vocabulary (*a*), and in the operationalisation of the model, this assumed common vocabulary is constructed on the basis of older sources, dictionaries and word lists. When interviewing a later generation in the same language community, researchers in traditional word death surveys present the informants with a selection of the words from older written sources (*a*), and are able to measure how much is left of the (assumed) original vocabulary *a*. The words not recognised by generation 2 are marked in figure 1 with a negative *b*. In addition it is assumed that some new local words have appeared, in figure 1 illustrated by +*c*. The basis of the vocabulary of the next generation of language users will be the vocabulary of the previous generation (*a*-*b*+*c*). Some of the original vocabulary will be lost, (-*d*), and some new will have appeared, (+*e*). In word death surveys, the idea is that the negative *b* and *d* can be used to calculate a word death percentage ('orddødsprosent').

There are some obvious methodological problems attached to the model illustrated in figure 1. Firstly, the model presupposes that the vocabularies of individual speakers remain stable throughout their lives. It does not include the factor that our informants are literate, and have got access to the same sources as the researchers do. Obviously, informants may enlarge their dialect vocabulary once they reach a stage in their lives when they become interested in local history or local dialect.

Secondly, the relationship between the assumed generation 1 and vocabulary *a*, is uncertain. In word death surveys the individual and social variation among living correspondents, i.e. generation 2 and 3 in figure 1, has been investigated. However, for generation 1, a historically homogenous language community has been assumed, in which all speakers had access to the same vocabulary. To use a Shetland example, the words included in Jakob Jakobsen's etymological dictionary (1921) may not have been common to all Shetlanders in the 19th century. On the contrary, much of the vocabulary in Jakobsen's collection seems to be terminology connected to the speech of certain groups in the society, for example to men, or to men involved in fishing (Bugge 2005:29). In other words, while generation 2 and 3 in word death surveys usually consists of randomly chosen adult and young speakers, the assumed generation 1 consists (or rather, consisted) of self-selected, motivated informants who may already have held a status as local dialect experts.

Finally, we should question whether the test scores from word recognition surveys really display the variation in the passive vocabulary of informants, or whether they display variation in attitudes towards the dialect, or the informants' skills at recognizing, and explaining words out of context.

4. Data material

The data material examined in this essay was collected in Shetland in 2005. In the first part of this essay, I will focus on a quantitative socio-lexical study of 47 Shetlanders' recognition of 64 words from Shetland dialect vocabulary. Among the 47 informants in the word recognition survey were 36 members from ten Shetland families. The words in my word recognition survey were drawn from three sources: Jakob Jakobsen's *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* (1921); John Graham's *The Shetland Dictionary* (2004 [1979]); and an unpublished collection by the

Norwegian Einar Seim, from the 1930s.[2] I chose to use words beginning with 'H', and only use words that were represented in at least two of the three sources. I ended up with 64 words, a relatively small number compared with similar surveys in Shetland and Norway[3].

In the second part of this essay, I will focus on school interviews from March 2005, made with two teachers and 30 pupils at Anderson High School in Lerwick, Mid Yell Junior High school in Yell and Baltasound Junior High school in Unst, to investigate if the informants refer to their families when discussing their own language or their individual linguistic strategies.

5. Is there co-variation between test score and family affiliation in the collected data?

5.1 Age

The results from all Shetland and Norwegian word death surveys I have come across have been similar: Older informants recognise more old dialect words than younger informants, and there is a large individual variation within each age group. This is the same pattern as we find in my results from the 2005 survey, illustrated in a simple scatter plot in figure 2[4].

[2] Einar Seim's collection of approximately 2000 Shetland words is now in the care of Målføresamlinga at the Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies at the University of Bergen

[3] For surveys on the knowledge of Shetland vocabulary, see for example Graham (2004 : xvii), Melchers (1983: 18−20) and Nässén (1989). For surveys on the survival of Norwegian dialect vocabulary, see for example Frøystadvåg (1997), Nergaard *(*1996) and Valestrand (1978).

[4]The significant correlation between *infomant's age* and *informant's survey score* is also illustrated in Appendix 1.

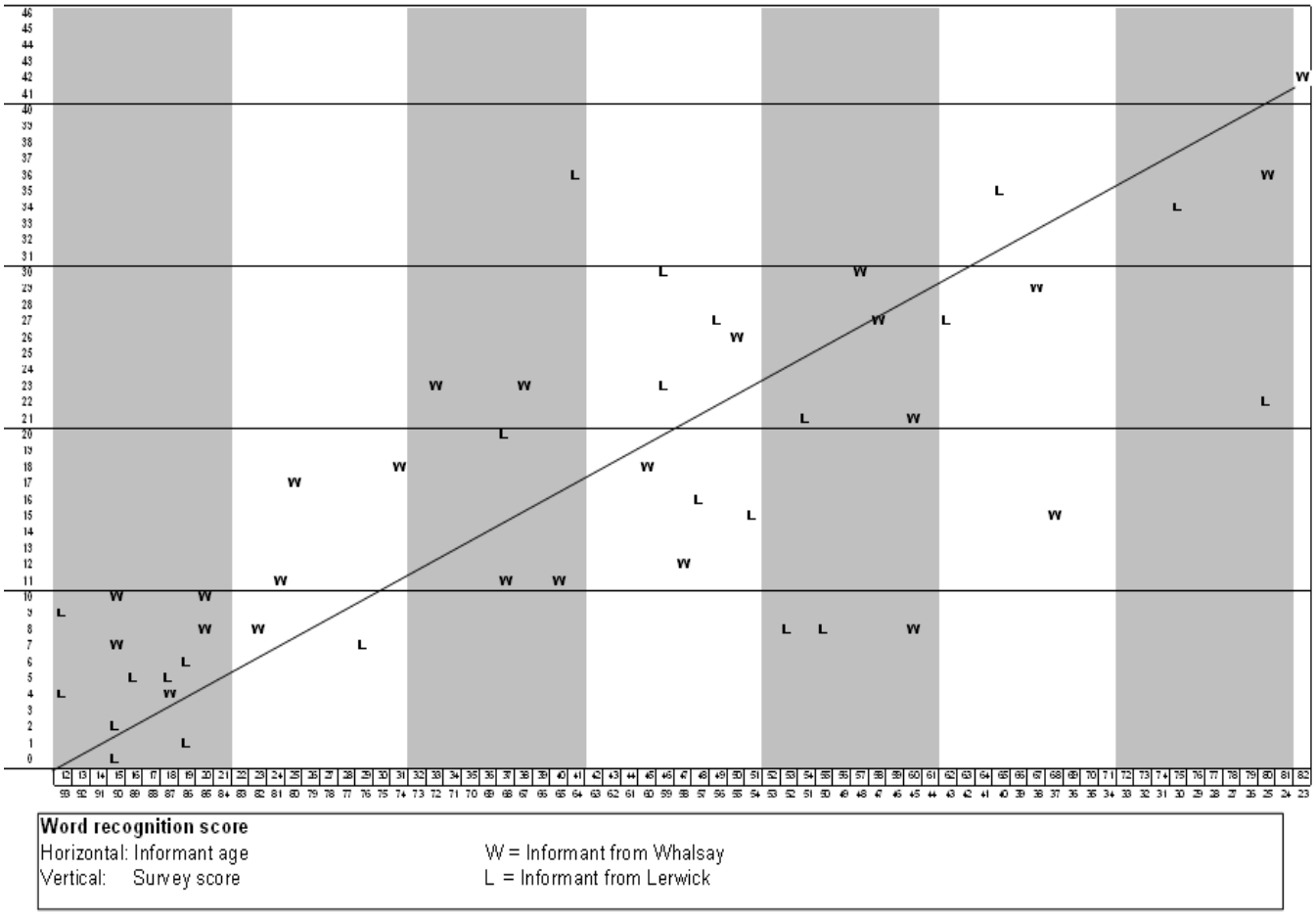

Fig. 2: Word recognition score. 47 informants, age : test score

The horizontal line in the scatter plot in figure 2 displays the informants' age (from 12 to 82), the vertical line displays the informants' survey score (from 0 to 42). The informant with the highest score in figure 2 is an 82 year old informant from Whalsay. His explanations match those of Jakobsen (1921), Graham (2004) or Seim (1930s) for 42 of the 64 survey words. The informant with the lowest score, (0), is a 15 year old girl from Lerwick. The individual variation in each age group is large. For example, we see that one 40 year old informant from Lerwick has a four times higher score than one 60 year old informant from Whalsay.

