

# 7 Faroese

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## 7.1 Introduction

Faroese is derived from the language of Norse (probably mainly Norwegian) settlers who established themselves in the islands in the ninth century. Owing to the virtual absence of Viking Age and medieval sources, little is known about the development of this language in pre-Reformation times. After the Reformation and until 1948 Danish was the official medium, and nothing of substance was written in Faroese before the 1770s, by which time most of the features associated with the modern language must have developed. Lack of official status in the post-Reformation period has had a number of consequences for Faroese. Speech is for the most part dialectally based and is heavily influenced by Danish, especially at the lexical level. The written language, in contrast, is relatively homogeneous and very puristic. Its orthography, established in the middle of the nineteenth century, owes much to Old Norse and something to Icelandic, and these languages have also had a certain influence on the morphology, syntax and lexicon of written Faroese. As in Icelandic, the lexicon is replete with neologisms, but many of these are used only in writing, the spoken language preferring Danish-derived equivalents. Although virtually every Faroese village has its own characteristic form of speech, mutual comprehension is no problem, and the capital, Tórshavn, where a sizeable proportion of the population now lives, has become something of a linguistic melting pot. It is not impossible that with time a spoken standard will develop based on Tórshavn speech. For the present chapter, the wide degree of variation in Faroese has necessitated the adoption of a somewhat abstract approach: by and large the description is based on those forms and features which are perceived to have the widest currency.

## 7.2 Phonology

Faroese has the same syllabic structure as most other forms of Scandinavian except Danish. In lexical pronunciation stressed syllables are long (V:, V:C, VC: or VCC – note, however, the clusters /pl, pr, tr, kl, kr/, where the preceding vowel is long) and unstressed are short. In the majority of its

features Faroese phonology is firmly West Scandinavian. Especially striking are developments in the vowel system. Following the quantity shift whereby all stressed syllables became long – which in Faroese mostly involved the lengthening of short vowels – nearly all the original long vowels and ultimately one of the lengthened short vowels were diphthongized. This parallels similar if on the whole less radical developments in Icelandic and west and central Norwegian dialects. The West Scandinavian character of Faroese phonology otherwise will be apparent from details in the following description.

### Vowels

The vowel system of Faroese, based on the most common distinctions, is given in Table 7.1. Different analyses are possible. Attempts have been made to present length as allophonic, but the corollary seems to be that length in consonants must then be regarded as phonemic, so little is gained in the way of economy. Some have considered the eight diphthongs as manifestations of long vowel phonemes, which certainly simplifies the system, but entails a fair degree of abstraction. For present purposes, Table 7.1 on its own is already too abstract since it disguises the considerable difference in quality which exists between long and short monophthongs. This is remedied in Table 7.2, which presents the vowel system in a broadish phonetic transcription. To aid comprehension of the remainder of this section, the principal Old Norse sources of the tonic and post-tonic vowels are also indicated (the pre-tonic vowel qualities given here exist mainly in words of foreign origin).

There are a number of points to be noted about the Faroese vowel system. The long monophthongs [i:, u:, e:, ø:, o:] are in free variation with a slightly diphthongal pronunciation, roughly [i:j, u:w, e:e, ø:œ, o:o]. In words of foreign origin [a:] and [ɣ:] may be found, e.g. *statur* 'state', *myta* 'myth', and these are regarded by some as allophones of /ea/ and /yu/ respectively. When followed immediately by post-tonic /a/, /ea/ is realized as [e:], [ɛ:], [ɛ:] or [ɛi], and /oa/ as [o:], [ɔ:], [ɔ:] or [ɔu], e.g. *hagar* [hɛ:ar] 'hither', *fáa* [fɔ:a] '(to) get'. The sequences /ev/, /øv/, /ov/, /av/ tend to have diphthongal pronunciation before /n/, especially the last, e.g. *havn* [haun] 'harbour'. Neither /e:/ nor /o:/

**Table 7.1** Vowel phonemes of Faroese

	Tonic				Pre-tonic			Post-tonic	
i:	i		y	u:	u	i		u	
	e:	e	ø:	ø	o:	o			
				a		a		a	
ui	ei	oi	ai						
yu	ou	ea	oa						

**Table 7.2** The vowels of Faroese in phonetic transcription together with their Old Norse sources

Tonic			
i: (<i,y)			u: (<u)
ɪ (<i,y)		ɤ (<u:)	ʊ (<u)
e: (<e)		ø: (<ø:,ø,ɔ)	o: (<o)
ɛ (<e,au)		œ (<ø:,ø,ɔ,o:)	ɔ (<o,a:,ɔ:)
		a (<a,æ:,e:)	
ʊɪ (<i:,y:)	ɔ <sup>ɪ</sup> (<øy)	ɔʊ (<o:)	
ʊ <sup>ɪ</sup> (<i:,y:)	aɪ (<ei)	ɛa (<a,æ:,e:)	
ɛɪ (<au)	a <sup>ɪ</sup> (<ei)	ɔa (<a:,ɔ:)	
ɔɪ (<øy)	ʊu (<u:)		

Pre-tonic		Post-tonic	
i	u	ɪ (<ɪ)	ʊ (<ʊ)
e	o		
	a	a (<a)	

normally appears before post-tonic /a/, the pronunciation being [i:] and [u:] respectively, e.g. *mega* [mi:ja] 'must (pl.)', *noda* [nu:a] 'ball of yarn'. Neutralization of phonemic contrasts has been identified elsewhere too, but in most such cases it is hard to disentangle phonemic, morphophonemic, and historical considerations. A basically historical perspective is adopted for present purposes since it provides the clearest and most informative exposition. The short diphthongs [ʊ<sup>ɪ</sup>], [ɔ<sup>ɪ</sup>], and [a<sup>ɪ</sup>] are monophthongized before certain consonants: [ʊ<sup>ɪ</sup>] > [ʊ] before [j], [ʀ], [ʂ], [ʃ], and, sometimes, [g] and [k], e.g. *lýggi* [lʊj:ɪ] 'scythe', *írskur* [uʂkʊr] 'Irish', *líknandi* [lʊknandi] 'similar'; [ɔ<sup>ɪ</sup>] > [ɔ] before [j], [ʀ], and, sometimes, [g] and [k], e.g. *oyggi* [ɔj:ɪ] 'island', *moyrkna* [mɔʀtna] '(to) rot', *roykti* [rɔktɪ] 'smoked (sg. past)'; [a<sup>ɪ</sup>] > [a] or [ɔ] (the variation is partly dialectal, partly free) before [j], [ʀj], and [ʀɔc], e.g. *deiggj* [daj:] 'dough', *eingin* [ɔʀjɪn] 'no one'. Old Norse /a/ > /e/ before [ŋg], [ŋk], [ʀj], and [ʀɔc], e.g. *langur* [lɛŋgʊr] 'long', *banki* [bɛʀɔcɪ] 'knock (1 sg. pres.)'; apart from the cases where [a<sup>ɪ</sup>] is monophthongized to [a], it is only in loanwords (usually of Danish origin) that we find the sequences [aŋg], [aŋk], [aʀj], and [aʀɔc], e.g. *sangur* [saŋgʊr] 'song', *banki* [baʀɔcɪ] 'bank'. Old Norse /u:/ > /i/ and /o:/ > /e/ before (intercalated) /gv/, e.g. *kúgv* [kɪgv] 'cow', *gjógv* [jɛgv] 'rock-cleft'.

As is clear from Table 7.1, the pre-tonic and post-tonic vowel systems have far fewer contrasts than the tonic. The five-way pre-tonic system is realized as [i, u, e, o, a], e.g. *mirakul* [mi'reakul] 'miracle', *studentur* [stu'dɛptʊr] 'student', *metal* [me'ta:l] 'metal', *politistur* [poli'ustʊr] 'policeman', *barbarur* [bar'ba:rʊr] 'barbarian'. The three-way post-tonic system, found in

derivative suffixes and above all in inflectional endings, is in theory realized as [ɪ, ʊ, a], but the distribution of [ɪ] and [ʊ] varies greatly from dialect to dialect (nowhere does it follow the distribution of the written language). In some dialects post-tonic /i/ and /u/ have completely or almost completely coalesced, leading to considerable variety in their realization. In its treatment of the post-tonic vowels Faroese contrasts sharply with Icelandic, which, alone of all the Scandinavian languages, consistently maintains the three-way system of Old Norse.

Owing partly to the vowel variations caused by ablaut, mutation and breaking, and partly to the differentiation of the Old Norse vowel system, morphophonemic relations in Faroese can be extremely complex. As many as five phonemes (or phonemes and allophones) may be found in the root of some words, e.g. *kúgv* /kigv/ 'cow', nom./acc. pl. *kýr* /kuir/, def. dat. sg. *kúnni* /kyni/, def. dat. pl. *kúnum* /kyunun/; *dagur* /deavur/ 'day', gen. sg. *dags* /dags/, dat. sg. *degi* /de:ji/, nom./acc. pl.  *dagar* [de:ar], dat. pl. *døgum* /dø:vun/; *síggja* [su:ja] '(to) see', 2 sg. pres. *sært* /sart/, 3 sg. pres. *sær* /sear/, 1 and 3 sg. past *sá* /soa/, pl. past *sóu* /souvu/.

