

Jonathan Adams and Hjalmar P. Petersen. 2009.
Faroese. A Language Course for Beginners. Textbook.
Stiðin, Tórshavn.. xiv + 400 pages. (A cd is included)

Hjalmar P. Petersen and Jonathan Adams.
Faroese. A Language Course for Beginners.
Grammar. Stiðin, Tórshavn. xiv + 303 pages

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1. Introduction

Faroese by Jonathan Adams and Hjalmar P. Petersen is a very ambitious attempt to fulfill the long-standing need for an up-to-date textbook on Faroese. As indicated above, the textbook itself is more than 400 pages and the accompanying grammar over 300.¹ In addition, a very useful cd is included and the audio files can also be accessed on the Internet (the URL is <http://www.stidin.fo/FaroeseCourse/default.htm>). Hence it is clear that this is not just a small booklet even if it is said to be „for beginners“. By comparison, Lock-

wood's *An Introduction to Modern Faroese* (first published 1955) is about 250 pages and the comprehensive handbook *Faroese – An Overview and Reference Grammar* by Höskuldur Thráinsson, Hjalmar P. Petersen, Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen and Zakaris Svabo Hansen (henceforth FORG, originally published in 2004) is a little over 500 pages. But neither of these is designed as a course book, although Lockwood's book contains a selection of Faroese texts (including conversations with a parallel text in English) and a glossary. Jeffrey Henriksen's *Kursus i færøsk* (1983) is very useful, of course, especially for those who can read and understand Danish, but it has had limited distribution and is already 30 years old. So a new textbook on Faroese is certainly to be welcomed.

Before writing a textbook it is obviously necessary to decide what kind of a user it is intended for. In the introduction of *FaroeseT* the authors say that their aim „has been to write an up-to-date introductory course on Faroese for the learner to

¹ Below I will use the abbreviation *FaroeseT* for the **textbook** part of this book and *FaroeseG* to refer to the **grammar** part.

be able to use either by him- or herself or in a classroom environment“. They add that the „course is designed for speakers of English“ but they do not specify their audience any further. Closer inspection of the book suggests that it must be intended for a rather wide variety of readers. Thus the presentation is usually formulated in very elementary, non-technical terms, but the emphasis on grammar and various kinds of grammatical overviews is much greater than would be expected in an introductory course designed for, say, a tourist who wants to prepare for a visit to the Faroe Islands. The grammatical description is thus to some extent more suitable for someone who is interested in the language for its own sake, e.g. a linguist or a student of languages. But it is a difficult task to try to satisfy such different needs and interests.

In this review I will first discuss the overall design and organization of the book. I will then describe the coverage of the book and the presentation of the material and discuss some problems that arise, at least partly, from trying to satisfy a wide audience. To conclude the review I will point out some mistakes or errors and suggest some changes that could be made when (or if) a new edition is published.

2. The design and organization of the book

The layout of the book, especially *FaroeseT*, is very pleasant. There is an introduction at the beginning of *FaroeseT* with useful information about the Faroese language and instructions as to how to

use the book. The first page of this introduction (information about the authors, acknowledgements) could actually have been put into a separate preface, but that is a minor issue.

FaroeseT is divided into 15 chapters and each chapter begins with an overview of the material to be covered. The whole book is organized around a trip to the Faroes where the main character is Claire, „a Scottish student visiting family in the Faroe Islands“. She has a Faroese mother so she speaks Faroese, but she is not very familiar with everyday life in the Faroes. This makes it possible to introduce various aspects of the Faroese language and culture through her inquiries, experiences and conversations with local people in a rather ingenious fashion. She meets Jógvan (who else!) on the bus on her way from the airport, he eventually becomes her boyfriend and ends up proposing to her at the airport when she is leaving after her summer visit. At the end of the book the reader is told that Claire and Jógvan got married the following summer and „lived happily ever after“.

In addition to dialogs featuring Claire (and Jógvan and others), the chapters in *FaroeseT* typically contain short texts of various kinds, vocabulary items, grammatical information (together with references to sections in *FaroeseG*), selected proverbs, factual information (in English) on Faroese life, geography, culture and history. There is also a number of exercises in each chapter and references to tracks on the accompanying cd. The first dialogs and texts are translated as a whole into English but later on the student is ex-

pected to be able to make sense of them with the help of the vocabulary items provided and the extensive and very useful glossary at the end of *FaroeseT*. The readers featured on the cd are excellent and the overall quality of the cd (and the audio files on the Internet) is fine.