5.2 Family affiliation

36 of the 47 informants displayed in figure 2 are related to at least one other informant in the survey. The family relationships between these 36 informants are displayed in figure 3. In figure 4 the sibling relationship is omitted, displaying only the relation between parents and their children, and the relationship between spouses.

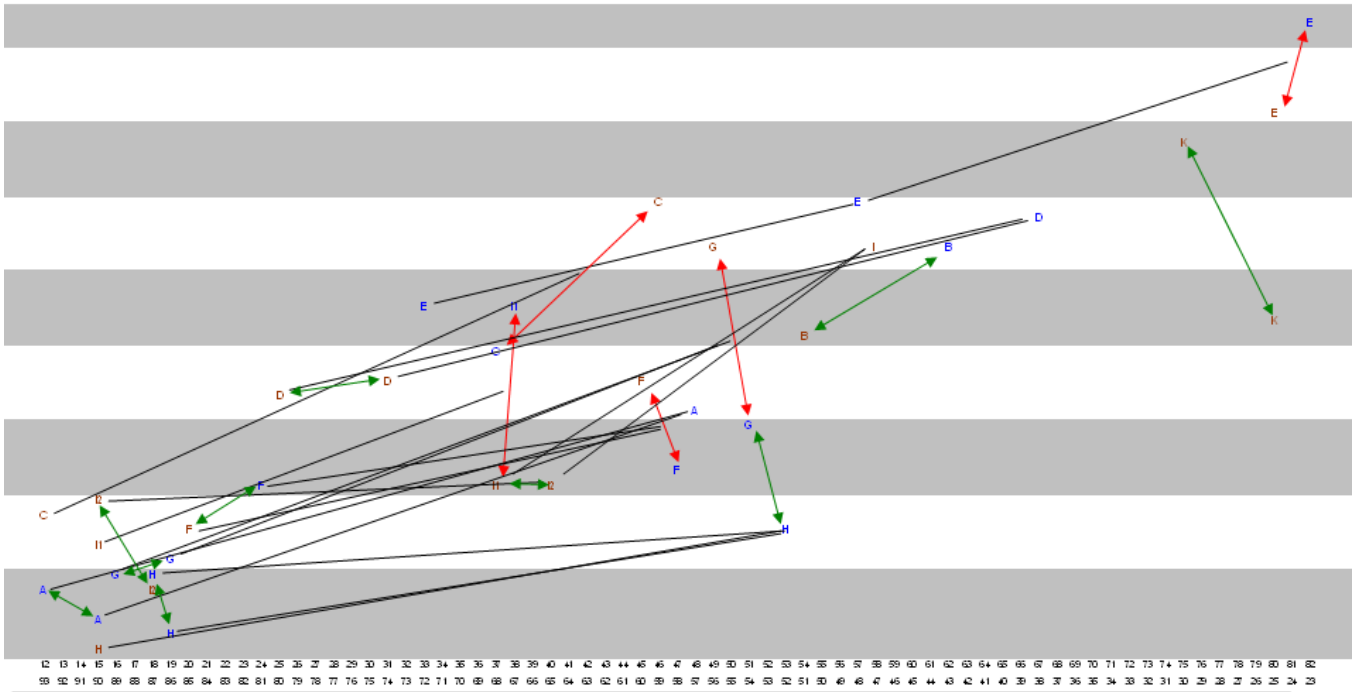

Fig 3: Survey score. 36 informants in ten families (generations, spouses and siblings)

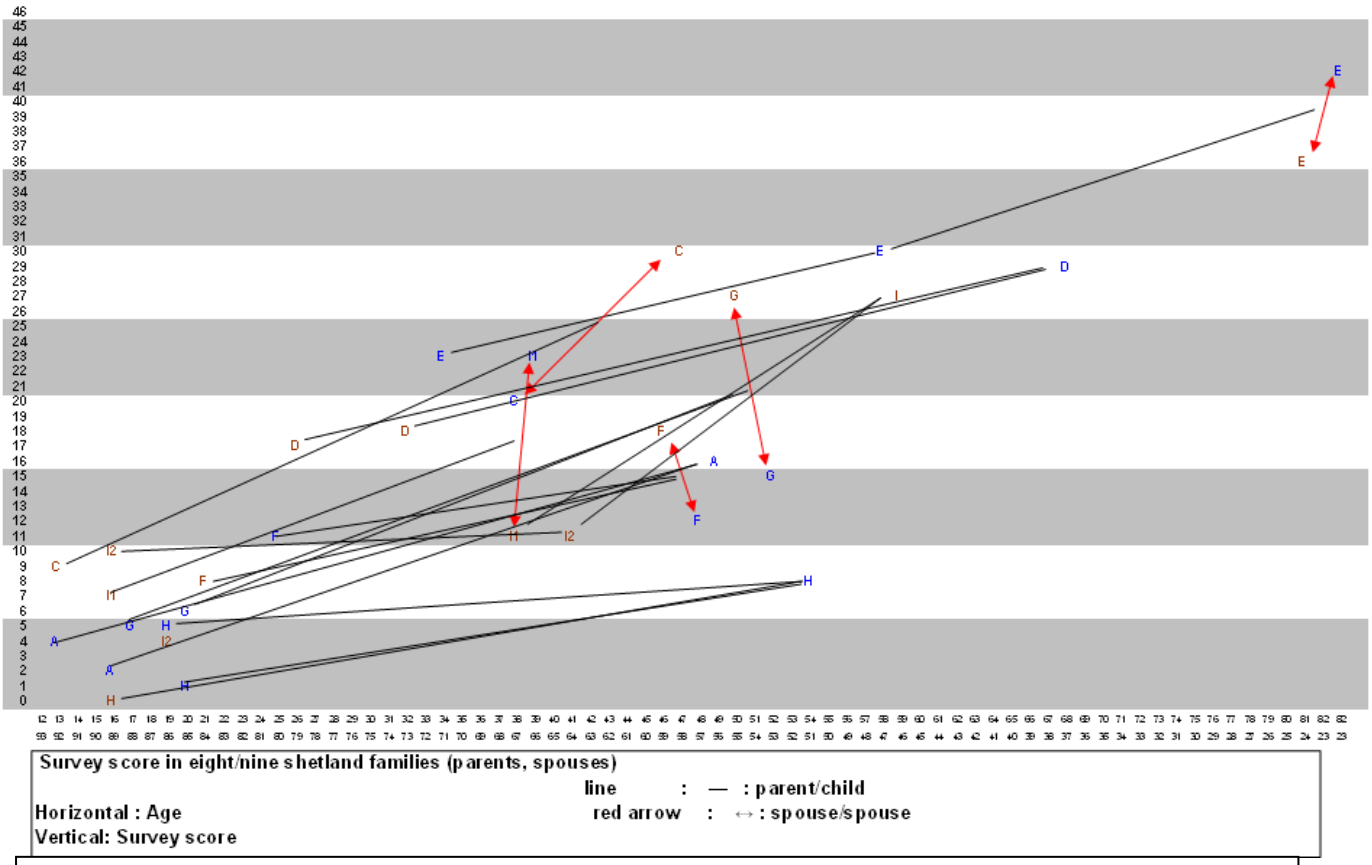

Fig. 4: Survey score. 32 informants in ten families. (generations and spouses)

