

The Danes and the English language – then and now

JACOB THØGERSEN & BENT PREISLER

In this article, we examine how Danes' self-perceived competence in, contact with and attitudes towards the English language have changed from the turn of the millennium to the present day. The method is two questionnaire surveys, representative of the Danish population in large, conducted in 1995-1996 and 2022, respectively. The survey in 1995-1996 is the one that formed the basis for Preisler's study *Danskerne og det engelske sprog* (1999). The survey in 2022 was conducted as part of the research project English and Globalisation in Denmark (Enida) and was (largely) a replication of Preisler's study. In both surveys, respondents were asked the same questions in order to keep as many things as possible constant and ensure a basis for comparison. The results show that 1) younger generations report higher competences than older generations, and that a person's perception of their own competences is relatively stable throughout life. In other words, Danes' English proficiency has increased as less proficient generations disappear and new, more proficient generations emerge. 2) Contact with English has generally increased, also during an individual's lifetime, and it is especially the 'productive' contact (speaking and writing) that has increased, more than the 'receptive' (hearing and reading). 3) Danes' attitudes towards English have become more extreme, both in a positive and (especially) in a negative direction. In addition to presenting the results, we consider the socio-historical factors that have caused the changes, and we discuss whether it is even possible to survey attitudes twice with the same questionnaire.

KEYWORDS: English in Denmark; language attitudes; language contact; globalization