The dialogs and other texts in the book are used quite cleverly to provide various kinds of information about the Faroese language, culture and society. The language of the texts is varied, although the main emphasis is on colloquial everyday language.² A number of pictures and illustrations break up the text, many of them informative or characteristic for the Faroes. The illustrations are probably the main reason why the publisher decided to use heavy high quality paper for the book. With this in mind it is a bit surprising that in some of the exercises the user is expected to provide written answers by writing in the textbook itself. A separate booklet in a cheaper format might have been a better idea for this, especially if the textbook is being used in a classroom situation. But all in all the design and organization of

FaroeseT is well thought out and interesting.

The most striking property of *FaroeseG* is its size. One cannot help but wonder if it is really necessary, or even sensible, to have a 300 page grammar book as a part of an **introductory course for beginners** (in addition to the 40–50 pages in *FaroeseT* that are devoted to presenting purely grammatical information). *FaroeseG* begins with a short introduction which is entitled „The grammar of Faroes: An overview”, although it is in fact mostly a „description of the language situation” (p. xiii), with emphasis on the relationship between Faroese and Danish. This introduction is then followed by 16 main chapters. The first one is on gender, then there are separate chapters on the word classes (parts of speech, i.e. articles, nouns, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions), chapters on syntax, derivation and pronunciation and even on punctuation and orthography. There is also a glossary of grammatical terms at the end of the book and suggestions for further reading.

As stated in the introduction to *FaroeseG* (p. xiv), it „not only concentrates on grammatical forms but also on language use“. This is undoubtedly necessary in some of the chapters, especially the one on syntax, but in some instances it seems that information given in *FaroeseT* is being duplicated by the explanatory examples in *FaroeseG* or that the explanations in *FaroeseG* should have been given in *FaroeseT*. While it is clearly difficult to find the appropriate balance here, it could be argued that *FaroeseT* and *FaroeseG* could

² The reader is sometimes told not to use particular expressions when speaking since they are too formal or belong to an official, written style. There is even a special symbol used to mark such words or expressions (cf. p. xi in *FaroeseT*). While this is undoubtedly useful, it would also seem to make sense to point out that some of the expressions used in the book are too colloquial or informal to be used in „an official, written style”, considering the fact that the reader is introduced to some rather formal situations in the textbook, e.g. the tax office, job applications, etc. This is not done, however.

have been (or should be) integrated more closely.

3. Coverage and the presentation of the material

3.1 *The coverage*

As already mentioned, it is stated in the introduction to *FaroeseT* that the book is intended as an „an introductory course in Faroese“. Now it seems clear that a 400 page textbook plus a 300 page grammar must be a bit more than an „introduction” — and it is. Thus some of the material in *FaroeseT* is not really introductory instruction material about the Faroese language but it also contains considerable information that would probably be called *Landeskunde* in German, i.e. information about the Faroe Islands, the Faroese society and culture. This includes the passages in English mentioned above, entitled *Veitst tú at ...?* (‘Do you know that ...?’), where the reader is e.g. given information about how to get to the Faroe Islands and travel around there (p. 21), the location and climate of the islands (p. 46), settlers and inhabitants of the islands (p. 74), Faroese food (p. 101), types of Faroese place names (p. 126), the Faroese postal system (p. 146), the Faroese chain dance (p. 182), the Faroese clothing industry (p. 204), etc. This makes the book an introduction to Faroese life and culture and not only an introduction to the language. Some users might like that.

One could argue, however, that both the textbook and the grammar contain too many and/or too long lists of factual information of various kinds. Here are a few examples: a list of over 40 sets of words for

countries and nationalities (pp. 11–12 in *FaroeseT*), some of which look and sound quite international and not particularly Faroese (there are also additional lists of this kind on pp. 47–48 in *FaroeseG*); lists of words having something to do with food (pp. 86–90 in *FaroeseT*); Faroese place names, together with prepositions used with them in the senses ‘in, from, to’ (pp. 115–116 in *FaroeseT* and on p. 52 in *FaroeseG*); a list of some 37 words about different kinds of fog (!, p. 163 in *FaroeseT*); a list of words not used in plural (*singularia tantum*, pp. 59–68 in *FaroeseG* — not really necessary since this property follows from the meaning of these words and corresponding words would typically behave in the same way in the neighboring languages, e.g. English); lists of compound verbs and particle verbs of different kinds (pp. 175–181 in *FaroeseG*), etc. While some of these lists are useful and informative, they are not really crucial information for an introductory textbook — or at least much too long for that kind of purpose.

3.2 *The presentation*

First, I should like to note that I think it was a mistake to „design” the book mainly for speakers of English, as the authors say was their intention (p. v in *FaroeseT*). This is not a major problem but the text sometimes explains phenomena with particular reference to English or in English terms. This is not really necessary for speakers of English who use the book and it is probably a bit annoying for other readers, e.g. from Scandinavia or Germany, and it could limit the popularity of the book.