The red arrows in figures 3 and 4 show indicate that the informants are married to each other, the green arrows in figure 3 indicate that the informants are siblings, and the black lines in figure 3 and 4 indicate that the informants are generations within the same family. Female informants have been given red letters, male blue. The families have been given random numbers: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I (including two branches, I1 and I2, where the family mothers, I2 b 1965 and I1 b 1968, are sisters of the same mother, I, b 1947) and K.

At the high scoring end of figure 4, we find family E, represented by E (b 1923) and E (b 1925) their son E (b 1948) and his son E (b 1972). The most striking pattern in figure 3 and 4 is that the black lines are almost parallel. All the members in family E and D have a got high score compared to other informants in their own age group. All the members of family H have got correspondingly low scores compared to their own age groups. The strongest deviation from this pattern is found in family I, where there seems to be a drop from I (b 1947) to her two daughters (I1 and I2). Interestingly,

Mrs. I (b 1947) started to study local history when she retired. The apparent drop from Mrs. I to her two daughters may be caused by a turn in Mrs. I's life learning curve, rather than a failure to transmit dialect vocabulary within family I.

5.3 Hypothesis 1: Informants' test score is always lower than the test score of their own parents.

Figure 3 and 4 focus on the number of words in the survey score, rather than its content. When focusing on the amount of words in the survey score we may test a hypothesis 1: *The informants' test score is always lower than that of their own parents.* To my surprise, this is the case in all the ten families in this small survey. The youngest members of family D and E have a considerably higher survey score than other correspondents their parents' age, for example H (b 1952). Yet, D and E do not have a higher score than their own parents. Even though H has the lowest score in his own age group, and a lower score than most of the youngest informants, he still has a higher score than his own children.

5.4 Hypothesis 2: If children's test score contain the words y, their parent's test score contain the words y + n.

We will now turn to the content of the test score, and ask if there is a similar correspondence in regards to *which* words the members of the same family recognise in the survey. Do siblings know the same words? Is the dialect vocabulary of children a smaller version of the dialect vocabulary of their parents, so that parents know all the dialect words their children know, while the children only have access to a part of the dialect vocabulary of their parents? We may formulate these questions into a hypothesis 2: *If children's test score contain the words* y, *their parent's test score contain the words* y+n. Hypothesis 2 is illustrated in figure 5:

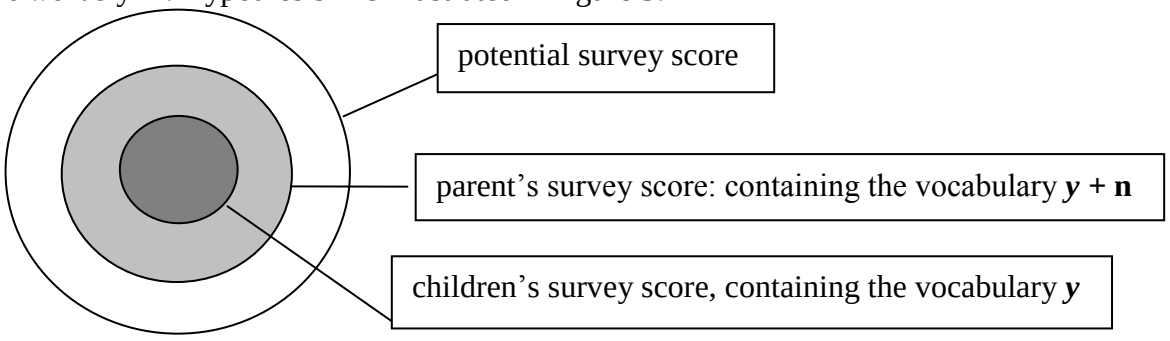

Fig. 5: Hypothesis 2: If children's survey score contain the vocabulary *y*, their parent's survey score will contain the vocabulary *y* + n

We can start by examining Family G, a family from Lerwick. The mother of the family (b 1957) has a test score of 27 words. Her husband (b 1954) has a test score of 15. 13 of the words explained 'correctly' by the mother in family G, are also found in her husband's survey score. In other words, husband and wife have, in this limited survey, a common survey score vocabulary of 13 words. The mother in family G recognised 14 words that her husband did not recognise, while he recognised 2 words that are not found in his wife's survey score. The score content of their two sons' survey score is positioned within the common vocabulary of their two parents. The overlapping content of the survey score of the members in family G, is displayed in figure 6:

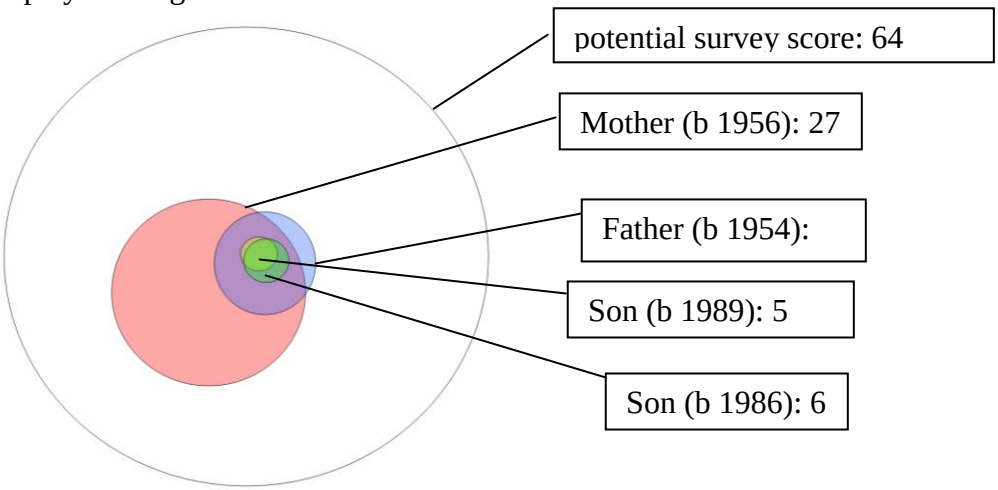

Fig. 6: Family G, overlapping content of four family members' survey score. The radius of an individual circle is determined by the informant's amount of 'correct' word explanations in the survey. The overlap between circles give an approximate illustration of the amount of cases where the same word is explained correctly by different informants. An explanation is counted as 'correct' when it matches one of the definitions given in Graham (2004), Jakobsen (1921) or Seim (1930s).

In total, family G recognised 29 of the 64 survey words, and four of these words were recognised by all four family members. The pattern of content overlap in figure 6 matches our hypothesis 2, illustrated in figure 5. In family G the parents recognise all the words in their children's survey score, while the children only recognise a part of the words in the survey score of their parents.

