

## The Gaelic language on The Isle of Arran, and topics of other languages

Written, publishing and photos by Linden Alexander Pentecost (a UK resident), published Wednesday June 15th 2022. This ebook is published from the UK on my website [www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk](http://www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk) Some of the articles within this book were previously published elsewhere, before being taken offline and republished here. Please note this is copyrighted including the photos, which I took myself, except for the last photo which is of Norway in summer which was taken by my grandmother and included with her permission. I thank my mother and father and the rest of my family for continuing to encourage me to work on these languages.

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# The Gaelic language on The Isle of Arran – A' Ghàidhlig air Àrainn

– text and photos by myself, Linden Alexander Pentecost, the original work is a part of my 'lethou' language project between 2008 and 2011. Mainly written (including with photos) in 2008-2009, published 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020, republished online on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020 after corrections in days previous.

Arran is a mountainous island in the Firth of Clyde, the rocky moorlands and forests of Galloway to the south open to the wide Firth of Clyde, separating Gall-Gaelic Scotland from Argyle-Gaelic Scotland. To the north and east of Arran are the mountains and sea lochs/fjords of southern Argyle. The native Arran Gaelic has not been used on the island now for decades, but at one time it was the first and only language of the island. Even to other Argyle Gaelic speakers, the Arran dialect sounded peculiar and unusual.

The island was isolated in its dialect, but people from Arran would readily adapt their dialect to be more easily understandable by other Gaels. Arran has had a long and fascinating geological history, there are granite mountains, limestone cliffs and sandstone hills to the south. These different environments also meant that the Gaelic was spoken a little differently in the south and north of the island. The south of the island with its green and fertile valleys has had a long human history. Back in the Stone Age time, the tribal people of Arran began to farm, and started to build stone monuments.

We don't know why they were built, or why they chose certain places and stones, but it's fair to say that these early people shared a special closeness to their land, the monuments may go back to an animistic religion where all nature was alive and somehow would affect our human lives. Before Gaelic arrived on Arran there was probably some kind of Cumbric or Pictish spoken here, these Celtic languages come from the P-Celtic branch along with Welsh, Breton and Cornish. The stone age

monuments are much older, and it appears that these people disappeared without much of a trace. It's sort of possible that they contributed in some way to the ancestry of the Gaels, but from the Gaelic myths and histories I have read there are no indications about what these places were for. A common story is that the stone circles are petrified witches, obviously a story to try and make sense of what they are. Their original builders are lost to time, and even the ancient Gaelic tradition doesn't remember who built them or why.

The Gaelic of Arran by Nils Holmer is the resource I used to learn a little about Arran Gaelic, the basics that I have written below about Arran (and Rathlin Gaelic) are quite common knowledge among people interested in Gaelic dialects, but this resource (which I do not own) gives a much more detailed account of Arran Gaelic. The photos included here were taken by me (Linden Alexander Pentecost).



**Eilean Àrainn** 'elan Eran' - Isle of Arran

Above: the Machrie Moor standing stones on the south of Arran, 'Machrie' **Am Machaire** is from Gaelic **machair**, which originally meant an expanse of land or fields. In Scottish Gaelic and English it can mean more specifically the fertile land behind the coast that is built on old sands and dunes. The Arran Gaelic used some words more commonly, there are many 'torrs' on the south of the island, a word normally associated with the Brythonic languages in Cornwall, Devon and Cumbria. One is **Torr Meadhonach** near Lochranza; while this word exists in Gaelic it may be of Pictish origin originally. In other senses the vocabulary of Arran was a bit closer to Irish in terms of some of its word choices. But normally the vocabulary was pretty much the same.

**Torr a' Chaisteal** is an Iron Age fort on the island, which would date to around the time that Brythonic would have been spoken, but I suppose that 'torr' names probably have an Old Irish explanation too.

The main differences with Arran Gaelic lie in the pronunciation of words. Arran Gaelic was much 'softer' sounding, it didn't have the 'kh' or 'h' pre-aspiration sounds of Gaelic, indeed the guttural 'ch' sounds in their broad and slender versions tended to become 'h' or not to be pronounced at all, giving Arran Gaelic a different flow from one word to the next. A word such as *bliadhnaichean* 'years' would be pronounced as though the 'ch' is silent, aka **bliadhnaidhean**.