The exhaustiveness of some of the lists mentioned above, especially those of a more linguistic nature (e.g. the list of compound verbs and particle verbs), together with the rather large grammar part, suggests that the authors wanted to write a book that would not only serve as an introduction for a typical tourist or somebody interested in the Faroe Islands in general but could also satisfy the needs and interests of a more serious student of languages (a language nerd) or a linguist. But it is very difficult to satisfy such a large and varied readership and I will describe some of the problems caused by this.

First, the presentation is sometimes overly simplistic, hence misleading and this is bound to annoy the more ambitious or knowledgeable readers. This is true, for instance, of the presentation of the Faroese speech sounds. Although there is a short section on „pronunciation” in *FaroeseG* (chapter 14), it is hardly ever referred to in *FaroeseT*. Instead the various chapters of *FaroeseT* mention the „pronunciation of one or more letters” (cf. p. ix of *FaroeseT*). But „letters” are not „pronounced”. Letters are writing symbols that represent the sounds of the language in some fashion and there is rarely a one-to-one correspondance between a letter and a sound. Although it is very important to explain this correspondance in a book that takes the written language as a point of departure, it is never done in any systematic or illuminating fashion. Thus there is, for instance, a short passage at the bottom of p. 18 of *FaroeseT* entitled „**Vowel length: a and æ**”. There is a reference to a particular track on the cd and the reader is told to

„Listen carefully to the recording and repeat the words below paying particular attention to the pronunciation of the letters **a** and **æ**”. Although the title of the section mentions „vowel length”, the reader is not told where or how vowel length comes into play in the examples that follow nor that there is any kind of regularity in the alternation between long and short vowels in the examples given. The reader is not even told that the letters ‘a’ and ‘æ’ are just different ways of representing the same Faroese vowel(s). The examples given are not arranged in any very obvious logical order, e.g. not as minimal pairs with alternating long and short variants (as, say, in *spakur* – *spakt* ‘calm’, *vænur* – *vænt* ‘beautiful’). Some of the examples do in fact illustrate long vs. short variants (e.g. *maður* ‘man’ vs. *mamma* ‘mum, mother’, *æra* ‘honor’ vs. *ætla* ‘think, intend’) whereas others involve a different kind of variation, such as the pronunciation of the vowel in question before *-ng-* (cf. *langur* ‘long’ vs. *sangur* ‘song’)³ and special variants in words like *baða* ‘bathe’ and *ræðast* ‘be afraid’. None of this is explained to the user, neither in *FaroeseT* nor on the cd (and the person reading the examples is obviously a bit confused by this since she refers to **a** as [a:] and to **æ** as [ɛa:]). A teacher in a classroom situation could obviously explain what is going on but a reader using the book „by him- or herself”, as the authors want to be possible (cf. p. v of the textbook) will have no idea as to what is going on here.

3 The gloss mentions that this is a loanword from Danish, but the reader is not told why that is relevant information in this connection.

In general, exercises involving particular sounds are presented without any kind of explanation or instruction. The reader is just told to „listen carefully” and „repeat”, paying special attention to the pronunciation of a given „letter“. In *FaroeseG*, on the other hand, technical terms like *phoneme* are sometimes used (e.g. on p. 282).

The simplistic (and hence misleading) presentation just mentioned is probably the result of an attempt to avoid as much as possible the use of any kind of linguistic concepts or apparatus. Thus *FaroeseT* never uses any kind of phonetic or phonemic transcription and tries to get away with just using letters instead.⁴ This sometimes leads to even more confusion than just illustrated, as when the reader is told (p. 3 of *FaroeseT*) that „Very rarely the letter ø is written ö“. That obviously does not make any sense — you cannot write one letter with another letter. What is meant is that the speech sound (or phoneme) /ø/ is almost always represented by the letter ‘ø’ in Faroese orthography and only very rarely by the letter ‘ö’ (on p. 285 in *FaroeseG* it is said that the letter ‘ø’ is now used „everywhere”). — A somewhat similar problem can be found in *FaroeseG* where it is said that „An accent over a letter means that **it** [my boldface] is a diphthong in Faroese” (p. 285). This is misleading in two ways. First, a „letter” cannot be a diphthong — diphthongs are types of speech sounds, not types of letters. Second, while it is true that all the vowels represented by accented

letters in Faroese are diphthongs when they are long, only some of them are when they are short (as actually illustrated on the page in *FaroeseG* just referred to).

Despite this general (and to some extent understandable) avoidance of using technical terms, such terms sometimes pop up, especially in *FaroeseG*. Thus the introduction of *FaroeseG* is partly presented in more technical terms than used most of the time in *FaroeseT*. As already mentioned, it uses phonetic transcription, which is not used in *FaroeseT* and only introduced in chapter 14 of *FaroeseG*. As a concrete example of a technical term used without much explanation in *FaroeseG* one could mention the word *anaphora* (p. 111).⁵ Other instances of somewhat technical language used in *FaroeseG* include the reference to *diamorphs* (p. xii), *analytic* vs. *synthetic* languages (p. xiii), and various references to „movement” of syntactic constituents, a concept presumably quite foreign to readers who are not familiar with generative grammar.