However, this pattern is not found in all the ten families in our data set. Like family G, family C also lives on central Mainland. The mother of family C (b 1959) has a slightly higher score than the mother of family G, recognizing 30 of the 64 survey words. Her husband (b 1968) has a test score of 20, and the couple has 17 correct survey word explanations in common. Their 12 year old daughter (b 1993) has a test score of 9, a higher score than that of the elder children in family G. Six of these words are also found in the survey score of both her parents, she has two words in common with her father alone, and one of the words she recognised is not found in the survey score of either of her parents. The relationship between the content of the family members' survey score is illustrated in figure 7:

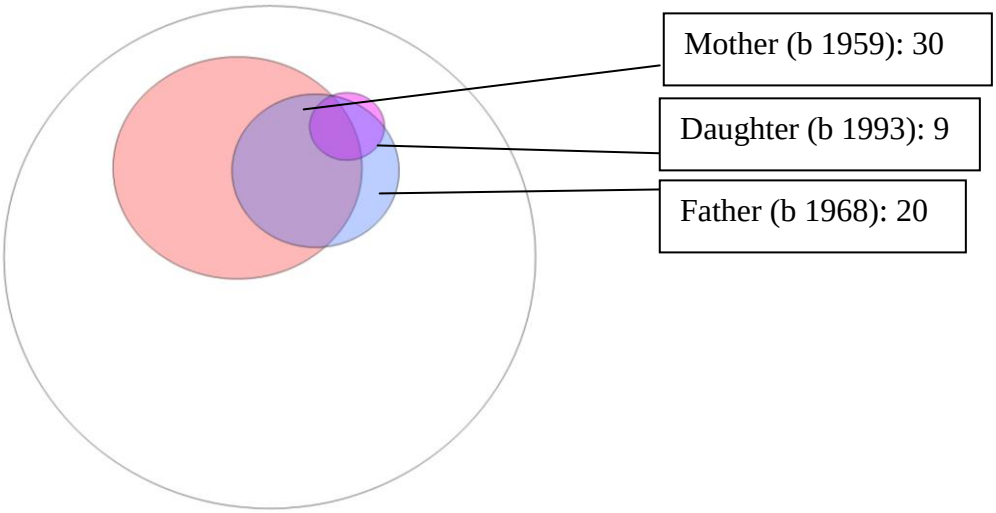

Fig.7: Family C, overlapping content of three family members' survey score.

The father in family G (see figure 6) has an older brother, H (b 1952). H (b 1952) has the lowest survey score of his own age group (see figure 3). Unfortunately, I did not interview his wife, due to my original informant selection criteria, as she had moved to Shetland as an adult. The youngest daughter of family H (b 1990) is the only informant in the survey with a test score of 0. Her elder sister (b 1987) has a test score of 5, the same size as her cousins in family G. Some of the words she recognised are not in the test score of her father. Her elder brother (b 1985) only recognised one word, and this word was also recognised by his sister and father. The relationship between the survey scores of family H is illustrated in figure 8:

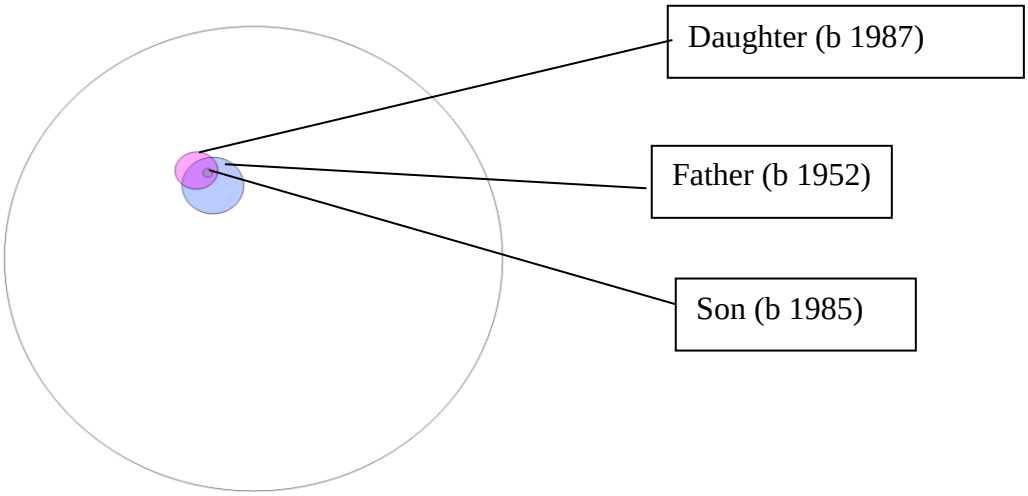

Fig. 8: Family H, overlapping content of three family members' survey score. One family member has a survey score of 0, and is therefore not shown in the model above.

The family with the highest total survey score in the data set, is family E, a family from Whalsay. The grandfather of the family (b 1923) has a test score of 42, the grandmother (b 1925) has a test score of 36. The couple has 31 correctly explained survey words in common. The content of their son's test score lies within the survey content of his parents, 24 of the 30 words explained correctly by the son (b 1948) are also explained correctly by both his parents. 5 words are only in the test score of father and son, one word is only found in the test score of mother and son. We could imagine that the content of the test score of the third generation of this family was positioned within the common vocabulary of the previous generations. This is the case for 19 of the 23 words in the test score of the son's son (b 1972). However, he has two words in common with his two grandparents alone, and two words only in common with his grandfather. The survey score content of family E is illustrated in figure 9:

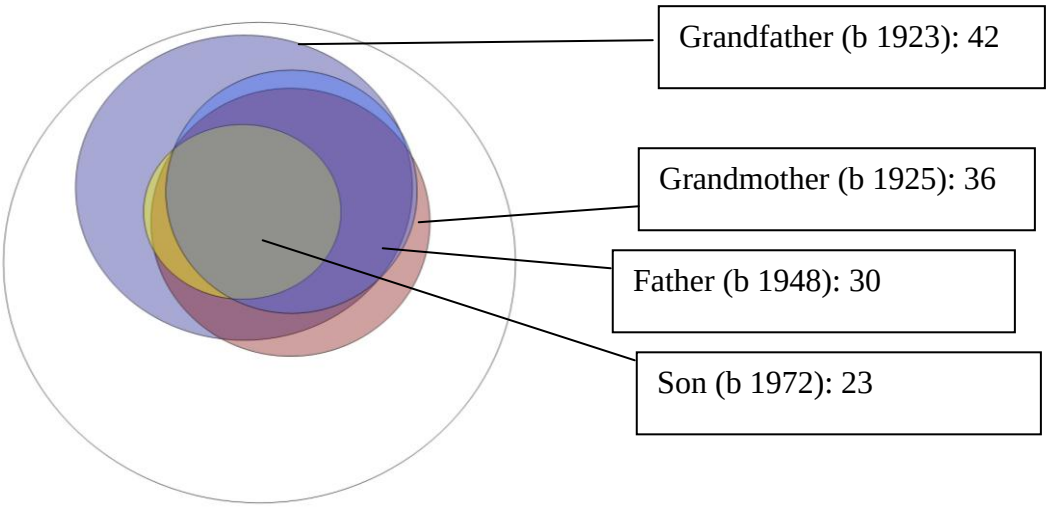

Fig. 9: Family E, overlapping content of four family members' survey score (3 generations).

5.5 Testing hypothesis 1 and 2

In 5.3, we saw that hypothesis 1: *The informants' test score is always lower than that of their own parents*, holds true for all the ten families in this small survey.