### Consonants

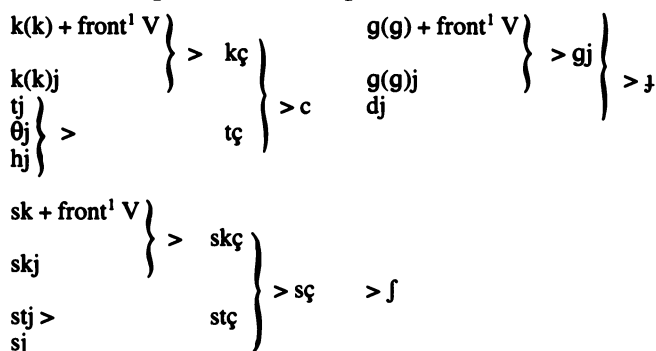
The consonant inventory of Faroese is given in Table 7.3. The following remarks outline the realization of these phonemes in various phonological environments. The plosives /p, t, k/ are unvoiced and tense; in lexical pronunciation they are aspirated before a stressed vowel and may also be so intervocalically. When preceded by /s/ they are unaspirated, as they often are intervocalically and in connected speech. /b, d, g/ are voiced, lax and unaspirated; however, the voicing is at best weak and sometimes absent (especially in word- or sentence-final position – but that is a characteristic of most voiced consonants). In connected speech the tense–lax distinction is often neutralized as well. A further complication is the fact that in the southern and northern extremities of the Faroes and to some extent in the Tórshavn area /p, t, k/ in intervocalic and post-vocalic position are realized as [b, d, g] or [b̥, d̥, g̥] in all cases. No wholly satisfactory account of the relationship between

**Table 7.3** Consonant phonemes of Faroese

	Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b	t d		k g	
Fricative	f v	s	ʃ j		h
Affricate			c ʃ		
Nasal	m	n		ŋ	
Lateral		l			
Rolled		r			

these two series of plosives has yet been given. The status of /ŋ/ is not entirely clear. Mostly it appears before /g/ and is therefore regarded by many as an allophone of /n/; however, it may also be followed by other consonants, e.g. *longd* 'length', which is pronounced [lɔŋɔ] or [lɔŋ<sup>h</sup>ɔ]. Palatal allophones of /l/ and /n/ occur between diphthongs with a palatal second element and a consonant, and before /c/ and /j/, e.g. *hvíld* [kvu<sup>h</sup>lɔd] 'rest', *tangi* [tɛŋjɔ] 'tongue (of land)'. Where /t, d, s, n, l/ immediately follow /r/ they are often realized as retroflexes, as in central Swedish and Norwegian, e.g. *gjørði* [jœrdɪ] 'made (sg. past)', *mars* [maʃ] 'March'. The extent to which /r/ is realized as a separate segment in such cases varies, but the sequence /rs/ is usually [ʃ]. Sometimes retroflexion may affect more than one consonant, e.g. *menninir standa* ['mɛn:mi:ʃtanda] 'the men stand'. Faroese /r/ may be realized in a variety of ways from a full rolled [r] to a virtually frictionless continuant [ɹ]. The most common pronunciation in ordinary speech seems to be fricative [ɹ], but [r] is regularly heard before a stressed vowel, especially after /p, t, k/. In the phonetic transcription here, only [r] is used. Most voiced consonants may be unvoiced when immediately preceding or following an unvoiced sound, but the variation is regular for /g, m, n, ŋ, l, r, v/ between a vowel and /p, t, k, s, c/, and marginally /f/, in the same syllable. The distinction /k/ : /g/ and /f/ : /v/ is thus neutralized in this position. Examples are: *lagt* [lakt] 'laid (pp.)', *lampa* [lappa] 'lamp', *ansa* [aŋsa] '(to) look after', *banki* [bɛŋci] 'knock (1 sg. pres.)', *banka* [bɛŋka] '(to) knock', *alt* [alt] 'all (nom./acc. n. sg.)', *heilsa* [ha<sup>h</sup>ʃsa] '(to) greet', *lurta* [luɹta] '(to) listen', *skeivt* [ska<sup>h</sup>ft] 'wrong (nom./acc. n. sg.)'; note also *langt* [lɛŋkt], [lɛŋt] nominative/accusative neuter singular of *langur* [lɛŋgʊr] 'long'. Between vowels /v/ may be realized as [v], [ʋ], or [w]; the last occurs after /u, yu, ou/. In common with their Icelandic counterparts, Faroese [p:, t:, k:] are pre-aspirated; pre-aspiration also occurs before [c:] and sporadically before /p, t, k/

Figure 7.1 The development of Faroese palatalization



Note: 1 The front vowels concerned are specified in the text. Length, except in the source form, is left out of consideration.

+ certain consonants. Neither this nor post-aspiration is marked in the phonetic transcription used here.

Considerable changes (most of which can be paralleled in other forms of West Scandinavian) separate the consonant system of Modern Faroese from its Old Norse source. As in all the Scandinavian languages except Danish (where the process was reversed), there has been extensive palatalization. The velars /k(:), g(:)/ and the cluster /sk/ developed palatal variants before the high and mid front vowels /i/, /y/ (if this had not already coalesced with /i/), /e/ and the diphthong which developed from /au/ (Modern Faroese /ei/), and these gradually coalesced with other palatal clusters as depicted in Figure 7.1. The two affricates which resulted are found not just in initial position (as is the case with the products of palatalization in many other forms of Scandinavian, including standard Norwegian and Swedish), but also medially, and they are regularly triggered by inflexional endings or suffixes, e.g. nom. sg. *bak* [bɛak] : dat. sg. *baki* [bɛaci] 'back'; nom. sg. *veggur* [vɛg:ʊr] : dat. sg. *veggi* [vɛj:ɣi] 'wall'; *bók* [bɔuk] 'book' : *bókin* [bɔucm] 'the book'. The reflex of Old Norse /sk/ in such cases is [sc], e.g. *elska* [ɛ]ska] '(to) love' : *elski* [ɛ]sci] 'love (1 sg. pres.)'. A system of glides has developed to fill the hiatuses which existed in Old Norse or which arose through the loss of intervocalic [ð] and [ɣ]: /j/ is found in palatal environment and /v/ in labial, realized as [w] following /u/, yu, ou/ and [v] elsewhere. Examples are: *áir* [ɔajr] 'streams (nom./acc. pl.)', *deyður* [dɛjʊr] 'dead', *vegi* [vɛ:j] 'road (dat. sg.)', *bøur* [bɔ:vʊr] 'infield', *maður* [mɛavʊr] 'man', *lágum* [lɔavʊn] 'low (dat. pl.)', *sóu* [sɔuwʊ] 'saw (pl. past)', *góður* [gɔuwʊr] 'good', *dugir* [du:wɪr] 'manages'. Neither [ð] nor [ɣ] survived in Faroese: in final post-vocalic position as well as between mid and low vowels they were normally lost without trace or replacement; sometimes they were assimilated to immediately following consonants or changed their manner and place of articulation in another way, e.g. *kvøða* [kvø:a] '(to) chant', *eg* [e:] 'I', *maður* [mak:ʊr] 'grub (noun)', *veðrið* [vɛgri] 'the weather', *drignan* [driɔn] 'pulled (pp. acc. m. sg.)'. As universally in Scandinavian outside Icelandic [θ] > /t/; in certain pronouns and adverbs, and compounds with *Þór-* as the first element, [θ] > /h/, a development closely paralleled in several Scandinavian dialects including Orkney and Shetland Norn. Common to Faroese and Norn is also the change /m/ > /n/ in dative endings, e.g. *tveimum óm* /tvaimun oun/ 'two ewes', *søgunum* /sɔvunun/ 'the stories'. Several of the consonantal developments that affected Faroese are found in all or virtually all West Scandinavian dialects, including Icelandic (though the products may be realized in slightly different ways). This is the case with /hu/ > /kv/ and /l:/ > /dl/, to which there are few exceptions in Faroese, with /n:/ > /dn/, which occurs almost exclusively after /oi/ and /ai/, and with /rn/ > /dn/ and /rl/ > /dl/, to which there are numerous exceptions, most notably the definite nominative/accusative plural, where normally only /n/ is heard, and syncopated past participle forms, where the pronunciation is still /rn/, e.g. *bátarnir* /boatanir/ 'the boats', *farnir* /farnir/ 'gone (nom. m. pl.)'.

### Stress and Related Matters

Phonologically there seems no reason to distinguish more than two degrees of stress, and in the above the terms 'stressed' and 'unstressed' have been used. Phonetically it is useful to distinguish four degrees: primary, strong secondary, weak secondary, and zero stress. Strong secondary stress is the norm in the first syllable of the second element of a compound. A four-syllable word like *fjallatindin* 'the mountain top (acc. sg.)' – a particularly common type – is pronounced [ˈfjɑdlɑ,tɪndɪm] with zero stress on the second and weak secondary or zero stress on the final syllable. In most native words, primary stress falls on the initial syllable. In common with the mainland Scandinavian languages, however, but unlike Icelandic, Faroese does allow primary stress elsewhere, chiefly in words of foreign origin, where it is not restricted to any particular syllables, and in native words and Danish loans with certain prefixes, where it can be located in the second. Examples are: *politi* [pɔlɪˈtɪ:] 'police', *studentur* [stuˈdɛntur] 'student', *ófatiligur* [ˌɔʊˈfɛatɪˌliːjʊr] 'incomprehensible', *forstanda* [fɔrˈʂtɑnda] '(to) understand'. Compound adverbs, of which there are many in Faroese, also regularly have primary stress on syllables other than the first, e.g. *framvið* [framˈvi:] 'past', *afturfyri* [aturˈfi:rɪ] 'in return'. Stress-linked tones, as found in many varieties of Norwegian and Swedish, do not occur in Faroese.

### Other Phonological Points

A number of external sandhi forms are found in Faroese, most notably the retroflexion of /t, d, s, n, l/ when they follow final /r/, e.g. *ger so væl!* [jɛ:ʂo:vɛal] 'here you are!', *ber neyðarrópini* [be:rɲɛɪjarɔpɪnɪ] 'carries the cries of distress'; cf. also *ov mikið* [ˈɔm:i:i:] 'too big (nom./acc. n. sg.)', *at gera við tað* [aˈjɛraˈvɪt:a] 'to do (something) about it'. Like virtually all forms of Scandinavian, Faroese does not easily tolerate large consonant clusters. Where such would otherwise arise, one of the consonants is usually lost, e.g. *fylgdi* 'followed (sg.)', *fyglði* 'caught birds (sg.)', both /fildɪ/, *myrkt* /mirt/ 'dark (nom./acc. n. sg.)'. In the (relatively rare) cases where four consonants might be juxtaposed, they are most often reduced to three, e.g. *sandflundra* [sarɲflundra] 'plaice', *eingilskt* [aɲɲɪst] 'English (nom./acc. n. sg.)', in special cases to two, e.g. *frskt* [ʊʂt] 'Irish (nom./acc. n. sg.)'. Where /t/ is added to the cluster /sk/ in monosyllables, metathesis normally results, giving /kst/, e.g. *danskt* /danɲkst/ 'Danish', *frískt* /frukst/ 'healthy', both nominative/accusative neuter singular. Length may be lost (a) in compounding; and (b) in connected speech where there is weakened stress, e.g. (a) *húskallur* [ˈhʏs,kadlur] 'farm-hand' from *hús* [hʏus] 'house' + *kallur* [kadlur] 'man', *kinnklovi* [ˈciɲ,kloːvi] 'corner of the mouth' from *kinn* [ciɲ:] 'cheek' + *klovi* [kloːvi] 'opening'; (b) *nú kunnu tey fara til Havnar* [ˈnʏkʊnʊtɛfaratɲˈhaunar] 'now they can go to Tórshavn', with which the lexical forms [nʏ kʊnːʊ tɛɪ feara til haunar] can be contrasted.