While most of *FaroeseG* presents material that is discussed to some extent in *FaroeseT*, it also gives an overview of things that are not really discussed or covered in

4 Phonetic transcription is used, however, in *FaroeseG*, even in the overview given at the beginning (p. xi), before the symbols have been introduced.

5 In fact, this word should probably not have been used here since the linguistic term *anaphora* in English refers to the ‘**process or result** [my boldface] of a linguistic unit referring back to some previously expressed unit or meaning’ (Crystal 1985:17) but what is meant in the text is probably the term *anaphor* with the technical reading it has in generative grammar, i.e. ‘a **type of noun phrase** [my boldface] which has no independent reference, but refers to some other sentence constituent’ (ibid.).

the textbook part. This is true, for instance, of sections 3.6 and 3.7, large parts of chapter 5, sections 8.4 and 8.5, large parts of chapter 9 and most of chapters 11, 14 and 16. While some of this is probably not covered anywhere else (not in FORG, for instance), it is not clear that it belongs in a grammar that is a part of an introductory course book.

In some respects *FaroeseG* is thus more extensive and detailed than it need be, or should be, as a part of an introductory textbook. In other respects, however, it is quite elementary. This can, for instance, be seen by comparing the glossary of grammatical terms and the suggested references. Most of the terms explained in the glossary are very non-technical and common (adverb, article, noun, plural ...) whereas many of the suggested readings are quite technical and only suitable for trained linguists. The reader is also referred to a more extensive list of readings in FORG. Otherwise it seems that there are no references to FORG in *FaroeseG*, although much of the grammatical material presented is covered in systematic fashion in that book. This is somewhat strange, especially since one of the authors of *FaroeseG* is also a co-author of FORG (Petersen). Rather than going into details about things extensively discussed in FORG, *FaroeseG* could have been simplified and shortened and the readers particularly interested in the grammatical system of the language referred to FORG instead.

FaroeseG relies heavily on traditional paradigms when presenting facts about Faroese inflection. The reason for this is the fact that paradigms are a useful way

of giving an overview of inflections. But paradigms and the division of words into inflectional classes can sometimes obscure general rules or patterns. Hence they should probably not be used too extensively in textbooks. The authors of *Faroese* are obviously aware of this and it is reflected in the somewhat limited way they use paradigms in *FaroeseT*. Thus they illustrate the (present tense) inflection of verbs for the most part class by class in *FaroeseT* (referring to the classes as „groups” and actually duplicating information given in *FaroeseG* by giving virtually the same tables with paradigms) but present the inflection of nouns in more general terms across the inflectional classes (e.g. gender in chapter 1, plural in chapter 2, the accusative in chapter 3, dative and genitive in chapter 5). This is probably a good idea.

But the reasons for division of the words into inflectional classes is not always made very clear. On p. 28 in *FaroeseT* the reader is told the plural of nouns will be indicated in the vocabulary explanations and the stem will be separated from the nominative singular ending, where appropriate, by a slash, as in *dag/ur* ‘day’, *tím/i* ‘time’, *gent/a* ‘girl’, *eyg/a* ‘eye’. Since the slash is otherwise used to indicate a choice or alternation and a hyphen is used to indicate inflectional endings (cf. the representation *-ar/-ir* to indicate two possible plurals for the word for *blaðgrein* ‘newspaper article’ on the page just referred to) this is a bit confusing and it is not clear why the separation of the nominative ending from the stem is not shown by a hyphen too (i.e. as *dag-ur*, *tím-i*, *gent-a*, *eyg-a* etc.). The examples used to illus-

trate this further include *kon/a* (-u, -ur) f. ‘woman’, *sól* (-ar, -ir) f. ‘sun’ and the reader is only told that the ending „just before the abbreviation for the gender”, namely before the *f.* in these examples, is the plural ending. It is not really explained why the other inflectional ending is there, just pointed out in a fn. that this is the genitive ending which will be „dealt with later in this course“. This is finally done on p. 119 in chapter 5 of *FaroeseT*, where this is explained in a very clear diagram.