When turning to the content of the survey score rather than its size, we formulated a hypothesis 2: Looking at the ten families in relation to hypothesis 2, *If children's test score contain the words* y, *their parent's test score contain the words* y+n. Comparing the overlapping content pattern of the ten families in this survey, we see that the older generations have recognised all the words in the survey score of their own children or grandchildren in the families A, E, F, G, I+I1 and I+I2. Family B and K are represented by one generation only (siblings):

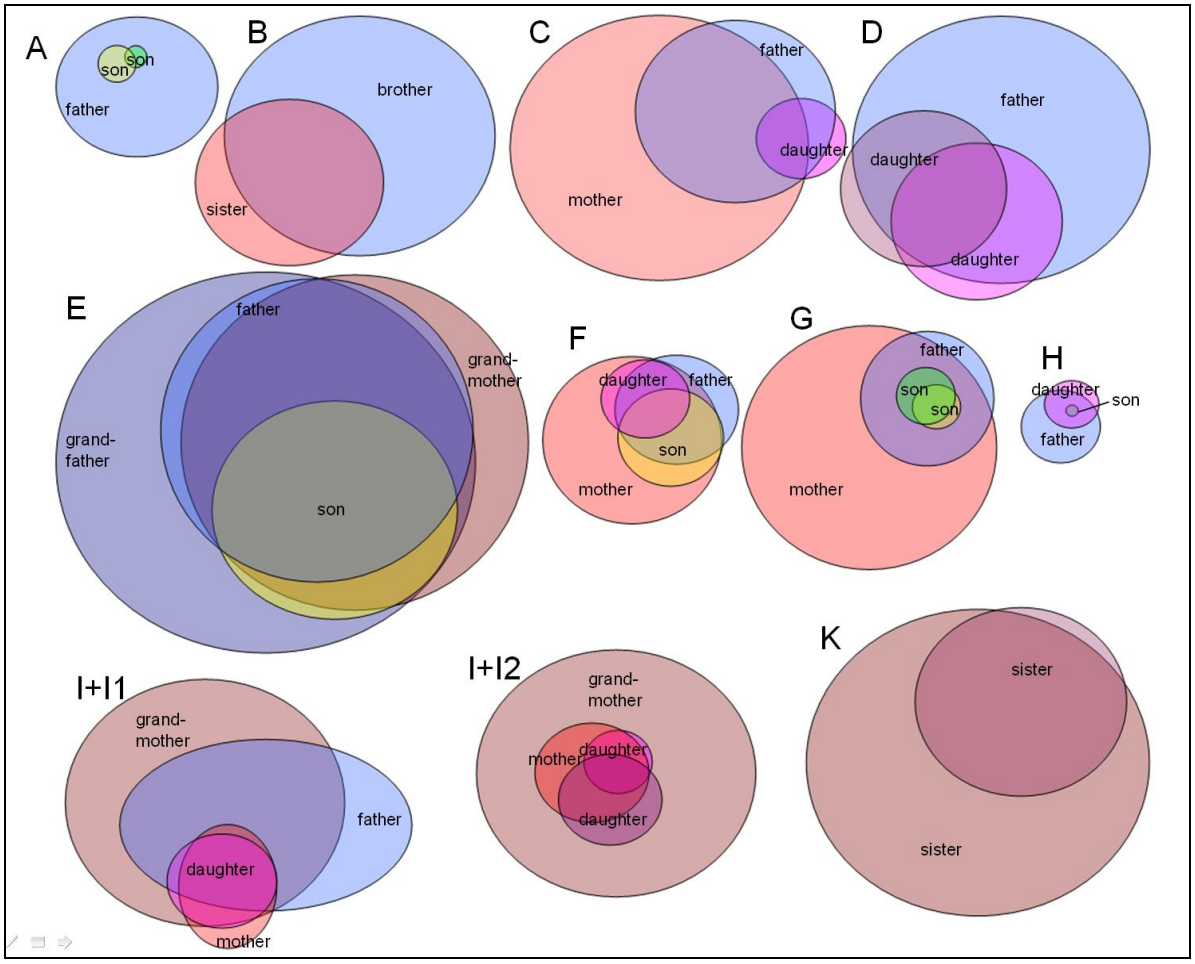

Fig. 10: Overlapping survey score content in ten families. Family I has two branches, I1 and I2

In family C, D and H, the younger generations have some words in their survey score not found in their parents' score. However, in family D and H, I lack the survey score of the mothers, in family H due to my original selection criteria, and in family D because the mother was not at home when the interviews were done. It is of course possible that the inclusion of these scores would have given family D and H a pattern more similar to that of family G (or F):

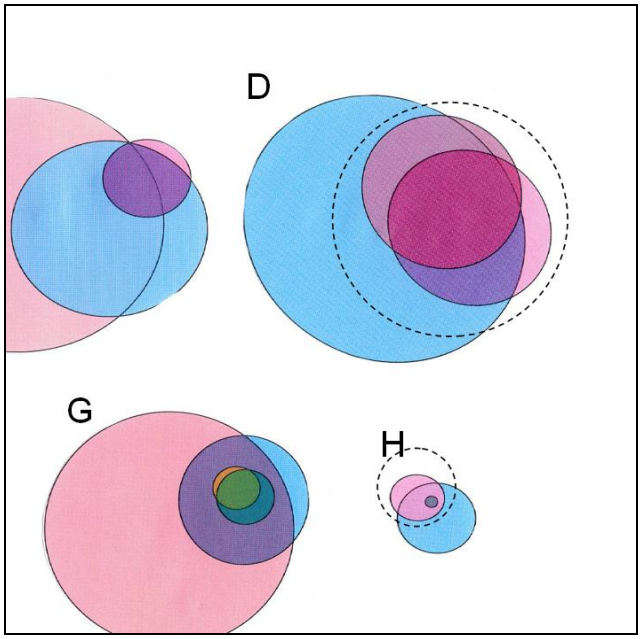

Fig. 11: The data set lacks the survey score of the mothers of family D and H. If the overlapping score content pattern of the two families is to match hypothesis 2, the pattern of the survey score of the mothers would need to resemble that of the dotted line.

5.6 A non-existent pattern

One striking pattern however, is the presence of overlap in the survey score content of all ten families. None of the families have a pattern similar to that of figure 12, where the family members have entirely separate contents in their survey scores.

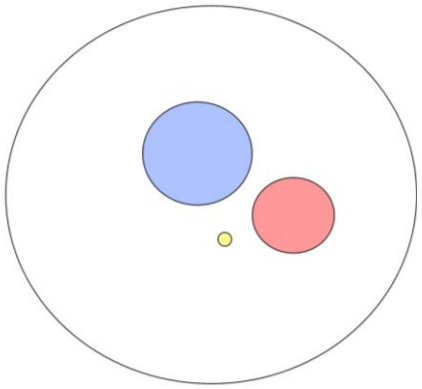

Fig. 12: A non-existent pattern

The overlapping survey score content of members of the same family is found even in families where the members have relatively low survey

scores. The overlap area may indicate a core vocabulary which all family members have access to. In the core vocabulary in the top scoring families in this survey, we find relatively rare words, which few or no other informants recognise, but which are known to all generations in a top scoring family. This may indicate that family affiliation not only corresponds with the *size* of informants' survey score (figure 3), but also with the survey score *content.*