## Orthography

The fact that Faroese orthography is based on Old Norse (in effect on etymological principles) and Icelandic means that the gap between the spoken and written form is considerable. The many new diphthongs are written as though they were still monophthongs, ⟨i⟩ is distinguished from ⟨y⟩ and ⟨i⟩ from ⟨ý⟩, but there are no corresponding differences in speech, ⟨ð⟩ is still widely used although [ð] has long since dropped out of the language, ⟨g⟩ appears where Old Norse had [ɣ] but Faroese has zero or a glide, /kv/ may be written ⟨kv⟩ or ⟨hv⟩, final /n/ regularly appears as ⟨m⟩ – and so on. In favour of the current orthography it has been argued first that it enables speakers of other Scandinavian languages to read Faroese more easily and second that it unites the many dialects in a common written form. When Modern Faroese was first written down, a quasi-phonetic approach was adopted, that is, people brought up with Danish (and to a lesser extent Latin and German) spelling habits wrote what they thought they heard. Once the etymological-Icelandic orthography was introduced in the 1840s and 1850s (subsequently refined), this kind of phonetic spelling was abandoned, though various attempts were made around the turn of the century to bring speech and writing into greater harmony. By way of exemplification two ballad stanzas are given, first in the original spelling, then in modern orthography. They are from the 1780s (1) and the 1820s (2) and represent different dialects.

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| (1) | Drikkjin drak tû Mirman<br>aldri bujur tû Bêut<br>Féarin eer tujn fagri Litur<br>bæi éav Hond o Féut | ‘Drykkin drakk tú, Mirman,<br>aldri bíður tú bót,<br>farin er tín fagri litur<br>bæði av hond og fót.’ |
|-----|--|--|

“You drank the drink, Mirman, you will never recover, your fair colour has gone both from [your] hand and foot.”

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| (2) | Hoon toug up ta siurtina<br>ædl var uj blouvi drijin<br>Heer skal tu sujdgja tej hærklajir<br>qvær uj tujn fajir er vijin | Hon tók upp ta skjúrtuna,<br>øll var í blóði drigin:<br>‘Her skalt tú síggja tey herklæði,<br>hvarí tín faðir er vigin.’ |
|-----|---|--|

‘She took up that shirt [which] was all covered in blood: “Here you shall see that armour in which your father was killed.”’

## 7.3 Morphology

### Nouns

Faroese has simplified somewhat the inflectional system it inherited from Old Norse, but to nothing like the same degree as the mainland Scandinavian



languages. In Old Norse nouns inflected according to stem class, and gender was very much an inherent category. Though inflection by stem class survives in Faroese, there has been a tendency for gender to be given more overt expression; thus most nouns will follow the pattern set out in Table 7.4. The four cases: nominative, accusative, genitive and dative are still distinguished, but nominative and accusative forms have become identical everywhere except in the singular of most masculine nouns and of one feminine stem class, and the genitive has been largely superseded by circumlocutions (see section 7.4). Many nouns have genitive forms only in the written language; the plural *-a* has all but disappeared as a spoken form and of the singulars only *-s* is at all common, though *-ar* may be heard in some set phrases. Where genitives are used in the spoken language, there is a tendency for *-s* to replace other endings, although in personal names and nouns used as such a new colloquial ending, *-sa(r)*, has developed (see further, section 7.4). Number consists of a singular-plural opposition, as in all Scandinavian languages. In Old Norse most neuter nouns did not have distinct singular and plural forms in the nominative and accusative, but in spoken Faroese one class of this gender has adopted an analogical *-r* as a plural marker while another has added *-r* to an existing plural ending. Noun

**Table 7.4** The basic noun inflections of Faroese

	<i>Strong Masculine</i>		<i>Strong Feminine</i>		<i>Strong Neuter</i>	
	sg.	pl.	sg.	pl.	sg.	pl.
Nom.	-ur	-Vr	- $\emptyset$	-Vr	- $\emptyset$	- $\emptyset$ / <i>-r</i>
Acc.	- $\emptyset$	-Vr	- $\emptyset$	-Vr	- $\emptyset$	- $\emptyset$ / <i>-r</i>
Gen.	-s/ (-ar)	(-a)	(-ar)	(-a)	-s	(-a)
Dat.	-i/ <i>-<math>\emptyset</math></i>	-um	- $\emptyset$	-um	-i/ <i>-<math>\emptyset</math></i>	-um
	<i>Weak Masculine</i>		<i>Weak Feminine</i>		<i>Weak Neuter</i>	
	sg.	pl.	sg.	pl.	sg.	pl.
Nom.	-i	-ar	-a	-ur	-a	(-u)/-ur
Acc.	-a	-ar	-u	-ur	-a	(-u)/-ur
Gen.	(-a)	(-a)	(-u)	(-a)	(-a)	(-na)
Dat.	-a	-um	-u	-um	-a	-um

Note: Brackets indicate that the form concerned is found chiefly or exclusively in the written language. V = vowel (i.e. *i*, *u*, or *a*, but see section 7.2, 'Vowels'). The distinction *-s/-ar* in the genitive masculine singular depends on stem class. The strong dative masculine and neuter *-i* ending is sometimes omitted, especially where the root of the noun ends in a vowel, and in personal names. Strong neuters ending in *-i* add no additional *-i* in the dative singular; like the weak neuters they have *-r* in the nominative/accusative plural in spoken and less formal kinds of written Faroese; in the genitive and dative plural of this class *-i* is deleted before *-a* or *-um* is added. The root vowel of many nouns changes in different parts of the paradigm according to fixed patterns.

derivation patterns do not differ greatly from those in Old Norse and Icelandic. Derivation by suffix and by compounding are both common (see also section 7.5).

### Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectival inflection too, while preserving the basics of the Old Norse system, has undergone some simplification (see Pronouns, Table 7.6). Adjectives still mostly agree in gender, number and case with the noun phrase they modify, both in attributive and predicative position, and there are still two sets of endings, 'weak' and 'strong' (the choice between which is largely determined by the definiteness or otherwise of the noun phrase, see section 7.4), but genitive forms are seldom found, even in writing, and certain endings have been modified on analogy with others. The strong neuter dative singular ending is now *-um*, just as the masculine, where Old Norse and Icelandic have *-u*; the strong masculine accusative plural is *-ar* (making final *-r* the norm for the nominative and accusative plural of masculine and feminine nouns and strong adjectives), Old Norse/Icelandic *-a*; the weak plural ending is *-u* throughout, as in Icelandic, whereas Old Norse had a weak dative plural in *-um*; of uncertain origin is the *-a-* in the strong feminine dative singular ending *-ari*, Old Norse *-ri*. Adjectives with root vowel *-a-* which end in *-aður* or *-in* (many of them past participles) do not follow the pattern of most others, which modify the *-a-* to *-ø-* or *-o-* in certain parts of the paradigm. One result of this is that the strong feminine nominative singular and strong neuter nominative/accusative singular and plural may have the same form: contrast Faroese *kastað* /kasta/ 'thrown' (the neuter nominative/accusative plural is most often *kastaði* /kastaji/ in the spoken language) with Old Norse *kostuð* (nom. f. sg. and nom./acc. n. pl.) and *kastat* (nom./acc. n. sg.) and with Faroese *gomul* 'old' (nom. f. sg. and nom./acc. n. pl.) and *gamalt* (nom./acc. n. sg.). New patterns of inflection have arisen in those adjectives with intercalated /ʒ:/ or /gv/ in their roots, owing to the fact that these consonantal extensions have not spread to the forms where an original consonant immediately follows the root vowel, e.g. *nýggjur* 'new', *búgvín* 'ready', nom./acc. n. sg. *nýtt*, dat. m. sg. *búnum*.

Adjectival comparison is made chiefly through the addition of suffixes, *-ar* or *-r* for the comparative, *-ast* or *-st* for the superlative (the second of the two forms usually appears in conjunction with modification of the root vowel). Present participles and adjectives in *-s*, both of which are indeclinable, form their comparative and superlative analytically, as do certain compound adjectives, e.g. *meira fámæltur* 'quieter' (lit. 'more few-spoken'), *mest hóskandi* 'most suitable' (lit. 'most suiting'). Synthetic comparatives have no strong declension, the strong endings being replaced by an invariable *-i*; the weak forms are the same as in the positive. Synthetic superlatives have the normal strong and weak endings.

Adverbs are chiefly formed in Faroese in one of the following three ways: (a)

by the addition of the suffix *-liga* to the root of the adjective, or by the changing of the adjectival suffix *-lig* to *-liga*, e.g. *stór-* 'big', *stórliga* 'greatly', *serlig-* 'special', *serliga* '(e)pecially'; (b) through use of the strong neuter nominative/accusative singular form of the adjective, e.g. *skjótur* 'quick', *skjótt* 'quickly'; (c) by the addition of *-a* to the root of the adjective, e.g. *ill-* 'bad', *illa* 'badly'. The comparison of adverbs follows the same pattern as the comparison of adjectives. The synthetic forms are *-ari* or *-ri* (in a few words *-ur*), *-ast* or *-st*, e.g. *dúgligari* 'more capably', *tyngst* 'most heavily'.

### Pronouns

Syntactically it may sometimes be useful to distinguish between pronouns and determiners in Faroese, but morphologically it makes little sense since all possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, and indefinite pronouns also function as determiners. Only the personal pronouns (third-person plural excepted) are solely pronominal; the relative is best regarded as a particle, since its function is that of complementizer rather than pronoun, but its form will be briefly mentioned here for completeness' sake.