As is well known, the Faroese genitive has long been a „problem child” (see e.g. Weyhe 1996) and one of the problems with it in this book is the fact that on the one hand it seems to play its traditional role in giving the reader clues to the inflection of the nouns (witness the inflectional endings given in the glossary, as explained above), but on the other its role in the inflection of nouns is downplayed, both in *FaroeseT* and *FaroeseG*. In the glossary at the end of *FaroeseT*, the inflectional information on the word *rættur* ‘dish’ is given as *rætt/ur* (-ar, -ir) m. in the glossary but for *leykur* ‘onion’ as *leyk/ur* (-s, -ir) m., suggesting that they belong to different inflectional classes. According to *FaroeseG*, however, they would both fall into inflectional class 3 of masculine nouns, whose main characteristic is plural in -ir (and additional characteristics are said to be nominative in -ur and dative in -i, although the dative ending is the same for all strong masculine nouns and thus not a special property of this class or any other class). Note also that the division of nouns into strong and weak, discussed on p. 29 in *FaroeseG*, cannot really be made with-

out reference to the genitive. Thus when the reader is told that strong nouns „usually end in a consonant” although „some strong nouns end in a vowel” (in the nominative singular, that is), it is not clear why some words that end in a vowel are called strong and others weak.

In an introductory textbook like *Faroese* it would probably have been a good idea to simplify the account of the nominal inflection, omit all references to „strong” and „weak” (which are very confusing terms anyway) and follow Lockwood’s example in basing the classification simply on the division into masculine, feminine and neuter nouns on the one hand and then the endings of the nominative singular and plural on the other. This would then also be reflected in the glossary by just giving the nominative ending in the singular and plural, together with the gender of the nouns, e.g. as follows: *fugl-ur* (-ar) m. ‘bird’, *akur* (-ar) m. ‘field’, *lykil* (-ar) m. ‘key’, *rætt-ur* (-ir) m. ‘dish’, *sól* (-ir) f. ‘sun’, *gent-a* (-ur) f. ‘girl’, *borð* n. ‘table’, *eyg-a* (-u(r)) n. ‘eye’, etc. The basic inflectional rules would be given in the textbook, the basic paradigms in the grammar part and readers who wanted to know more about the inflection of nouns could then be referred to FORG for more details. This would make the book more suitable as an introductory textbook.

It should also be pointed out in this connection that giving long lists of words that inflect like *akur*, *lykil* and *jökul* ‘glacier’ (cf. pp. 32–34 in *FaroeseG*) is not only unnecessary but in fact misleading. It suggests that there is something irregular about their inflection and hence they

need to be listed, but the fact is that their inflection follows a very general and regular pattern: the unstressed vowel of the stem ending in *-r*, *-l* or *-n* ('radical' *-r*, *-l*, *-n* as they are called in *FaroeseG*, p. 30, an example of a somewhat technical if traditional term) is deleted before an inflectional ending beginning with a vowel, e.g. the dative singular *-i* or the plural endings. Words of this kind are in fact listed in *FaroeseT* (277ff.) and there it is maintained that their inflection is „irregular, that is they are not declined as we might expect“. Instead, the regularities in the inflection of these words should have been pointed out.

Finally, as mentioned above, *FaroeseG* contains lists of various kinds, sometimes quite long and detailed. They would often be suitable as supplementary material in a course but they often seem rather out of place in a grammar which is a part of an introductory course book.

4. Some errors and inconsistencies

Every review has to point out some errors and inconsistencies, if possible, so I will mention a few. The main purpose of this is to prevent the recurrence of these mistakes in case the book is republished. I will give a list of typographical errors (which are actually very few, it seems) and only mention things that could easily be corrected or improved.

4.1 Pronunciation and phonetics:

On p. 3 in *FaroeseT* the Faroese alphabet is introduced and the names of the letters are given on the cd (track 4). Here the speaker clearly pronounces the name of the letter ó as [eu:] (or [ou:]). On pp. xii and 276

in *FaroeseG*, on the other hand, the same speech sound is transcribed as [eu:] and on p. 285 as [ĩu:]. This should be made more consistent.

On p. xi in *FaroeseG*, unaspirated voiceless stops like /b,d,g/ are sometimes transcribed with a circle under the transcription symbol to indicate voicelessness but sometimes not. This circle is often omitted in the book, e.g. when transcribing examples like *allir*, *barn*, *oynni*, *seinni* on p. 280. But in the table at the bottom of p. 280 and in the examples at the top of 281 the circle is used and so is the symbol [h] to indicate aspiration. Similarly, in a table on 282 the symbols for /b,d,g/ all have the circle on them and the symbols for /p,t,k/ the aspiration sign [h], i.e. [ph, th, kh ...]. The aspiration sign is not used on p. xi, on the other hand.

In the table on p. 282 in *FaroeseG*, the symbols used for palatal affricates are not the same as used elsewhere in the book, e.g. on p. 281.

It is a bit odd to say that „**long** [my boldface] vowels are shortened in front of two or more consonants“ (p. 275 in *FaroeseG*, a similar statement can be found further down on the same page). A common way of stating the vowel length rule is to say that stressed vowels in Faroese are short before two or more consonants but long elsewhere.