The broad 'ch' in *machair* sometimes became a 'h' as well. Unlike in Standard Scottish Gaelic, the pronunciation of b, d, g was closer to phonemic b, d and g no matter where in the word, so that Sannaig 'Sannox' would be pronounced with a final 'g' and not with a 'k' as in standard Scottish Gaelic. Also this applies to slender pronunciation, so slender 'd' in *théid* sounds like 'j' and not like 'tch'. Arran Gaelic pronounces the broad final -dh or as though a broad 'g' without lenition, so *feadh* 'duration, length' and *smaoineachadh* 'thinking' take a final -g, spelled here as **feag** and **sm̀yintinn**.



Above: the coastline of Southern Arran. Words **tràich** – beach, standard: *tràigh*, **tìr** – land, **mwàth** – good, standard: *math* pronounced ‘mweh’

A unique thing for Arran is that certain broad consonants when followed by ‘a’ are pronounced with a ‘w glide’, so standard spelling ‘ba’ ‘fa’ ‘ma’ are pronounced like ‘bwa’ ‘fwa’ ‘mwa’. In the old way of speaking, the following ‘a’ becomes an ‘e’ sound [ɛ] so sound like ‘bwe’ ‘fwe’ ‘mwe’. This pronunciation can be found in words like *bàta* – boat, *math* – good (these are standard spellings, on Arran, ‘boat’ might be written as **bwáta**. There is no way to write Arran Gaelic as all Gaelic dialects tend to use the same spelling rules and there is no ‘w’ in standard Gaelic, and in any case writing the dialects differently may distance dialects from the bigger Gaelic language.

The pronouns in Arran Gaelic were slightly different. Like in Irish the form of you singular without lenition was used on Arran, but not that commonly, *tu* instead of *thu*, Irish *tú*. The word *iad* for ‘they’ was pronounced like ‘ad’ or ‘ed’. These can be written in my improvised dialect spelling as **tu** and **ad** or **ád**.

Below: the mountains of Arran taken from Goat Fell, the highest of which is Goat Fell – **Gaoda Bheinn** in Gaelic, *gaoda* might come from the Norse word for a goat. This could be written on Arran as **Göda Bheinn**.



Above: view from part of Goat Fell - *Gaoda Bheinn*

Of the Arran Gaelic vowels, as we have already mentioned the ‘a’ can become ‘e’ in pronunciation, this further extends to the long à which becomes a longer version of the ‘e’ sound. There is a difference in a way that ao is pronounced, it sounds a bit like the German ö and sometimes it can sound like the Gaelic é [e:] (no-longer in written Gaelic), similar to the Munster Irish pronunciation. This ö sound can also come from ‘ei’, like in *creidsinn* – believing, pronounced like ‘kröj’shinn’, which I write as **cròidsinn**.

On Arran the eu is sometimes pronounced [e:] and not ‘ia’, but this depends on the word and some words on Arran have ‘ia’.

Many of these traits of Arran Gaelic were used interchangeably. By the time the Gaelic was recorded by Nils Holmer it is clear that pronunciations like ‘ha’, ‘va’ were also used alongside ‘he’ ‘vwe’ for *tha*, *bha*. The original

Arran pronunciation seems to have added emphasis and reference to the story being about Arran or related to Arran, whereas by this day the more ordinary pronunciation was known and adapted to contextually. Probably to help communicate with other Gaelic speakers from beyond the Isle of Arran. Arran Gaelic was also different because it used a glottal stop, as in 'uh-oh' where 'th' was found broad and between the vowels, like in *rathad* – road, which I write in Arran Gaelic as **raʔad**.

### Will Arran Gaelic return?

Because there are not many speakers of Arran Gaelic, it would not be a simple task to teach the old Gaelic there. A person would have to deduce the Arran pronunciation of each word, when the Gaelic media and official guides would give very different pronunciations. This isn't simple, it isn't as easy as following rules because in Arran the sounds may be pronounced differently in different words, perhaps making the standard spelling quite inapt for using and speaking Arran Gaelic when there are no fluent speakers to show learners.

Arran Gaelic could come back, if there is enough interest. Gaelic is taught on Arran and there is interest, but Arran Gaelic is not taught. For Arran Gaelic to be reestablished it would have to be taken out of the realm of official learning and promotion and be given to the people of Arran to use in their daily lives. This is the difference between Gaelic being a second language of education and Gaelic being a used island language. Currently the Gaelic being taught is not the 'native Gaelic' and perhaps the people of Arran would embrace Gaelic again with even more enthusiasm, if it was their native island Gaelic that was being taught and spoken. All of the original Arran place-names are from Gaelic, Lochranza – *Loch Raonasa*, Brodick – *Breadhaig*, Glensannox – *Gleann Shannaig*. The name Arran isn't totally understood, if it's not Gaelic, it must come from the previous Brythonic language spoken here. Scottish Islands have poetic and song names in Gaelic, Mac an Tàilleir (2003) notes that the poetic name for Arran is *Arainn nan Aighean Iomadh*, which I believe means 'Arran of the many stags', presumably pronounced 'Eran nan eye-an imag'. In some places *aighean* refers to fawns or young deer.