**Table 7.5 Personal pronouns**

	<i>1 sg.</i>	<i>2 sg.</i>	<i>3 sg.</i> m.	f.	n.
Nom.	eg	tú	hann	hon	tað
Acc.	meg	teg	hann	hana	tað
Gen.	mín	tín	hansara	hennara	tess
Dat.	mær	tær	honum	henni	tí
	<i>1 pl.</i>	<i>2 pl.</i>	<i>3 pl.</i> m.	f.	n.
Nom.	vit	tit	teir	tær	tey
Acc.	okkum	tykkum	teir	tær	tey
Gen.	okkara	tykkara		teirra	
Dat.	okkum	tykkum		teimum	
	<i>3 refl.</i>	<i>2 sg. pol.</i>			
Nom.	—	tygum			
Acc.	seg	tygum			
Gen.	sín	tygara			
Dat.	sær	tygum			

The personal pronouns alone of the Faroese nominals have retained the full four-case system of Old Norse. The paradigms are set out in Table 7.5. The first- and second-person plural go back to the Old Norse dual. The second-person singular polite form is based on the accusative/dative of the Old Norse second-person plural, *yðr*, with initial /t/ (< /θ/) from the nominative, but otherwise there is little trace in present-day Faroese of the old first- and second-person plurals. As in Old Norse, the third-person plural forms also function as demonstratives, determiners, and as the preposed definite article (see below), e.g. *tey av tykkum* 'those of you', *teir menninir* 'those men', *tær ungu kýrnar* 'the young cows'. If allowance is made for the sound changes that separate Faroese from Old Norse, the only noteworthy developments in the paradigms not so far mentioned are the spread of the pronominal and adjectival dative ending *-um* into the first- and second-person plurals and the third-person dative plural (ON *okkr*, *ykkir*, *þeim*), and the addition of *-a* (of uncertain origin) to the genitive forms in *-ar*, as well as the extension of this ending to the third-person masculine singular (ON *hans*). In unstressed position, personal pronouns undergo a number of changes, most notably the regular shortening of vowel or consonant and the frequent loss of initial /h/, e.g. *tað veit eg* [ta'vate] 'I know it', *eg tók hann við* [e,tʰokan'vi:] 'I took him with (me)'. There seems no phonetic justification, however, for positing a class of clitics since the behaviour of these pronouns in connected speech is little different from that of the generality of words.

In common with other Scandinavian languages, Faroese makes no distinction in form between possessive pronouns and adjectives. The first- and second-person singular and the reflexive possessive (nom. m. sg. *mín*, *tín*, *sín*) are inflected according to the scheme in Table 7.6 (nom./acc. n. sg. *mítt*, *títt*,

**Table 7.6 Schematic overview of pronoun (non-personal) and determiner inflections**

	Singular			Plural		
	m.	f.	n.	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	-θ	-θ	-t(t)	-ir	-ar	-θ/-i
Acc.	-θ/-an	-a	-t(t)	-ar	-ar	-θ/-i
Dat.	-um	-i/-ari	-um	-um		

Note: Individual pronouns and determiners may vary from this pattern in certain forms, especially the nominative/accusative neuter singular and plural. The nominative feminine singular, the nominative/accusative neuter plural, the dative masculine and neuter singular, and the dative plural may be marked by change of the root vowel ( $a > \emptyset$  or  $o$ ). Genitive forms of a few pronouns and determiners are occasionally found in writing: m. and n. sg. *-s*, f. sg. *-ar* (very rare), pl. *-a*. Apart from *-ur* in the nominative masculine singular as opposed to *-θ*, this is the paradigm according to which strong adjectives by and large are inflected (acc. m. sg. *-an*, dat. f. sg. *-ari*, nom./acc. n. pl. *-θ*).

*sítt*), the other possessives are invariable and take the same form as the genitive of the corresponding personal pronoun.

The principal demonstratives in Faroese are *tann* 'that', *hesin* 'this', *hasin* 'that', and *hin* 'the other'. The latter three are inflected more or less in accordance with the scheme in Table 7.6 (*hesin* and *hasin* have accusative masculine and nominative feminine singular *henda(n)*, *handa(n)* and nominative/accusative neuter singular *hetta(r)*, *hatta(r)*, the forms with the final consonant are colloquial); the plural of *tann* is set out in Table 7.5 (*teir*, etc.) and the singular is as follows: nom./acc. m. and nom. f. *tann*, acc. f. *ta*, nom./acc. n. *tað*, dat. all genders *tí*, although the dative feminine may also be *teirri*. The deictic sense of *tann* is somewhat weakened, possibly as a result of the availability of *hasin*, which has a strongly pointing function and is often reinforced by the addition of *har* 'there'. As well as being a demonstrative, *tann* also serves as the preposed definite article (as can *hin* in older written Faroese and in certain phrases in the spoken language), in which function it naturally loses its deictic sense altogether. Since *tann* is the preposed counterpart of the suffixed definite article and, like the other three demonstratives, regularly appears in conjunction with it (on the syntax of these and related phrases, see section 7.4), it is convenient to consider here both the forms of the article and its pattern of suffixation to the noun. Fundamentally it is like *hin* (of which it is probably the reflex) without initial /h/, and its inflections parallel those of the pronoun except in the nominative/accusative neuter singular where *hin* has the form *hitt*; however, those noun endings that are syllabic (except the strong nominative masculine singular) cause syncopation of the initial /i/. The forms are thus as given in Table 7.7.

**Table 7.7 The suffixed definite article**

	Singular			Plural		
	m.	f.	n.	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	-(i)n	-(i)n	-(i)ð	-nir	-nar	-(i)ni
Acc.	-(i)n	-(i)na	-(i)ð	-nar	-nar	-(i)ni
Gen.	-(i)ns	-(i)nar	-(i)ns	⏟		
Dat.	-num	-(i)ni	-num	-nna -num		

Note: The genitive forms are little used, even in the written language, the feminine almost never; the genitive plural occurs in both spoken and written Faroese in a limited number of postpositional phrases involving *millum*, contrast *húsanna millum* with *millum húsini* 'between the houses'. The *-m* (/n/) of the dative plural is dropped from nouns when the definite article is added, e.g. *bátum* (/boatun/) 'boats', *bátunum* (/boatunun/) 'the boats'. In the spoken language there is a tendency for the nominative and accusative masculine plural of the definite article to coalesce, usually in favour of the nominative form.

The interrogative pronoun and adjective in Faroese is *hvør*. It inflects according to the scheme in Table 7.6, but with the following idiosyncrasies: the accusative masculine singular is *hvønn*, the nominative/accusative neuter singular *hvát*, and all endings that begin with a vowel are preceded by /j/.

The relative particle is *sum* or *ið*, between which there are a few slight differences of syntactic function; outside these, *sum* is by far the most common of the two in the spoken language. Literary Faroese sometimes uses *hvørs* (formally the masculine or neuter genitive singular of the interrogative *hvør*, *hvát*) in the sense 'whose'; this is probably in imitation of the corresponding Danish form *hvis*.

Indefinite pronouns and determiners include *nógvur* 'much, a lot', *hvør* 'each, every', *ein* 'one', *annar* 'another, other, the other, the one (of two)', *báðir* (pl.) 'both', *fáur* 'few', *eingin* 'no one, none, no', *hvørgin* 'neither', and *nakar*, *onkur*, *summur*, the latter three all in the range 'some/any(-one/-thing)', for which senses *ein* can also be employed. These words are all inflected according to the scheme in Table 7.6, though most exhibit some idiosyncrasies; *hvør* has exactly the same forms as the interrogative except for the nominative/accusative neuter singular, which is *hvørt*. The relationship between *nakar*, *onkur*, *summur*, and *ein* is subtle and complex, and not yet completely understood. It seems to involve such features as [ $\pm$  existence], [ $\pm$  specific], [ $\pm$  distributive], and while there is a considerable degree of overlap, there are many contexts in which only one or some of these pronouns or determiners are grammatical. To a certain extent Faroese parallels English, in that *nakar* is the preferred word in interrogative and negative clauses (see section 7.4), but *nakar* is also widely used in declaratives, especially when the required sense is [+specific], contrast: *nakrar dagar* '(for) some days (acc.)', *summar dagar* 'some (individual) days (acc.)', *hann hoyrði nakað* 'he heard something (specific)', *hann hoyrði okkurt* 'he heard something (or other)'. Synonymous with pronominal *ein* is *man* 'one' (from German via Danish), but this is not a word favoured by purists and it has the disadvantage that it can only be used when nominative is the appropriate case. As well as being an indefinite pronoun or determiner, *ein* also functions as the numeral 'one' and the indefinite article. In the latter two senses it may appear in the plural (a) when denoting a pair, e.g. *einir skógvar* 'one/a pair of shoes'; (b) when modifying a plural noun, e.g. *eini hjún* 'one/a married couple'; (c) when used to denote an approximate number, e.g. *ainar fimm seks gentur* 'five or six girls'. The numeral also has weak forms, which occur when it is preceded by a determiner, e.g. *tann eini vinurin* 'the one friend (of many)'. In connection with numerals, it is worth mentioning (a) that as well as *ein*, *tveir* 'two' and *tríggir* 'three' are inflected for case and gender; (b) that in counting the unit usually precedes the ten, e.g. *ein og tjúgu* 'twenty-one'; and (c) that the words for the tens from 'fifty' to 'ninety' are normally *hálvtrýss*, *trýss*, *hálvfjerðs*, *fýrs*, *hálvfems*, these and their ordinal counterparts being based on the corresponding Danish forms *halvtreds(indstve)* 'fifty', etc.

## Verbs

Faroese verbs are inflected for person and/or number, and tense, according to a system greatly simplified in comparison with Old Norse or Icelandic. As in all Germanic languages, the finite forms are either present or past, and the two main conjugation types are 'weak' and 'strong'. The principal inflections are outlined in Table 7.8. The second-person singular *-t* and *-st* endings are often dropped in both the written and the spoken language, and there are tendencies locally for the past singular and plural to coalesce in certain weak verb classes, either because the singular form is extended to the plural or because post-tonic /i/ and /u/ are no longer distinguished, e.g. *vit elskaði* 'we loved', *nevndi-nevndu* 'mentioned', both [nɛundi], [nɛundə] (or some other unitary form). In strong verbs the past singular-plural distinction is still maintained by all speakers, e.g. *eg kom* [e'ko:m] 'I came' : *vit komu* [vit'ko:mɪ] 'we came'.