5.7 How many words do the informants recognise in total?

The 36 members of the ten families in this survey recognise a total of 55 out of 64 words. 54 words are recognised by at least one informant born before 1949. All the 46 words recognised by the informants born between 1951 and 1974 are also recognised by at least one of the oldest informants. The youngest informants, born after 1980, recognise a total of 25 words. The youngest generation breaks the pattern slightly, as one word, *hurless* (adj), was recognised by a few members from the oldest and youngest generation, but not by any members of the middle generation (b 1974 − 1951). In addition, only one of the 36 informants, a 12 year old girl, explained the adjective *hair-rivin* as a meteorological term, matching the definitions given by Graham (2004) and Jakobsen (1921). *Hurless* (adj) and *hair-rivin* (n) causes a slightly asymmetric pattern in figure 13:

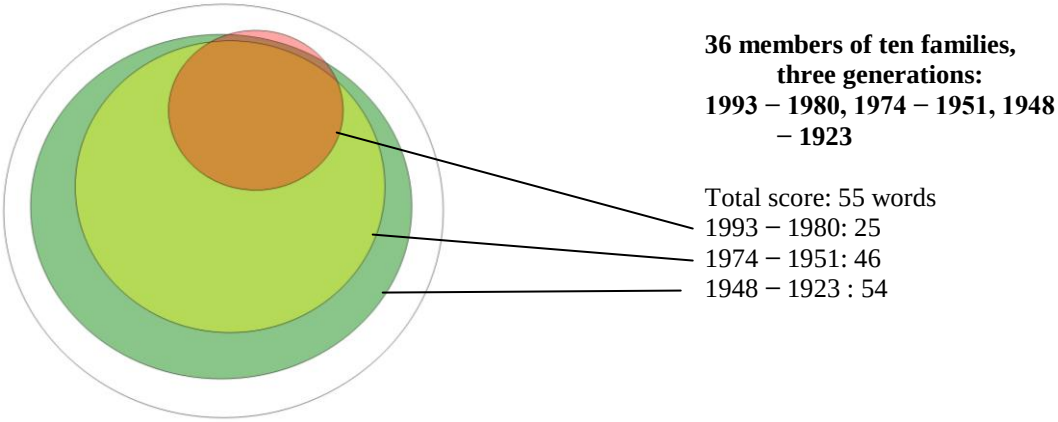

Fig. 13: Overlapping survey score content, 36 members of ten families.

When the 11 informants in the data set who are not connected to any of the ten families are added, the oldest generation covers 56 of the 64 survey words and the middle generation 51 of the 64 survey words. The youngest generation still possesses 25 of the 64 survey words.

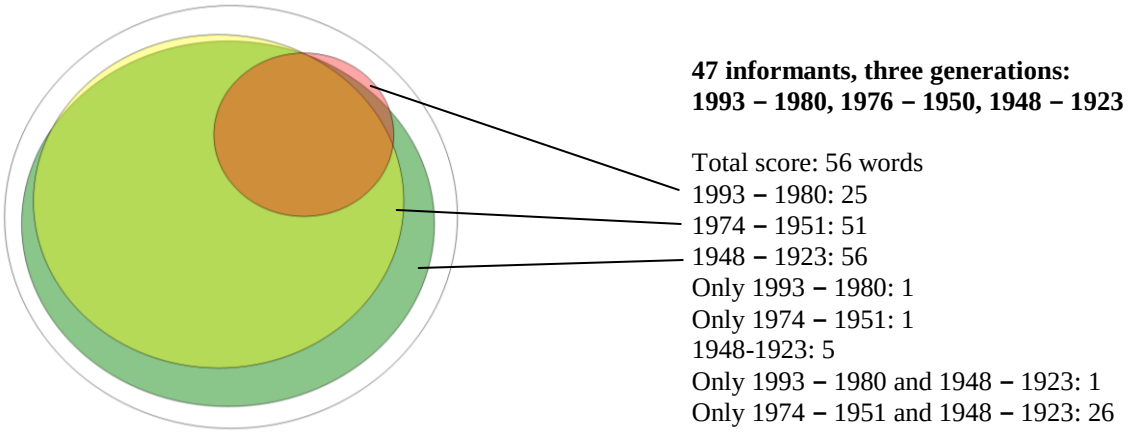

Fig. 14: Overlapping survey score content, 47 informants.

5.8 Which words are known?

In figure 15 the words known to one or more informant in each generation are included in a modified version of figure 15:

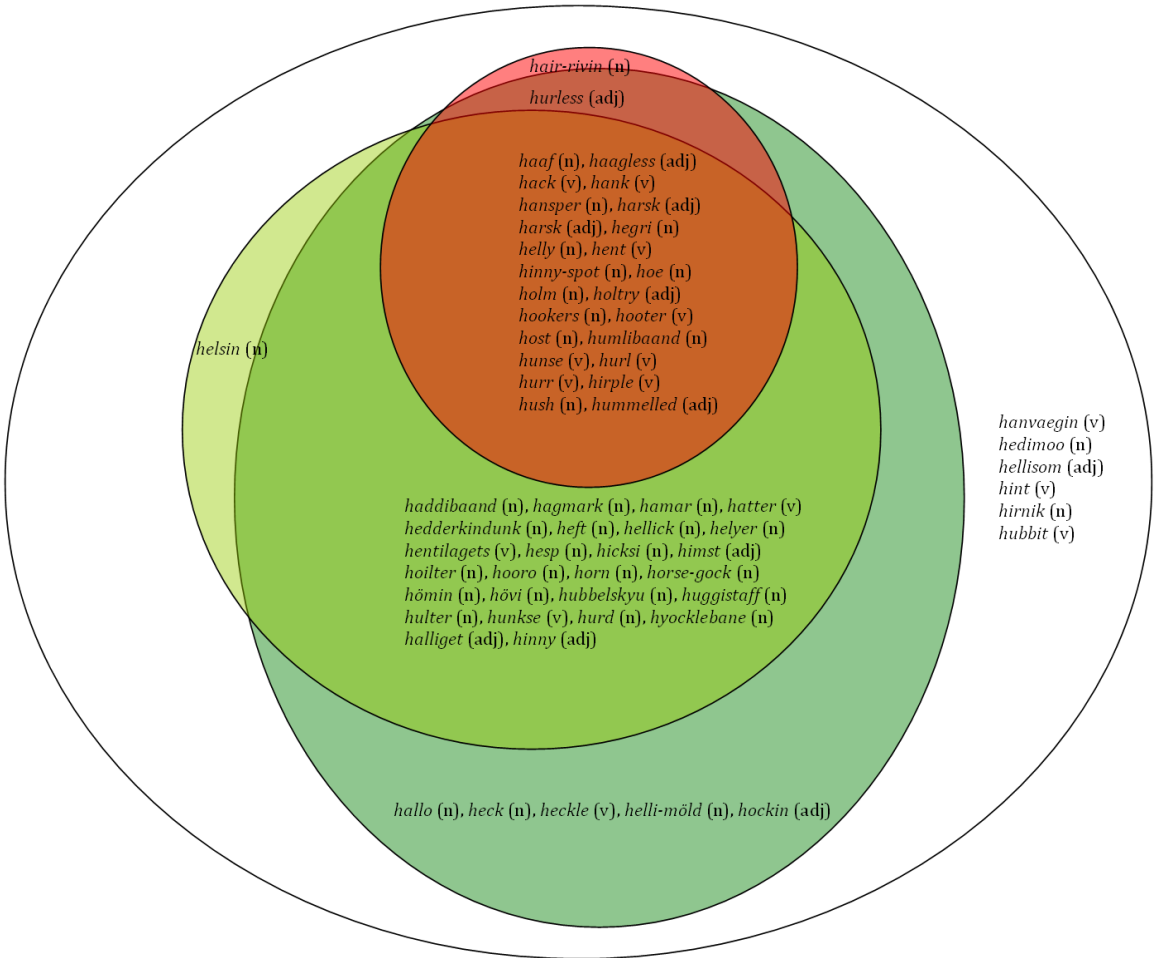

Fig.15: 47 informants, three generations. Overlapping content of survey score.