Below: Lochranza on North Arran – *Loch Raonasa, Loch Rönasa*



### Early Gaelic on Arran

Gaelic would have arrived on Arran with the coming of Dál Riada, the medieval Irish kingdom which crossed the sea to Argyle. It brought with it Gaelic and the Christian faith. There is however a cave on the south of Arran that contains an Ogham inscription, but I believe the cave is not easily accessible. It would make an interesting photo-project for next time though! Ogham was used during this period, but comes from the Primitive Irish period just after the Iron Age. The Pictish language in Scotland also used Ogham, but less liberally.

I am unsure if the Arran Ogham inscription is in an early form of Gaelic or Pictish, but in any case, the alphabet was brought from Ireland. So perhaps even before Dál Riada there would have been some early Irish influence on Arran. Which is not surprising, Arran after all isn't very far



across the North Channel from Ulster. Across the North Channel lies Rathlin Island off the coast of Antrim.

The Gaelic of Rathlin was 'Irish', but grammatically it was more like Scottish Gaelic in some ways. It employed Scottish Gaelic plurals and other choices. The Gaelic of Rathlin also shared the ö sound with Arran Gaelic. But apart from a few similarities, it is important not to overstate them. Each island in the Gaelic world had its own distinct Gaelic that developed there, and Rathlin Gaelic lacked the distinctive 'w' sound of Arran, and the change from 'a' to 'e'.



Above: the coast of Arran with dark clouds. Words *muir* – sea, *feasgar* – evening, *uisge* – water, *sgòthan* - clouds

### Poetry in Arran Gaelic – Bàrdachd

**O, Àrainn nan Aighean Iomag  
Thá do Ghàidhlig an-seo a-ri?isd  
Chi mi Dia nad bheanntan móra  
Agus thá do ghuth a' fwás àrd**

Oh Arran of the many stags  
Your Gaelic is here again  
I see God in your big mountains  
And your voice is becoming loud

Poem written by, myself. And another below.

Arran is a rather magical island. All islands are, but maybe Arran spoke to my heart especially. There was definitely something special I felt when walking on the mountains and in the glens of Arran; and when swimming in the waters, and being in the wee glens at dusk. Arran certainly opened my poetic side, and made me look at life itself a little differently.

*May Gaelic be forever alive in the glens of Arran  
In the names of the birds and of the hills  
And of the names of all beasts and plants  
Great and small  
May Gaelic guide us home*



Above: **beanntan móra air Àrainn** – great mountains on Arran  
Arran's scenery is unlike anywhere else in Scotland, or possibly the world.  
Although I wouldn't know that of course. These mountains are made of  
granite,  
a rock-type which isn't so common in Britain, nor in Scotland. There are  
cliffs on South Arran of sandstone, and limestone at Corrie.



Above: the author/myself/*mise fhéin* paddling on a small puddle, Isle of Arran, taken 2008.

## Lismore Gaelic

Gaelic on the island of Lismore is in some ways close to Arran, but it does for example have pre-aspiration, unlike Arran Gaelic for the most part. A distinguishing feature of Lismore Gaelic is that the broad velarised L becomes [w] or, in some cases [v] as written in the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland: questionnaire materials collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh. For example, I choose to write this in the written language e.g. **cluais** – ‘ear’ might be written as **cwuais** or as **cvuais**.

## Gaelic in the East Highlands

Photo below (on next page): gnarly looking Scots Pine trees in semi-open forest close to Aviemore These forests are beautiful and calming places to be, even the foggy air, spelling of pine, makes me feel very close to nature. I like to think on how very similar trees were around in the times of dinosaurs, and so smelling the scent of the pines feels like something in dreamtime, more or less unchanged for hundreds of millions of years. Except of course humans weren't around at the same time as dinosaurs, and maybe their sense of smell was different to ours. Nevertheless, these forests are magical and sacred places, they are a like a sacred space to me.