Finite inflections not included in Table 7.8 are those of the modal auxiliaries and, to a limited extent, of *vera* '(to) be' (for both see below), and the imperative and subjunctive forms. Faroese has a second-person singular imperative, which for most verbs consists simply of the root, but for one class of root + *-a*, and a second-person plural with the ending *-ið* (/i/), e.g. *kom!* 'come! (sg.)', *komið!* 'come! (pl.)', *kasta!* 'throw! (sg.)', *kastið!* 'throw! (pl.)'. Note that as in the mainland Scandinavian languages but unlike in Icelandic imperative constructions as a rule have no overt subject. In spoken Faroese the imperative singular form is often used even when more than one person is being addressed. In the absence of first-person imperative forms (found only in archaizing style), the imperative singular (rarely the plural in the spoken language) of *lata* '(to) let' is used followed by *meg* 'me' or *okkum* 'us' and the infinitive of the main verb, e.g. *lat okkum fara* 'let's go'. The residual subjunctive can sometimes act as a substitute for a third-person

**Table 7.8 The principal verb inflections of Faroese**

	Present	Past weak	Past strong
1 sg.	-i	-Di	-Ø
2 sg.	-(V)r(t)	-Di	-(s)t
3 sg.	-(V)r	-Di	-Ø
1 pl.	-a	-Du	-u
2 pl.	-a	-Du	-u
3 pl.	-a	-Du	-u

Note: V = vowel (i.e. *i*, *u*, or *a*, but see section 7.2, 'Vowels'). D = suffix, originally and still often dental. There may in addition to these endings be changes of root vowel between the second- and third-person singular present and the other present-tense forms (which preserve the vowel of the infinitive), between the present and past of strong verbs and of some weak verbs, and also between the singular past and plural past of many strong verbs.

imperative, but the use of the subjunctive is severely restricted in Faroese and it can hardly any longer be regarded as a productive verb form. It appears only in the present tense and almost exclusively in the third person, and has just the one ending: *-i*. Typically, it occurs in exclamations, e.g. *ólukka slái hann!* 'misfortune strike him!', *Harrin fylgi tær!* 'the Lord accompany you!', *verði ljós!* 'let there be light!' (lit. 'become light'), but in officialese instructions are also occasionally attested, e.g. *nýggir limir vendi sær til skrivaran* 'new members should apply to the secretary' (lit. 'new members turn themselves to...'). The unproductiveness of the subjunctive is revealed by the severe restrictions on the choice of subject and verb phrase in clauses of the type exemplified: *pápi hansara slái hann!* '(let) his father hit him!', *nýggir limir kvøði eitt ørindi* 'new members (should) recite a verse', for example, are pragmatically extremely odd.

To all the finite endings in Table 7.8 may be added *-st* (corresponding to the *-s* or *-st* of the other Scandinavian languages). The use of this suffix usually involves reflexive, reciprocal or passive meaning; it can be applied to the majority of Faroese verbs, but by no means all. Before *-st* the endings *-(u)r*, *-rt*, and *-st* are lost, e.g. *krevur* 'demands', *krevst* 'is demanded'.

The conjugation types of Faroese are many. Weak verbs can be divided into three classes, but irregularities abound. Class I has *-ar* in the second- and third-person singular present, *-aði/-aðu* (/ajj/, /avv/) in the singular and plural past, and *-a* in the imperative singular. Class II has *-ir*, *-di/-du*, *-ti/-tu*, or *-ddi/-ddu*, and zero, class III *-ur*, *-di/-du* or *-ti/-tu* + vowel change, and zero in the corresponding forms. A small number of verbs with *-ar* in the present tense have *-di/-du*, *-ti/-tu*, or *-ddi/-ddu* in the past. Strong verbs exhibit many different vowel alternations; the number of classes to be distinguished depends on how big a 'miscellaneous' group one is prepared to tolerate. Common alternations in the present, past singular and past plural are: *í-ei-i*, (*j*)*ó/ý-ey-u*, and *e-a-u*. Five modal auxiliaries, *kunna* 'be able to', *mega/muga* '(to) have to', *munna* 'be probable', *skula* 'be obliged to, intend', *vilja* '(to) want to', as well as *vita* '(to) know', have present-tense forms radically different from those of other verbs. The characteristics are: zero ending in the first- and third-person singular, *-t* or *-st* (depending on the verb) in the second person, and *-a* or *-u* (in part depending on the verb, in part on dialect) in the plural; apart from *vilja*, all have a different root vowel in the singular from in the infinitive and plural. Except for *mátti/máttu* 'had to' and *átti/áttu* 'ought' (from *eiga*, which has an ordinary present tense; cf. also *visti/vistu* 'knew'), the modals have a regular weak past tense, consisting of the root of the infinitive + *-di/-du* endings, e.g. *kundi* 'could (sg.)' (= *kun* + *di*). Note that the endings of *vera* '(to) be' except in the present plural are predictable, though the root is not; the forms are: present 1 sg. *eri*, 2 sg. *ert*, 3 sg. *er*, pl. *eru*, past 1 and 3 sg. *var*, 2 sg. *vart*, pl. *vóru*.

The non-finite forms of the Faroese verb are the infinitive, the present and past participles, and the supine. The infinitive ends in *a*, and this termination



has been extended to those verbs which had monosyllabic infinitives in Old Norse, e.g. *fáa* '(to) get'. The present participle is formed through the addition of *-andi* to the verbal root, e.g. *komandi* 'coming'. It does not inflect. Apart from a straightforward adjectival function, it commonly has the modal and passive sense '-able, -ible', e.g. *etandi* 'edible', from *eta* '(to) eat', *óhugsandi* 'inconceivable', from *hugsa* '(to) think'. The form of the past participle depends on verb class, but can usually be predicted on the basis of past-tense endings. Weak verbs thus exhibit the following formations: class I *-aður* (*-dur, -tur, -ddur*), class II *-dur, -tur, -ddur*, class III *-dur, -tur* (with the same root vowel as the past tense); the past participles of strong verbs end in *-in*, and the root vowel is often different from either of those in the past tense, although mostly predictable (inf./pres. *í* gives pp. *i*, (*j*)*ó/ý* gives *o*, *e* gives *o* or *u*). The past participle inflects like an adjective and has both strong and weak endings. The supine is identical in form with the nominative/accusative neuter singular of the past participle, and is used after various auxiliaries in the formation of complex verb phrases. While not every verb has a past participle, virtually all have a supine. The *-st* ending discussed above (p. 205) does not occur in the present or past participle (except *lagstur* 'gone to bed', *setstur* 'seated', *vilstur* 'lost'), but may be added to the infinitive and the supine, whereupon the latter loses its final *-t* or (written) *-ð*, e.g. *hefur bart* 'has hit', *hava barst* 'have fought', *hevði fingið* (/finʒi/) 'had obtained', *hevði fingist* 'had been obtained'.

Complex verb phrases are best dealt with under syntax, but it may be noted here that *hava* '(to) have' combines with the supine and *vera* '(to) be' (in the case of 'change of state' intransitives) with the past participle to form the perfect, e.g. *hon hefur sungið* 'she has sung', *vatnið er runnið burtur* 'the water has run away' (lit. '... is run...'); further, that *verða* or *blíva* '(to) become' (the latter mainly restricted to spoken Faroese) and *vera* function as passive auxiliaries, e.g. *tað verður gjørt* 'it is being done, it will be done', *tað er gjørt* 'it is done'.

## 7.4 Syntax

### The Nominal Group

The primary division of the Faroese noun phrase is into indefinite and definite. Indefinite noun phrases are characterized first and foremost by strong adjective morphology, but also by the absence of demonstratives, definite articles, possessives, and genitive modifiers, and (often) by the presence of the indefinite article or indefinite determiners. The word order in such phrases is article/determiner + adjective + noun. Examples illustrating the different types are: *bátar* 'boats', *stórir bátar* 'big boats', *ein stórur bátur* 'a big boat', *nakrir stórir bátar* 'some big boats'. With determiners of similarity we may have article + determiner, e.g. *ein sovorðin stórur bátur* 'a big boat of that

kind' (lit. 'a such big boat'). Definite noun phrases are characterized by weak adjective morphology and/or the presence of demonstratives, definite articles, possessives, and genitive modifiers. Here the word order and the structures are more complex. If we ignore possessives and genitives initially, the word order is: preposed definite article/demonstrative + adjective + noun + suffixed definite article. Examples are: *báturin* 'the boat', *hinir bátarnir* 'the other boats', *tann gamli báturin* 'the old boat'. Where definite noun phrases contain an adjective or a demonstrative, or both, Faroese prefers double definition, as illustrated by these examples, but single definition also occurs, and a noun phrase may be marked definite solely by the weak form of the adjective. The type adjective + noun + suffixed article, e.g. *gamli báturin* 'the old boat', occurs widely in written Faroese and is especially common in the press. In the spoken language it is mainly restricted to names or set phrases, e.g. *Heilagi Andin* 'the Holy Ghost', sometimes also with reverse word order: *Áin Mikla* 'the Big Stream' (lit. 'Stream-the Big'). Preposed article + adjective + noun, and demonstrative ± adjective + noun are constructions that can be found sporadically in spoken and written Faroese, most commonly where the adjective is an absolute superlative, e.g. *tann versti ránsmaður* 'a thoroughly wicked bandit' (lit. 'the worst bandit'), or where *tann* is part of a noun phrase modified by a relative clause, e.g. *í teirri oyggj, sum...* 'in that island which...'. The marking of definiteness by weak adjective morphology alone is mainly restricted to names, vocatives, qualified superlatives, and set phrases, e.g. *Svarti Deyði* 'the Black Death', *góðu fólk!* 'dear people!', *vit róðu yvir um longsta fjørð í Føroyum* 'we rowed across the longest firth in the Faroes', *aðru ferð* '(for) the second time (acc.)'. The phrase *longsta fjørð* unqualified by *í Føroyum* would tend to have the force of a place-name 'Longest Firth'; however, in poetic writing weak adjective + noun does not necessarily invite this interpretation, contrast *ígjøgnum Grønu Líð* 'across Green Slope' with *ígjøgnum grønu líð* 'across the green slope'.

Two further points concerning the indefinite and definite article need to be noted. In generic noun phrases there is usually no indefinite article, contrast *Páll er frálíkur lærari* 'Páll is (an) excellent teacher' with *vit hava fingið ein frálíkan lærara, sum eitur Páll* 'we have got an excellent teacher, who is called Páll'. The definite article is sometimes not used where a noun or noun phrase denotes a unique phenomenon or a phenomenon only one example of which is of immediate relevance, e.g. *kongur* 'the king', *prestur* 'the priest', *føroyskt mál* 'the Faroese language'.