The basic difference between Faroese /p,t,k/ vs. /b,d,g/ is stated at the top of p. 281 in *FaroeseG*. For some reason the phonetic transcription is given between slashes and not square brackets as elsewhere in the book. The examples given to illustrate this are the words *tala* 'talk' and *dala* 'fall'.

Then it is said that „some phoneticians transcribe these words” differently, namely with initial [th] (it actually says [th], which must be a typo) vs. [t]. This is not very accurate since the difference mentioned here does not have anything to do with „these words” in particular. Rather, it is a question of how to represent voiceless unaspirated stops in general.

4.2 Words and inflections:

On p. 5 in *FaroeseT* it says that the Faroese definite article „takes the form of a suffix” and no other alternative is mentioned. In section 2.1.3 in *FaroeseG* (p. 17), on the other hand, it is pointed out that there is also a „free-standing definite article” in Faroese, namely *tann* and *hin*.

An example of a mistaken (and even misleading) English-orientation of the presentation can be found on p. 7 in *FaroeseT*, where it is said that „There are three forms for ‘it’ in Faroese: masculine, feminine and neuter”. What is being referred to is the fact that Faroese has grammatical gender and the pronouns *hann* ‘he’, *hon* ‘she’ and *tað* ‘it’ can all be used to refer to inanimate things and the choice depends on the grammatical gender of the words in question. This is different from English, where *it* is as a rule used to refer to inanimate things (although ships and cars are sometimes referred to by the pronoun *she*), but the emphasis on non-technical English-oriented presentation is somewhat confusing here.

On p. 10 in *FaroeseT* the phrases *í dag* and *í Havn* are called „adverbs”. That is not very accurate. They are prepositional phrases, although their role in the sen-

tence is similar to that of adverbs like *nú* ‘now’ and *har* ‘there’.

On p. 121 in *FaroeseT* it is said that constructions like *ein vinur Pæturs*, where *Pæturs* is the infamous genitive, should be used „to translate phrases such as ‘a friend of Pætur’s’”. This is one more instance of the unfortunate English-orientation of the presentation, which makes this statement sound as if the Faroese expression in question is somehow restricted to translations.

On p. 214 in *FaroeseT* it says that the „most usual form of the relative pronoun in spoken Faroese is the indeclinable particle *sum*”. This is a rather unfortunate way of putting it since an indeclinable particle cannot really be a „form of a pronoun”. What is meant is that relative pronouns are not really a part of the grammar of modern Faroese. Instead the relative „particles” (or conjunctions or complementizers) *sum* and *ið* are used to introduce relative clauses and *sum* is the one typically used in the spoken language. Hence it is also misleading to say that the relative **pronoun** can be dropped in examples like *Hann hevur ein son, (sum) hann ikki hevur sæð leingi* ‘He has a son (that) he has not seen for a long time’. It is the relative particle (conjunction) that can be left out. — The situation is explained much better in *FaroeseG* (p. 121, although the example *Hetta er konan, eg elski* ‘This is the woman I love’ is given there as an example of a sentence with a relative particle). Unfortunately, however, the sentence *Marjun er ein persónur, sum tú ikki kanst líta á* is given in the glossary of grammatical terms (*FaroeseG*, p. 292) as an illustration of what a relative **pronoun** is and it is

translated as ‘Marjun is a person **who** you cannot trust’.

The remains of the subjunctive mood in Faroese are explained adequately on p. 320 in *FaroeseT*, but *subjunctive* is missing from the glossary of grammatical terms in *FaroeseG*.

The list of „double gender nouns” on pp. 11–13 in *FaroeseG* contains two types that should be explicitly distinguished. One type is represented by homonyms like *armóð n./f.* ‘poverty’, *blídni m./f.* ‘kindness’, *bræði f./n.* ‘haste’ *heidni n./f.* ‘paganism’, *nakni n./f.* ‘nakedness’, etc. The other involves nouns that have different endings that determine their gender and inflection (or the other way around?), e.g. *blanding f.* vs. *blandingur m.* ‘mixture’, *fyrring f.* vs. *fyrringur m.* ‘shyness’, *kalkun f.* vs. *kalkunur m.* ‘turkey’, *lomvigi m.* vs. *lomviga f.* ‘guillemot’.⁶

It is slightly inaccurate to say (p. 19 in *FaroeseG*) that the reason why (double) definiteness is used in expressions like *tað føroyska málið* ‘the Faroese language’ is the fact that the „noun is one of a kind”. The noun *málið* is, of course, not one of a kind, but what the noun phrase as a whole refers to is.

Although the genitive of nouns is used much less frequently in the spoken language than in the written one, it is hardly accurate to say that it is „never used in the spoken language”. The dialogs and texts in *FaroeseT*, which are supposed to reflect

normal spoken Faroese, contain a number of genitives of nouns, especially after the preposition *til*, e.g. *til Føroya*, *til Danmarkar*, *til dømis* ‘for example’, etc.