When selecting the words for the survey word list, I did not pose any criteria to their etymological origin, nor to their original geographical origin. My only requirement was that the words should be included in at least two of my three sources (Jakobsen 1921; Graham 2004 and Seim 1930s). A number of the words included in my three sources have originally not been limited to Shetland dialect, but have been recorded in Scottish and English dialects spoken in a larger geographical area (Sigmundsson 1985).

The 25 words covered by at least one of the informants in the youngest generation in this survey, i.e. the survey words placed in the reddish circle, contain a high number of words that originally have been used in a larger geographical area. The words that only are known to older informants, and are placed in the green circles, are marked by a higher number of words not common outside Shetland and Orkney.

In this small survey, there is, however, no tendency that words connected to fishing or farming are lesser known than words that may be assumed to be more useful in a modern urban daily life. Some of the words in the red core are only there because of our top scoring families E and D. The adjective *hummeled*, for example, is hardly known to any other informants, yet familiar to all the members of the families D and E.

6. Do the informants refer to their families when discussing their own language or their individual linguistic strategies?

So far I have focused only on the results from the quantitative word recognition survey. I will now turn to qualitative data from interviews with school pupils from the Mid Yell Junior High School on Yell, Baltasound Junior High School on Unst and Anderson High School in Lerwick, focusing on the pupils' experiences of the family as a linguistic and normative unit. How do the pupils refer to their own families, or the family institution in general, in relation to dialect use?

In the school interviews, several of the pupils referred to their family background to explain their own relation to and use of Shetland dialect. This was particularly common among those pupils who regarded themselves as mainly non-dialect speakers, as illustrated in the following two interview extracts:

1.
Boy (18): *because I can't even speak dialect really*
Edit: *ok*
Boy (18): *just never have done at home*

2.
Girl (18): *I don't think I usually use any Shetland words, because my parents don't use any. So usually just not use them.*

These rather deterministic interpretations of the effect of parent's linguistic influence on their own children are quite common in the school interviews. The pupils leave us with a picture of Shetland where dialect is only learned at home, and the influence from peers only go in the direction of standardised speech. The pupils rarely claim to be very broad speakers, but they may refer to other broad speakers, and these are sometimes explained as broad because of their family background:

My mum speaks broader than my dad, cause she got comes fae a huge family and like they like her mum and dad always like spoken Shetland to them so she's just grown up wi it (Girl 14, Unst)

There has not been much research on folk beliefs on the relation between family, kinship and language, despite this being a relatively common topic in folk discussions on language, and in folk linguistic explanations on linguistic variation.

Such data give interesting windows into popular views on the effect of and connection between biological and social factors in the development of the language of the individual speaker.

6.1 What do you need to be a Shetlander?

My selection criteria for correspondents to the word recognition survey were inherited from the methodical tradition in Norwegian dialect research. I wanted my informants to have lived in Shetland from the age of 5, and have at least one parent from Shetland. When doing this, I must have believed that this was the way to go to ensure some sort of authenticity among my informants. It turned out that the selection criteria that I posed coincided with the informants' own divisions between 'Shetlanders' and 'incomers'. The informants saw Shetland as a bidialectal community, and most of the informants claimed to use both a dialect variety and a more

standarised variety in their daily lives. When some of the informants claimed neither to know nor use Shetland dialect, this was often connected to their classification of themselves as incomers, or as non-Shetlanders.

Several informants claimed that Shetland family roots were a requirement for 'being a Shetlander'. Here, the argument is put forward by two girls, both from rural Shetland. Neither of the girls have Shetland born parents, but they have lived all their lives in places where 'incomers' were in minority. They claim to 'always speak English', and this seems to be linked to their claim that they do not class themselves as 'Shetlanders' (Bugge 2007:43):

Edit: *Now do you consider yourselves as Shetlanders or as Scottish or as British or.. all of them*?
Girl 1: *I don't know... I'd probably consider myself as Scottish. I suppose I've grown up in Shetland all my life, but I'm not sure I'd class myself as a Shetlander*.
Edit: *no?*
Girl 1 : *I'm not sure...*
Edit : *Then.. Then what do you need to be a Shetlander?*
Girl 1 : I don't know..
Girl 2: *It's very hard to say, I think a lot of what you need to be a Shetlander is Shetland family.. because*--
Edit : --mhm--
Girl 2: --*Shetland family ties are very, very strong.*
Edit : *mhm*
Girl 2 : *I mean, in [place], where I live, there's 74 people, and about 60 of them are all related to each other*

The two girls' presentations of this criterion for local belonging are connected to their presentations of their own linguistic strategies, where they claim to use a neutral, non-local variety. A cultural emphasis on kinship may have consequences for the pattern in the linguistic variation, if the linguistic identity and linguistic strategies of the individual speakers are influenced by their evaluations of their own local, ethnic and national belonging, what Olaf Smedal has called an 'implisitt *Blut und Boden-argument*'. (Smedal 2001: 26−27). This principle may be underlying not only the choices of these young girls, but also the western images of family reflected in the methodical tradition of dialect research.

On the basis of the pupils' presumptions that only authentic locals speak the local dialect, and that incomers' children remain incomers, also linguistically, the pupils in my survey construct quite pessimistic predictions

about the future of Shetland dialect. In the extract below, this view is put forward by a 17 year girl at Anderson High School:

> Girl (17) *the problem is that it's getting so hard for people to stay in Shetland, I mean, as I said, the main like cores of the dialect are all in the islands. And Shetland's island population, like* [place] *for example, it.. we've lost nearly a tenth of the population in the somewhat 15 years that I've been there. And that's just draining away all the time, because the old ones are dying and the children are moving away and not coming back. I think, the incomers to Shetland are English and the ones that are leaving are the native Shetlanders and so I think maybe in a hundred years the only people left in Shetland will be the incomers and the native Shetlanders that know the dialect will have dispersed to other places. I think that's how the dialect will go out in the end.*

7. The role of family in the intergenerational transmission of Shetland dialect vocabulary.

In this essay I have approached the family as a linguistic and normative unit from different angles, by looking at qualitative and quantitative data from interviews made in Shetland in 2005. By connecting the quantitative and qualitative data we may gain an understanding of the role of *family* in the intergenerational transmission of Shetland dialect vocabulary.

The co-variation between family affiliation and survey score in the quantitative word recognition survey may be interpreted in different ways. We could assume that the language of the individual speaker is inevitably influenced by its early linguistic influence, and we may assume that for many speakers, their parents were actually the first and most important models in their linguistic life history. However this explanation would be more suited to explain linguistic variation on for example the phonological level, than it is for variation in the passive vocabulary. After all, we cannot claim that the term for the three-cornered piece in the front of the boat must be acquired before children reach a critical age of three, to really be acquired!