The expression of possession in Faroese is complicated by the almost total loss of the genitive case for this purpose in the spoken language, and attempts by linguistic purists to resuscitate it. In Old Norse genitive modifiers followed their head word; in Faroese, to the extent they were used at all, they came for the most part to precede it. As a result, the resuscitated literary genitive may either precede or follow its head word, while such colloquial genitives as exist tend largely to precede it, e.g. *ríkisins ovasta umboð* or *ovasta umboð ríkisins*

'the kingdom's foremost representative', *Jógvansar bátur* (less commonly *bátur Jógvansar*) 'Jógvan's boat', *móti foreldurs ráðum* (\**móti ráðum foreldurs*) 'against parents' advice' (the genitive ending *-sa(r)*, added to personal names or their equivalent, and the analogical plural *-s* both have their inspiration in the spoken language). Not even the literary genitive can regularly trigger agreement in modifiers since the necessary forms are mostly lacking. We may attest *hvørs manns* 'every man's', but in *nakað annað lands kvæði* 'the ballads of any other country' the *-s* is attached only to the head word since *nakar* and *annar* have no generally accepted formal means of indicating agreement with a genitive. On the other hand, Faroese does not normally exhibit constructions like those in mainland Scandinavian in which an *-s* is attached to the last word in a genitive phrase irrespective of whether it is the head word or not (cf., however, *Djóna í Geils gøta* (lit. 'Djóni's in Geil's Street'), a street-name in Tórshavn – the official name *Djóna í Geil gøta* is never used in the spoken language and is felt by most natives to be ungrammatical). The reasons for this are the almost universal replacement of the genitive (in all but certain preposition phrases) by prepositional circumlocutions and the difficulty, even if this had not been so, of attaching the genitive *-s* to existing case endings. Norwegian *mannen med det hvite hårets kontor* 'the man with the white hair's office' thus corresponds to Faroese *skrivstovan hjá manninum við tí hvíta hárinum* 'the office of the man with the white hair'. Personal relationships, for which the prepositions *at* 'at' or *til* 'to' are commonly used, e.g. *mamma til Kjartan* 'Kjartan's mother', may also be expressed by an accusative singular following the head word: *pápi drongin* 'the boy's father' (lit. 'father boy-the'), but this construction has been losing ground in the last 40 or 50 years (earlier it was not restricted to personal relationships). The possessive adjective normally follows the noun it modifies. Faroese differs from the other Scandinavian languages that have this order in that the noun always appears without a suffixed article: *drongur mín* 'my boy'. The reverse order, *mín drongur*, also occurs, but normally only when the sense is contrastive, 'my boy'. Where an adjective is used in addition to the possessive, the latter may precede the noun without implying a contrast: *mín nýggi bátur* or *nýggi bátur mín* are alternative ways of saying 'my new boat', but 'my new boat' would normally only be *mín nýggi bátur*. Just as the genitive has largely been superseded by preposition phrases, so noun + possessive adjective may be replaced by noun + suffixed article + *hjá* ('at, with') + personal pronoun, e.g. *hesturin hjá mær* 'my horse' (lit. 'horse-the at me'), and adjective + noun + possessive adjective by preposed article + adjective + noun + suffixed article + *hjá* + personal pronoun, e.g. *tann nýggi báturinn hjá mær* 'my new boat' (lit. 'the new boat-the at me'). Unlike the genitive, however, possessive adjectives (and pronouns) are still very much part of modern spoken and written Faroese (the former especially when used to modify terms of relationship).

Since, in most respects, Faroese pronouns and anaphors behave exactly like

their counterparts in other Scandinavian languages, we will limit our discussion of them to two points: the occurrence of zero elements and patterns of reflexivization, both of which in part distinguish Faroese (and Icelandic) from virtually all forms of mainland Scandinavian. Like its sister languages, Faroese, as we might expect, has zero anaphors as the underlying subjects of infinitives (so-called 'PRO'), e.g. *vit hava nóg mikið at gera* 'we have enough to do', and allows them in 'telegraphic style', e.g. *kom heim ígjár* 'came home yesterday'. Where it differs from Danish, Norwegian and Swedish is in regularly omitting expletive *tað* 'it' from non-clause-initial position. We find: *nú regnar* 'now it's raining' (lit. 'now rains'), *kalt er úti* 'it's cold out' (lit. 'cold is out'), *spurt varð, hvussu lá fyri* 'people asked what the situation was' (lit. 'asked was how lay before'), but, e.g., *tað regnar nú* 'it's raining now', where *tað* cannot be omitted since an ungrammatical clause-initial finite verb would result (see 'The sentence' below, pp. 214–16). In one important respect Faroese differs from Icelandic: expletive *tað* is *sometimes* found in other than clause-initial position – *regnaði tað ígjár?* 'did it rain yesterday?', for example, is a possible alternative to *regnaði ígjár?*

In matters of reflexivization, Faroese, like Icelandic, follows the basic Scandinavian pattern. In a sentence with just two noun phrases, a reflexive anaphor, whether non-possessive *seg* or possessive *sín* must (except in certain cases of long reflexivization, mentioned below) be co-referential with the subject, while a pronominal or name must not. The distribution of the simple reflexive and the complex *seg sjálvan* (reflexive + 'self') is also much as in the mainland Scandinavian languages, i.e. the complex form is used by and large contrastively or to disambiguate, e.g. *Jógvan er stoltur av sær sjálvum* 'Jógvan is proud of himself', *Mikkjal bað Pætur raka sær sjálvum* 'Mikkjal asked Pætur (to) shave himself'. Because complex reflexives are bound within the clause, the co-reference in the last example must be between *sær sjálvum* and *Pætur*; if we remove *sjálvum*, ambiguity results: *Mikkjal<sub>i</sub> bað Pætur<sub>j</sub> raka sær<sub>ij</sub>*. Like other Scandinavian languages, Faroese allows object-controlled reflexivization within the clause, but only where the relation between object and reflexive phrase is that of subject and predicate, e.g. *eg sá Mortan á skrivstovu síni* 'I saw Mortan in his office', \**eg bardi gentuna við dukku síni* 'I hit the girl with her doll'. Although long reflexivization – the ability of a reflexive in a tensed clause to find its antecedent in a higher clause – is found in mainland Scandinavian, it is a very marginal phenomenon in these languages (and frowned upon by normative grammarians). In Faroese, as in Icelandic, it is a regular, though entirely optional feature. Long reflexivization is largely an indirect speech phenomenon. It is important to note, however, that the governing category in which reflexives are bound may extend far beyond the sentence containing the matrix clause that introduces the indirect speech. Thus, *sær dámdi væl musikk* 'she liked music' (lit. 'herself (dat.) liked well music') may stand as an independent sentence, but it presupposes 'she said that ...' or the equivalent – either stated or implied – as an antecedent.

Long reflexivization thus has something of the force of the German subjunctive, which is doubtless why in Icelandic it appears to correlate with this mood – an impossibility in Faroese, which has no productive subjunctive (see section 7.3).

The Faroese quantifiers can be dealt with briefly since they show few syntactic features which are not widely paralleled in other Germanic languages. We may note the following. In general quantifiers follow determiners but precede adjectives: *hesir tríggir gomlu menninir* ‘these three old men’; the pattern applies to *báðir* ‘both’ as well: *hesir báðir menninir* ‘both these men’, *teir báðir* ‘both of them’. This notwithstanding, ‘quantifier floating’ is a widespread phenomenon in Faroese; note, e.g., the varying position of *allir* ‘all’ in the following sentences: *allir vóru teir komnir í land*, *teir vóru allir komnir í land*, *teir vóru komnir allir í land*, *teir vóru komnir í land allir* ‘they had all come ashore’. In conjunction with many quantifiers nouns may appear both with and without the suffixed definite article. Often there is a difference in meaning, but sometimes only one of style, e.g. *allan dag* ‘all day (today) (acc. m. sg., AdvP)’, *allan dagin* ‘all (of some) day (acc. m. sg., AdvP)’, *eina nátt* ‘one night (only) (acc. f. sg., AdvP)’, *eina náttina* ‘one (particular) night (acc. f. sg., AdvP)’, but *nógv ár*, *nógv árin* ‘many years (nom./acc. n. pl., NP or AdvP)’ – *nógv árin* is more colloquial and has perhaps less emphasis on the quantifier. In some phrases the article is obligatory, e.g. *annar báturin* ‘the one boat (of two)’, *hin báturin* ‘the other boat’. Where numerals are used in conjunction with the definite article in noun phrases a partitive sense results: *ein ærin er hvít* ‘one of the ewes is white’ (lit. ‘one ewe-the...’), *ein tann besti lærarin* ‘one of the best teachers’ (lit. ‘one the best teacher-the’). Three residual points are worth mentioning. In the senses ‘barely’ and ‘just over’ the plurals of *knappur* ‘scarce’ and *góður* ‘good’ can precede numerals greater than one: *knappar tvær vikur* ‘barely two weeks’, *góðar tvær vikur* ‘just over two weeks’. The quantifier *mangur* is used in both singular and plural; in the singular it has the sense ‘many a’. Where the reference is to age, numbers above one normally trigger the genitive plural of *ár* ‘year’: *hon er átta ára gomul* ‘she is eight years old’.

### The Verbal Group

There are no absolutely watertight formal criteria by which auxiliaries can be distinguished from lexical verbs in Faroese, and there are therefore a number of verbs which it is hard to classify. The principal criterion must be the ability to be followed by an infinitive, past participle or supine without an intervening *at* ‘to’, but *eiga* ‘ought (inf.)’ and *kunna* ‘be able’, which share characteristics with other modals, are always (*eiga*) or occasionally (*kunna*) followed by *at*, while *biðja* ‘(to) ask’, which mostly behaves like a lexical verb, is often followed by a bare infinitive: *um menn kundu at skriva um tað* ‘if men were able to write about it’, *hann bað geva sær vatn* ‘he asked (someone to) give him (lit. ‘himself’) water’. Other criteria include the very irregular conjuga-

tions of *kunna*, *mega*, *munna*, *skula*, *vilja* (cf. section 7.3) and the ability of these verbs and also *hava* '(to) have', *vera* '(to) be', *blíva* or *verða* '(to) be (passive)', *eiga*, *fáa* '(to) get', *duga* '(to) manage' to occur in elliptical responses, e.g. *ja*, *tað hava vit* 'yes, we have', *nei*, *tað vildi hann ikki* 'no, he didn't want to' (lit. 'no, that wanted he not'). The tendency in elliptical responses otherwise is to use the pro-verb *gera* '(to) do', e.g. *lær hann ofta?* *ja*, *tað ger hann* 'does he laugh often? yes, he does' (\**ja*, *tað lær hann*); with some verbs, however, a dual response is possible, e.g. *minnist tú, hvaðani hon kom?* *nei*, *ikki minnist eg/nei*, *tað geri eg ikki* 'do you remember from where she came? no, I don't remember/no I don't' (lit. '... no, not remember I/no, that do I not').