Similarly, although it is clearly true that there is a tendency not to inflect some personal names, it must be misleading to say that the „main rule is that personal names are not inflected in Faroese” (*FaroeseG*, p. 46) and that it is just a „prescriptive rule” that names like Ólavur should be inflected like masculine common nouns ending in *-ur* (*FaroeseG*, p. 47). A quick search on the Internet gives 6320 examples of *hjá Ólavi* and only 98 for *hjá Ólavur* and one cannot seriously maintain that language use on the Internet is heavily influenced by prescriptive rules. In addition, the names used in the dialogs in *FaroeseT* are typically inflected, e.g. *Jógvan*. So if the authors really believe that the main rule is that names like *Jógvan* are not inflected, then that should be reflected in the texts in *FaroeseT*, especially the dialogs. Otherwise the statement about inflection of proper names in *FaroeseG* should be changed.

On p. 114 in *FaroeseG* the example *Konan málar sín bil* is translated as ‘The woman paints her own car’. This is not entirely accurate, since *her own* in English would imply some sort of emphasis or contrast, whereas the use of *sín* in Faroese does not. It would have been more accurate to use the method employed on p. 116 of the same book, where *Hann elskar sína konu* is translated as ‘He loves his (= his own) wife’. (Unfortunately, however, there are some translation mistakes on that page, namely where *min bil* is translated

⁶ The chapter on gender in *FaroeseG* is quite extensive and informative, which is not surprising given the fact that it deals with the topic of one of the author’s dissertation (Petersen’s).

as ‘your car’ (instead of ‘my car’) and *mítt barn* as ‘your child’ instead of ‘my child’.)

Although some of the tables illustrating the inflection of verbs in *FaroeseG* are also shown in *FaroeseT*, there are some inconsistencies. Some of them are just curious and of no real importance, e.g. the fact that the order of the verbs in the table on p. 69 in *FaroeseT* is not the same as the order of the verbs in the corresponding „figure 69” on p. 141 in *FaroeseG*, or that the verb *venja* is translated as ‘train’ in *FaroeseT* and as ‘practise’ in *FaroeseG*, and that *FaroeseT* refers to „groups” of verbs and *FaroeseG* to „classes”. It is a bit more confusing that what is called *group 3* on p. 78 in *FaroeseT* is called *class 1* in figure 71 on p. 143 in *FaroeseG* (this must be a typo) and a different set of verbs is used to illustrate the inflection.

The fact that the voiced dental fricative [ð] does not exist in modern Faroese makes it a bit difficult to give an overview of the regular past tense inflection of verbs. This problem is not really adequately solved in *FaroeseG*. Thus it says on p. 136 that the past tense ending of verbs belonging to the first class is *-aði* in the singular (it actually mistakenly gives *-aði* instead of *-aðu* as the past tense plural ending in the table at the bottom of p. 136 but correctly as *-aðu* on the following page). Then it is pointed out that the letter *-ð-* in *-aði* actually stands for the sound [j] and the *-ð-* in the ending *-aðu* represents the sound [v]. So the representation of the past tense endings here uses the orthographic form together with a phonetic explanation. That is fine, of course, but in the table at the bottom of p. 136 it is said that the past

tense endings of verbs of the first class are just *-i* in the singular and *-u* in the plural. On p. 137 it turns out, however, that they are spelled *-ði* and *-ðu*, respectively, as in *ró-ði* and *ró-ðu* ‘rowed’ (sg. and pl.). This is also how they are represented in the table on p. 144 (figure 74), i.e. according to that table the past tense endings are *-ði* and *-ðu* for the verbs in question and not just *-i* and *-u* as stated on p. 137. At the bottom of p. 144 we then find the following comment: „Note that the past tense in these verbs has the morpheme [i], as ð is never pronounced between vowels.” This is a rather confusing comment. First, this [i] only shows up in the past tense **singular** (at least in the dialect that this description is based on). Second, it has standardly been assumed that there is a [w] before the final vowel in past tense forms like *róði* and *róðu* (see e.g. the description on p. 38ff. in FORG and references cited in that connection). So the presentation has to be made clearer and more consistent here.

FaroeseG contains a list of „separable compounds” on pp. 176–178. This is actually a rather strange name for the list since mainly contains verbs followed by a particle.⁷ The list then illustrates that it is usu-

7 The authors actually maintain that these are verbs followed by adverbs and not verbs + particles. But the standard name in the linguistic literature for (at least most of) the words in question is actually *particles*, e.g. *blaka e-n út* ‘throw somebody out’. They can be distinguished from prepositions by the fact that they have to follow unstressed pronominal objects whereas prepositions precede their objects. Thus we have a minimal pair like *Eg rokni tað við* ‘I include it’ and *Eg rokni við tí* ‘I expect it’.

ally not possible to form compound verbs by prefixing the particle to the verb, i.e. there can be no compound verb *útblaka corresponding to *blaka út* ‘throw out’ and no compound verb *viðrokna corresponding to *rokna við* ‘include’. Since the compounds do not exist (or cannot be created), it is odd to refer to them as „separable compounds“.

