

# Forgotten words. An investigation of Hans Christian Ørsted's neologisms and their place in modern Danish

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Hans Christian Ørsted (1777-1851), the celebrated Danish physicist, was also a prolific creator of new Danish words. Several of his neologisms are still in active use, not only in everyday vernacular, e.g. *lynafleder* 'lightning conductor', *billedkunst* 'visual art', *tidevand*, 'tide'), but also in scientific discourse (*ilt* 'oxygen', *opdrift* 'buoyancy', *rumfang* 'spatial volume'). This paper investigates the linguistic heritage of H.C. Ørsted. Which of his new lemmas are still known by the average Danish language user? Which other influences has Ørsted had on modern Danish? These questions are approached by establishing a formal model of cognitive accessibility of lexical items (for language users individually as well as collectively) using the formal framework of *categorical grammar*. Then, the model to the entire body of Ørsted's lexical productions and report are applied to the results. The paper concludes with a discussion of Ørsted's oeuvre as an inspiration for present-day computational linguistics.

**KEYWORDS:** H.C. Ørsted; Danish language; morphology; nomenclature; corpus linguistics; categorical grammar