In Faroese we often find a supine where in other Scandinavian languages an infinitive is used. This happens (a) where a supine has already occurred in the sentence, the second one being 'attracted' by the first; and (b) in connection with auxiliary verbs. Two typical examples will suffice to illustrate (a): *eg havi hoyrt hann sagt tað* 'I have heard him say it' (lit. '... said ...'), *tað hevði verið stuttligt at sæð hana* 'it would have been nice to see her' (lit. 'it had been nice to seen her'). In the first example an infinitive could be used although the supine is more common, in the second only the supine can occur. Past-tense auxiliary + supine has in many cases taken over the function of the past-tense subjunctive of the auxiliary + infinitive, and there is a minimal contrast with past-tense auxiliary + infinitive, e.g. *vit kundu rógva yvir um sunðið* 'we were able to row (inf.) across the sound', *vit kundu róð yvir um sunðið* 'we could row (sup.) across the sound (if ...)'. Note that the latter example is ambiguous between 'could row' and 'could have rowed'; it can be disambiguated by the addition of *havt* 'had (sup.)': *vit kundu havt róð yvir um sunðið* 'we could have (sup.) rowed (sup.) ...'.

In matters of tense and aspect Faroese does not differ greatly from mainland Scandinavian. The uses of present, past and perfect parallel those in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, and there are incipient progressive and inchoative constructions such as *vit sótu og prátaðu* 'we sat talking, we were talking' (lit. 'we sat and talked'), *hann sá menninar fáast við at seta gørn á vatninum* 'he saw the men putting fishing nets in the water' (lit. '... busy themselves with putting ...'), *hann er um at fara* 'he is about to go', *hon er farin at eldast* 'she has begun to grow old'. However, Faroese has nothing like the Icelandic aspectual system.

Three points concerning word order in the verbal group should be noted. Phrasal verbs that take objects may, as in Norwegian, have the object before or after the particle, but the former, e.g. *hann las brævið upp* 'he read the letter out' is more usual than the latter: *hann las upp brævið* (there are, however, deviations from the pattern, depending in part on the particular phrasal verb used and in part on dialect). Where a transitive verb and its object follow directly the auxiliary *lata* '(to) cause', the order is usually verb + object: *tey lótu mála húsin* 'they had the house painted' (lit. 'they let paint buildings-

the'), although the reverse: *tey lótu húsini mála* is not unknown. Periphrastic verbs, like their phrasal counterparts, do not form an indivisible syntactic unit; just as *brævið* may intervene between *las* and *upp*, so too may the subject between the verb and noun of a periphrastic verb, e.g. *har bar politisturin eyga við hana* 'there the policeman caught sight of her' (lit. '... bore policeman-the eye with ...').

### Grammatical Relations

Here we will be concerned primarily with the relationship between morphological case and word order, and between active and different types of passive. The retention of a morphologically distinct nominative, accusative and dative in nouns, pronouns and adjectives makes it possible to mark some grammatical relations by case. Thus the subject normally stands in the nominative, the direct object in the accusative and the indirect object in the dative. However, word order is probably more important in establishing grammatical relations since, providing it is unmarked, noun phrases with subject properties always occur leftmost, and in clauses with both direct and indirect objects, the latter precede the former. Furthermore, none of the three morphological cases can satisfactorily be used to define a particular syntactic function since they each have a variety of functions. Thus nominatives, for example, may appear as subject complements: *hann er lærari* 'he is a teacher', or as complements to the accusative in accusative and infinitive constructions: *hann segði seg vera bangin* 'he said he was afraid' (lit. 'he said himself (acc.) be afraid (nom.)'); accusatives are found in many adverb phrases: *vit hava arbeiðt allan dag* 'we have worked all day'; and datives may be subjects and direct objects as well as indirect objects: *sum óviti dámdi mær ost* 'as a child I liked cheese' (lit. 'as child liked me (dat.) cheese'), *eg møtti teimum í býnum* 'I met them (dat.) in the town'.

The example *hann segði seg vera bangin*, in which the complement to the accusative stands in the nominative (the accusative is also used in such cases), illustrates the rather tenuous grip grammatical concord has on Faroese. As long as the relationship between the words where agreement is expected is clear-cut and they stand in close proximity, the traditional rules of concord are applied. Thus, attributive adjectives never fail to agree with the nouns they modify, nor, normally, do predicative adjectives, though superlatives in predicative position may be without ending, e.g. *Paulus er størst* (for *størstur*) 'Paul is greatest'. Consider, however, the following examples: *eg rokni við tí* 'I assume that (dat.)', *tað rokni eg við* 'that (acc.) I assume', *hann gongur við einum barnavogni, fullan við dukkum* 'he walks (around) with a pram (dat.), full (acc.) of dolls', *tey nokta seg sekan* 'they deny they are guilty' (lit. 'they (n. pl.) deny themselves guilty (acc. m. sg.)'). In the last example, *seg*, which is marked only for case, seems to have influenced the form of the following adjective, which is accusative, as we would expect, but does not agree with the subject in either gender or number. Observe also how in cleft sentences

the focused constituent is attracted into the case of its counterpart in the corresponding simple clause: *tað eri eg, sum eri komin* 'it's me who's come' (lit. 'it am I who am come'), *tað er meg, tú sært* 'it's me you see'. Two further points about case marking in Faroese should be noted. First, personal names and titles (of books etc.) are often left uninflected. Second, idiosyncratic case is often reanalysed; thus, dative subjects alternate in many cases with nominatives, and nominative objects, common in Icelandic, are seldom found, e.g. *mær dámar/eg dámi ferskan fisk* 'me likes/I like fresh fish', *honum tókti skattin ov lítlan* 'he thought the tax was too small' (lit. 'him (dat.) thought tax-the (acc.) too small (acc.)') (cf. also the remarks on the passive below).

Present and past passives in Faroese are formed with the auxiliary *verða* (lit. 'become'; *verða* alternates with *blíva*, the latter being especially common in the spoken language) + past participle, and perfect passives with *er vorðin* (*er blivin*) (lit. 'is become') or, more usually, just *er* + past participle: *hetta verður broytt* 'this is being changed, this will be changed', *hetta er broytt* 'this is changed'; the first example corresponds to the active *tey broyta hetta* 'they are changing this, they will change this', the second to *tey hava broytt hetta* 'they have changed this'. The dative objects of active clauses usually become nominative subjects in the passive equivalents, e.g. *tey hjálptu honum* 'they helped him (dat.)' : *hann varð hjálptur* 'he (nom.) was helped'. Where the active clause contains both a direct and an indirect object, it is usual for the direct object to become subject in the passive equivalent, e.g. *hann seldi bóndanum kúnna* 'he sold the farmer the cow' : *kúgvín varð seld bóndanum* 'the cow was sold to the farmer', although where for reasons of focus the direct object cannot easily become subject, the indirect object takes its place; in such cases the subject remains in the dative and the object often, but not always, in the accusative, e.g. *tey ynsktu honum eina góða ferð* 'they wished him a good journey' : *honum varð ynskt eina góða ferð* 'he (dat.) was wished a good journey (acc.)'.

Passives in Faroese may also be formed with the *-st* suffix, which corresponds typologically but not always in function to the *-s(t)* of the other Scandinavian languages. The *-st* passive is particularly common in complex verb phrases consisting of modal auxiliary + infinitive, e.g. *alt má etast* 'everything must be eaten', but it also occurs regularly in the finite forms: *so sigst* 'so it is said', *nógv fekst fyri fiskin* 'much (money) was obtained for the fish'; perfect passives, where the *-st* is added to the supine, are distinctly uncommon. Apart from marking the passive, the *-st* suffix has a number of other functions, not all of which can easily be defined in broad terms. To certain verbs it imparts a reflexive sense, and may then sometimes alternate with the reflexive pronoun, e.g. *setast* or *seta seg* '(to) sit down' (lit. 'set oneself'); to other verbs, when used with a plural subject, it gives reciprocal meaning, and the appropriate form of *hvønn annan* 'each other' is occasionally a possible alternative, e.g. *kennast* or *kenna hvønn annan* '(to) know each other'. With some verbs the *-st* suffix has only one reading, but with others



it may have two or more, and interpretation will depend on the make-up of the rest of the clause; thus, *kennast* may also be passive as in *ikki eitt livandi kendist* 'not a bite (from a fish) was felt' (lit. 'not anything living...'), or combine with a preposition and become transitive, e.g. *kennast við* (+ object) '(to) recognize, (to) acknowledge'. Some *-st* forms on their own have a transitive reading, e.g. *minnast* '(to) remember', *óttast* '(to) fear', but the majority of those which are not passive, reflexive, or reciprocal tend towards an ergative sense, e.g. *opnast* '(to) open', *kvalast* '(to) suffocate' (both intransitive), *gerast* '(to) become' (cf. *gera ein ríkan* 'make someone rich'), and even – with a dative object – *nærkast* '(to) approach' (cf. the transitive *nærka* '(to) move closer'). With a number of verbs the finite *-st* form can have a generic passive reading indicating possibility, e.g. *tað fæst* 'it can be obtained, it is obtainable', *tað sást* 'it could be seen, it was evident'; an active equivalent of the first example might be *tað er at fáa* 'it is obtainable' (lit. 'it is to obtain'), or *tað ber til at fáa tað* 'it is possible to obtain it'. Ergativity is not restricted to *-st* forms; we find *halda* '(to) keep (intr.)', *krevja* '(to) be required', *selja* '(to) sell (intr.)' (a recent import from English via Danish), and also some relaxation of the strong form = intransitive–weak = transitive dichotomy (both this and ergative *selja* are frowned upon by purists). However, the norm in Faroese is for there to be a separate intransitive verb corresponding to the transitive, e.g. *bróta* '(to) break (tr.)', *brotma* '(to) break (intr.)'; there is some justification for seeing *-st* ergatives as part of this pattern and for classing, for example, *gerast* and *gera* as different lexical items.