As a normative unit, the family equips its members with a set of cultural values. In the following interview extract, two girls from Unst explain how they are corrected when using non-dialect features at home. The correction is connected to a cultural devaluation of standardised speech:

Edit*: do you say du to your teachers as well?*
Girl (13)*: no!*
Edit *: no, not even to those who are from Shetland?*
Girl (13)*: not really no.*
Edit *: and to your parents?*
Girl (13)*: yeah I du/do to my parents.*
Girl (14)*: yeah I du/do to them.*
Girl (13)*: I do/du more to my dad then my mum cause my dad speaks more Shetland.*
Girl (14)*: dey would tell me aff if I started like speaking English cause it's something being all posh and*
Girl (13)*: I know I* [laughter]
Girl (14): [laughter]

In family interviews from my research in North-West Norway, the parents, and particularly the fathers, seem to want their adolescent children to use the appropriate degree of local dialect, apparently linking the local dialect to positive values such as reliability, honesty, integrity and, for the boys, masculinity. The fathers claim that they do not want their sons to be perceived as 'someone trying to be something they are not', and it seems to me that the children's assigned identity is partly assigned by who and what their parents are.

When some of my Shetland informants claim not to be dialect speakers, despite having spent all their childhood in places where the majority of children were dialect speakers, I believe that this may be an indication of similar cultural values as those indicated in the Norwegian family interviews. Some of the informants define themselves as 'incomers', and may express an incomer identity through the use of a standardised variety. Other informants have local parents, but perceive their parents as not really speaking dialect, and this may influence their own construction and acting of a linguistic identity. The self-constructed or assigned identity as an 'incomer' or as a non-dialect speaker may also influence the motivation in word recognition surveys, such as the one referred in this essay. It is not unlikely that the test score of an unmotivated informant will be lower than the test score of a motivated informant. In family H, several of the members make it clear that in their family they are not dialect speakers and that they are not particularly interested in the local dialect. The opposite is the case in our top scoring families E and D.

The apparent connection between the informant's survey score and their family background may be influenced by some homes nurturing a

linguistic awareness. In my Norwegian family interviews, it seems that in some families, *Language* is a topic around the kitchen table, in other families, it is not. It is possible that linguistic training at home give the members of some families the cultural capital enabling them to get better scores in language tests, such as my Shetland word recognition interviews.

The pattern may also be a result of some family cultures being more orientated towards local history. The content of the relatively large common area in the test score of the top scoring families contains terminology that enables the family members to access and speak about the past in a different way than the members of the low scoring families.

The correspondence between the survey scores of correspondents from different generations in the same family may be interpreted as an indication on particular Shetland families being carriers of a Shetland cultural heritage as well as a linguistic heritage. This cultural capital is, however, not inaccessible to individuals without the right family background. As seen in the example of Mrs. I (see 4.1), some individuals acquire an interest in local culture and dialect later in life.

8. Conclusion

In this essay I have examined the role of 'family' in the transmission of Shetland dialect vocabulary. In a data material from a socio-lexical survey of 47 Shetlanders' recognition of Shetland dialect vocabulary, we saw *age* seemed to be the most defining social variable in determining the size of the correspondents' survey score. However, the individual variation within each age group was great, and the correspondents' family background seemed to be an important factor in determining this individual variation. In a discussion of some tendencies in qualitative interviews with 30 Shetland school pupils' notions of and attitudes towards Shetland dialect, we saw that family affiliation was one of the explanatory factors used by the pupils when referring to the use of local Shetland dialect. The pupils also referred to family affiliation in the delimitation of the concept of 'being a Shetlander'.

I believe that family affiliation is only one of several factors influencing the individual linguistic knowledge. In this survey I have only examined the co-variation between family affiliation and passive vocabulary. It would, however, be of much interest to investigate if the apparent co-variation between test score and family affiliation is restricted to the lexical level, or if similar patterns may be found in phonological, morphological or syntactic interspeaker variation. In this way, we could investigate if the

linguistic variation among middle-age and elderly Shetland correspondents is mirrored in the variation of their own children and grandchildren.

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Appendix 1:

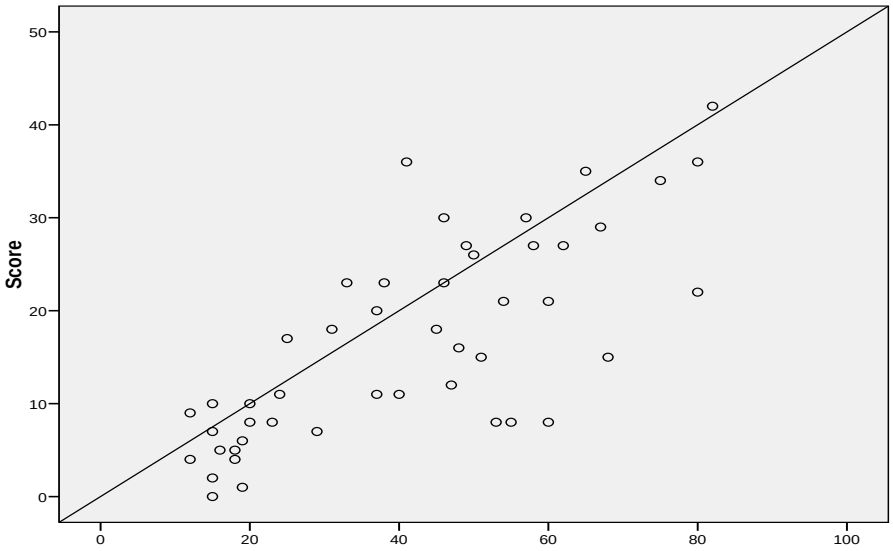

Fig: 16. Scatterplot of 47 informants, age: survey score

Correlations

			Age	Score
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,742(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	47	47
	Score	Correlation Coefficient	,742(**)	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	47	47

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). p= 2,456069347742e-009

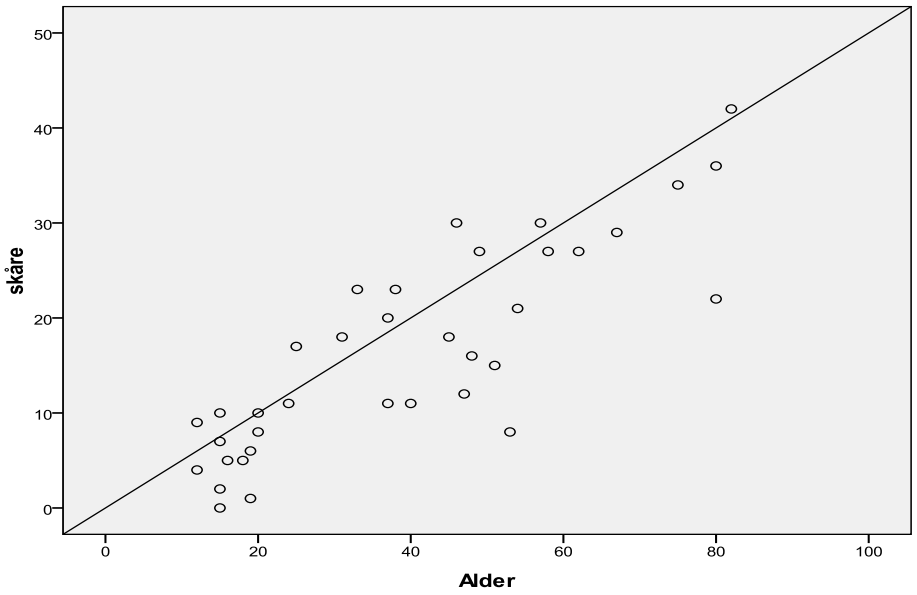

Fig. 17: Scatterplot of 36 informants, members of ten families. Age: survey score

Correlations

			skåre	Alder
Spearman's rho	skåre	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,838(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	36	36
	alder	Correlation Coefficient	,838(**)	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	36	36

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). p= 1,835319711899e-010