The list of „problem verbs” (pp. 182–187 in *FaroeseG*) is somewhat strange as a part of a grammar since it basically contains verbs that have two or more meanings or are used somewhat differently from their English counterparts. This kind of information can usually be found in dictionaries, but it is also something that a teacher might add as supplementary information in a course.

The statement on p. 256 of *FaroeseG* that „Faroese does not have any *-ing* form as English” is one more example of a strangely English-oriented presentation. It would obviously be rather odd if Faroese literally had an „*-ing* form“. What is meant is the fact that Faroese does not have a productive way of expressing a progressive or durative aspect the way an *-ing* form typically does in English.

On p. 288 in *FaroeseG* it says that Faroese has three productive cases and one historical case, namely the genitive. The term „historical case” is not explained here and it can be somewhat misleading in light of the statement in *FaroeseT* (p. 118) that the genitive is used „actively” in pronouns.

The glossary of grammatical terms in *FaroeseG* gives the following description of what a *definite article* is: „The definite article is English ‘the’. A noun may be

definite or indefinite. Definiteness is expressed with the definite article **tann** ‘the’ + the weak declension of the adjective + a noun + a definite ending in Faroese: **tann stóra konan** Lit. the big-*the* woman-the ‘the big woman’“. This is not a very clear presentation. Most importantly, it (wrongly) implies that it is necessary to have both a free-standing article and a suffixed one in Faroese. Second, it equates the (weak) inflectional ending of the adjective with the suffixed article on the noun. This is confusing since the suffixed article is not really comparable to an inflectional ending since it arguably has its own inflection.

The term *direct object* is wrongly translated into Faroese as *hvørljumfalsávirki* (p. 288 in *FaroeseG*), i.e. as ‘dative object’, but the example of a direct object given in the glossary is actually an accusative object, which can be said to be the default type of a direct object in Faroese.

On p. 289 in *FaroeseG* it is said that the indicative expresses „positive beliefs“. It is not explained further what that means.

The term *passive* is explained as follows (p. 191 in *FaroeseG*): „The passive voice is used when the subject of the verb is the patient, target or the undergoer of the action“. This is simply not true. It is true that the subject of the passive is never an agent, but the subject of the verb in the active voice can very well be the „undergoer” of an action (cf. *John died*) or the „target” (or „goal”, cf. *John got a present*). Thus while it is true that „The active voice is used then the subject of the verb is the agent/actor ...” (p. 287), the active is not only used in such instances, as just illustrated. So these explanations of the terms

active and *passive* have to be changed, as well as the statement (top of p. 294) which says: „If the subject is the patient, target or undergoer of the action, it is said to be in the passive voice“.

5. Conclusion

As is common for reviews, this one has dwelt more on the negative points of the book under review than on the positive ones. Hence it is both necessary and fair to restate the positive ones here.

First, it is clear that *Faroese* is an ambitious work. The basic organization of *FaroeseT* is ingenious and it works well. It makes it possible to present a lot of information on the Faroese language, culture, society and geography in a coherent and interesting fashion. The exercises are well thought out and useful and the cd (and the audio files on the Internet) is excellent.

The main complaint is that *FaroeseT* and *FaroeseG* are not well enough integrated and as a whole the book (the two volumes) is too big and too complex as an introductory course. As a result the book is **prohibitively expensive**. A common price in Faroese bookstores today seems to be 1000 Faroese krónur, which is something like £115, €135 or \$170. That is much too high for an introductory textbook. When (or if) the book is republished, I suggest that it be shortened considerably. There are various ways of doing this:

Some of the exercises could be removed from the textbook and put in a less expensive booklet. This applies in particular to the ones where the user is supposed to write something in the book itself or fill

in blanks. It seems that exercises of this kind make up over 25 pages of *FaroeseT*.

Both *FaroeseT* and *FaroeseG* contain long and exhaustive lists of various kinds that could be shortened or even omitted, as pointed out above. They are not really necessary in an introductory textbook. Some of them are by nature more like supplementary material that a teacher might want to add if using the book in a course, others can be found in dictionaries or handbooks.

FaroeseG could be shortened, made more concise and designed more like a supplement to *FaroeseT*. This could partly be done by removing some of the grammatical or linguistic details that are already covered in existing books on Faroese, such as dictionaries and FORG, and refer the linguistically oriented readers to these books.

Something like this should not only lower the price of the book but also in fact make it more user-friendly as the introductory textbook the authors say it was meant to be.

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