### The Sentence

The principal matter to be considered here is word order. One or two brief points will also be made about negation and subordination. Faroese, not unexpectedly, is a verb-second language, both in the Generative and the more traditional sense. Its basic word-order patterns for the most part parallel those in other Scandinavian languages, but it exhibits a few idiosyncrasies, mainly arising from its typological position between mainland Scandinavian and Icelandic. Fundamentally, there are seven slots in declarative and six in interrogative and embedded clauses. These may be filled as follows. Declarative clauses: (1) topic; (2) finite verb; (3) subject, pronouns (indirect object, object, or subject complement); (4) modal, negation, sentence, and certain other adverbs; (5) infinite verbs; (6) noun phrases (indirect object, object, subject complement, object complement); (7) adverbials, e.g. *her man fólk ongantíð hava fingið fisk fyrr* 'people have surely never caught fish here before' (lit. 'here will people never have caught...'). Interrogative clauses: as declaratives, but without the topic position, e.g. *man fólk nakrantíð hava fingið fisk her?* 'have people ever caught fish here, I wonder?' (lit. 'will people ever have caught fish here?'). Embedded clauses (except verb-first conditionals, which have the same order as interrogatives): (1) subject; (2) modal, negation, sentence, and certain other adverbs; (3) finite verb; (4); (5); (6) as

(5); (6); (7) in declaratives; this is the pattern of embedded clause word order in mainland Scandinavian too, but in Faroese the position of (2) and (3) may be reversed, as is normally always the case in Icelandic, e.g. (*hóast*) *fólk ongantíð hevur fingið fisk her*, (*hóast*) *fólk hevur ongantíð fingið fisk her* ' (although) people have never caught fish here '.

Unlike the mainland Scandinavian languages, Faroese allows a fair amount of deviation from this order, though the principal deviations are literary and lend an archaic or bookish flavour to the style. Four possibilities will be mentioned here, three affecting declaratives and one embedded clauses. Because expletive *tað* is often omitted when it is not needed as a clause-introducer, the subject may appear in position (6), e.g. *her hevur verið ein maður* 'there has been a man here' (lit. 'here has been a man'), although *her hevur ein maður verið* is perhaps more usual. After the conjunction *og* 'and' in narrative style the finite verb may precede the subject (so-called 'connective inversion'), e.g. *tollarar tustu umborð, og hevði skiparin úr at gera* 'customs officers rushed on board, and the skipper was extremely busy' (lit. '... and had skipper-the out-of to do'). In older Faroese verb-initial order was more common, but except after *og* (and occasionally after *men* 'but' in imitation of the *og* construction) it is no longer part of the living language. Occasionally we find verb-third in written Faroese, e.g. *vit hugdu trúliga, men onga sól vit sóu* 'we looked steadily but no sun we saw'. This appears to be deliberate alteration of the normal word order for stylistic effect, but it is not uncommon and does not strike native speakers as in any way ungrammatical. In embedded clauses Faroese shares with Icelandic the phenomenon called 'stylistic fronting'. Essentially this means the moving of some (virtually any) element from the right of the finite verb into an empty subject position, e.g. *meðan farið varð í kirkjuna* 'while people were going to church' (lit. 'while gone was into church-the'), *tað, ið allan munin ger* 'that which makes all the difference' (lit. '... all the difference makes'), *hann spurdi, hvussu til stóð* 'he asked how things were' (lit. '... how to stood').

We have seen that the normal position for negation is (4) in declarative, (3) in interrogative, and (2) or (3) in embedded clauses. This affects not just the adverb *ikki*, but other negatives such as *eingin* 'none, no one, nothing, no', e.g. *tí hevur hann onga eydnu havt* 'therefore he's had no luck', *hóast hann ongar pengar átti/hóast hann átti ongar pengar* 'though he had no money'. Negatives may however appear in other pre-infinite verb positions, and are especially common initially, where they are placed to achieve slight emphasis: *ikki var hann nakar oldingur* 'he (certainly) wasn't an old man', *ongu hevði hann eydnuna* 'he had no luck (at all)'; or to frame marked negative interrogatives: *ikki er hann ræddur fyri mær?* 'he isn't afraid of me, is he?' (the positive equivalent uses the tag *ikki sannheit?* 'not truth?', e.g. *hann var heima ígjár, ikki sannheit?* 'he was home yesterday, wasn't he?'). Because of the inability of negatives to appear after the infinite-verb position, *eingin* is often replaced by *ikki nakar* 'not any(one/thing)', e.g. *hann hevur ikki havt*

*nakra eydnu* 'he hasn't had any luck'. As pointed out in section 7.3, *nakar* is not interchangeable with *onkur* 'some(one/thing)' in negative clauses. This is part of a wider distinction, paralleled in other Germanic languages, between non-assertive and assertive forms, the choice between which is determined by whether or not they come within the scope of a negation. Non-assertive *nakrastaðni* 'anywhere', *nakrantíð* 'ever', *heldur* 'either', *longur* 'any longer', *enn* 'yet', etc., thus contrast with assertive *onkustaðni* 'somewhere', *onkuntíð* 'sometime (or other)', *eisini* 'also', *enn* 'still', *longu* 'already', etc. Two final points about negation are worth recording. First, Faroese has no regular cases of multiple negation. Second, there is an optional construction involving focusing negation: *ikki ... men* 'not ... but' is sometimes replaced by *ikki ... uttan* 'not ... but (rather)'.

Subordination in Faroese is both finite and non-finite. Apart from the usual range of subordinating conjunctions introducing finite clauses, there are a few which may be followed by an infinitive or supine clause, e.g. *uttan at missa andlit* 'without losing face', *fyri at stýra hesum viðurskiptum* 'in order to control these affairs', *við at gjørt stýrið føroyskt* 'by making (sup.) the management Faroese'. In addition to this type of non-finite subordination, accusative or nominative + infinitive constructions are commonplace. Accusative + infinitive is found where there is an active verb in the matrix clause, e.g. *eg sá hann fara* 'I saw him go', *hann hevði sagt seg verið kokkur* 'he had said he was a cook' (lit. '... said himself been cook'), *teir hildu hana liggja deyð á gólvinum* 'they thought she was lying dead on the floor'. Nominative + infinitive occurs with a passive matrix verb and involves subject-to-subject raising, e.g. *ikki er hann sagdur at vera vitugur maður* 'he is not said to be an intelligent man', *dansurin hoyrdist ganga lystiliga* 'the dance was heard going merrily'.

## 7.5 Lexis

The vocabulary of written Faroese derives mainly from the Old Norse of the ninth-century settlers, that of spoken Faroese from the same source and from Danish. It is in the lexicon that the wide gulf between the written and the spoken language can be most clearly seen. While the claim that almost any Danish lexical item can be used in Faroese is probably exaggerated, it is certainly true that vast numbers of everyday words are Danish loans. Purists have fought an energetic and protracted battle against Danicisms in Faroese and have in large measure succeeded in eradicating them from the written language or preventing their appearance there at all. A number of obvious Danicisms can be found in the language of journalism, but there are few in other forms of writing and very few indeed in the works of lexicographers. This means that many of the most common words on people's lips cannot be found in any dictionary. An instructive example is the Faroese for 'ticket'. The word almost all native speakers use when talking is *billett*, from French via

Danish, but what they write, officially at least, and what one finds in dictionaries is *ferðaseðil* (lit.) 'journey note'. To discover the gender and inflections of *billett* one must make enquiries of a native speaker. Certain neologisms have been gaining ground in the spoken language recently owing to their prevalence on radio and television, and it may be that many Danicisms will eventually be displaced. Neologisms are chiefly formed (a) by the coining of new words through the use of derivative suffixes; (b) by extending the meaning of existing words; or (c) by compounding, e.g. (a) *telda* 'computer' (cf. *tal* 'number', *telja* '(to) count'); (b) *góðska* 'quality' (original meaning 'goodness'); (c) *orðaskifti* 'debate' (lit. 'word-exchange'). Many Faroese neologisms are borrowed from Icelandic, either directly, e.g. *mentan* 'culture', or indirectly, e.g. *fólkaræði* 'democracy' (cf. Icelandic *lýðræði*, *lýður* 'people' is hardly known in Faroese).

In spite of the policy of purism, a number of 'international' terms have entered Faroese vocabulary and seem likely to be permanent fixtures, e.g. *telefon* 'telephone', *politi* 'police', *tomat* 'tomato'. One does not however see the great influx of English words and phrases that has taken place in the mainland Scandinavian languages, although Faroese is not immune from the pressure of Anglo-Saxon culture; it is only a few years, for example, since banks were able to inform their customers that they were 'on line'. On the whole, though, the influence of English on Faroese has tended to be of a different kind – longer-term but gentler – than on mainland Scandinavian. Because of its geographical situation, natives of the British Isles have found their way up to the archipelago in small numbers throughout its recorded history. This has given Faroese loans not found in other Scandinavian languages, e.g. *fitur* 'nice' (Eng. *fit*), *trupul* 'difficult' (Eng. *trouble*, but cf. also Icelandic *trufla* '(to) disturb'), *fokkaður* 'knackered' (Eng. *fuck*), and the now archaic *batlari* (Eng. *bottle*). Long before the English speakers there were visitors and settlers familiar with *Q*-Celtic, and they too left their mark on Faroese vocabulary, e.g. *kjadlámur* 'the left hand' (Gaelic *lámh chearr*), *korki* 'lichen' (from which purple dye is made) (Ir. *corcra* 'purple (dye)'), *sornur* 'device for drying corn' (Ir. *sorn* 'kiln'), *dunna* '(tame) duck' (Gaelic *tunnag*). Nor can the existence in Faroese of *Q*-Celtic modes of expression be ruled out: *tað er ótti á mær* 'I am afraid' (lit. 'there is fear on me') has no counterpart in other Scandinavian languages, but matches perfectly Irish *tá eagla orm* (lit. 'is fear on-me').

## Further Reading

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