Strathspey and the Cairngorms represent a well known area of natural beauty and indigenous Scots pine forests. The Gaelic dialects of this region were typically 'eastern' dialects, so for example the word for

‘summer’, **samhradh**, would often not possess the final syllable, and so would become **samhr** or **saur**, the second example is inspired by information in the Gaelic dialects that nasalisation was also not always present in this word. These dialects can also contain a [z] sound, from what I understand this may appear after the definite article, for example **an samhradh** could be written **an zaur**. The information in the previous paragraph, I picked up from studying the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland: questionnaire materials collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh

Another curious thing about Strathspey Gaelic indicated in *the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland: questionnaire materials collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, is the appearance of what is written as [ɬ], I don’t know the exact quality of this sound or what closeness it has to a voiced alveolar lateral fricative. It appears in words such as **saille** ‘salted’, written here as **sailɬt**. and **soillsich** – ‘shine’, may be written as **soilɬtich**.

Note that these phonetic changes aren’t always specific where indicated in *the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland: questionnaire materials collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh. The spirit of the pine in some Gaelic traditions may be connected to the letter A, or Ailm of the Ogham alphabet, which is thought may be referring to a Scots pine tree. Not only are these trees very ancient in Scotland, one of the first trees to have arrived after the Ice Age; but as I mentioned earlier, they are pretty similar to trees that are hundreds of millions of years old. I feel that is a statement of a beautiful spirit that continues to help us. These pine forests are such special and beautiful places, and it is extremely important that we protect them and allow them to remain wild. I feel that the letter Ailm in Goidelic spirituality is related to the cross, as it appears as a cross in the Ogham alphabet, when as a single vowel upon a line. It is connected I feel to the purifying scent of pine, and to the way in which pines are often angular and may show crosses in the dimensions of their branches and general shape. I feel perhaps most importantly, that Ailm is about new beginnings. The drawing together of north, east, south and west, to find a centre, in the sacred and enchanting protective forests. Please do not put these forests at risk of fire damage.

## Gaelic on the Small Isles



Photo above: An Sgùrr, Eilean Eige. The Small Isles are considered part of Argyll, and their Gaelic dialects share much in common with other Northern Argyll dialects. Although there are differences, on the Isle of Canna the Gaelic can share some more ‘Gàidhlig Meadhan na Mara’ features, features of Gaelic that are less localised and which seem associated with the general passage of contact via the sea between island communities. The dialects of Eigg and Rùm were quite different though, although in the case of Rùm, there are not as far as I am aware, any records of how Gaelic was spoken there, and Rùm might also have had another ancient language present until relatively recently, I believe less than two thousand years ago. For Eigg there are recordings and some information about the dialect, including from the ... Eigg Gaelic is known for the Eigg gluck, a glottalised broad velarised l, [w̥lʲ], for example *cluais* - ‘ear’, - **cw̥luais**, *làidir* – ‘strong’, - **w̥làidir**. Note that I learned about the [w̥] from *the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland: questionnaire materials collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh.

## An Ghaelig i dTír Chonaill



The photo above is the estuary of **Gaoth Barra**, in **Tír Chonaill** also known as **Condaidh Dhún na nGall** and in the Caighdeán as *Contae Dhún na nGall*. The Irish of Donegal is Ulster Irish, and within Donegal the language may vary quite considerably. For me personally, Donegal Irish dialects are perhaps the most distinctive sounding. Many of the things in the prosody and sound of Donegal Irish may occur in other dialect areas, but other things are specific to Donegal. This includes that for example the vowels may have a quite different sound in Donegal Irish and also that the 'ch' may be a much softer sound, although arguably this is a common Ulster Irish feature in general. I know far more about Scottish Gaelic dialects than I do those of Irish, but what I have always felt is that, in language, poetry and music, the nature and spirit of Donegal shines full of hope, and many of us feel it.

## Introduction to The Northern Sámi language and landscapes

Written and published by Linden Alexander Pentecost, originally on archive.org. Published on June the 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. Photos also by Linden Alexander Pentecost. (I am from the UK, and my little knowledge of the Sámi languages does not by any means make me an expert). This article including the photos are not copyrighted, I want this to be available to people. I would appreciate being accredited though.

Note that the autumn pictures in this section, are photos which I originally published under the pseudonym *Lauri Karvonen* in the book *Autumn on the Border* on blurb. However rather than choosing a Finnish name, I chose instead to use my own name and to make these photos more available. Some of the content from that book will be in this course. My name on blurb is Linden Pentecost despite the pseudonym, although, it was an old account.

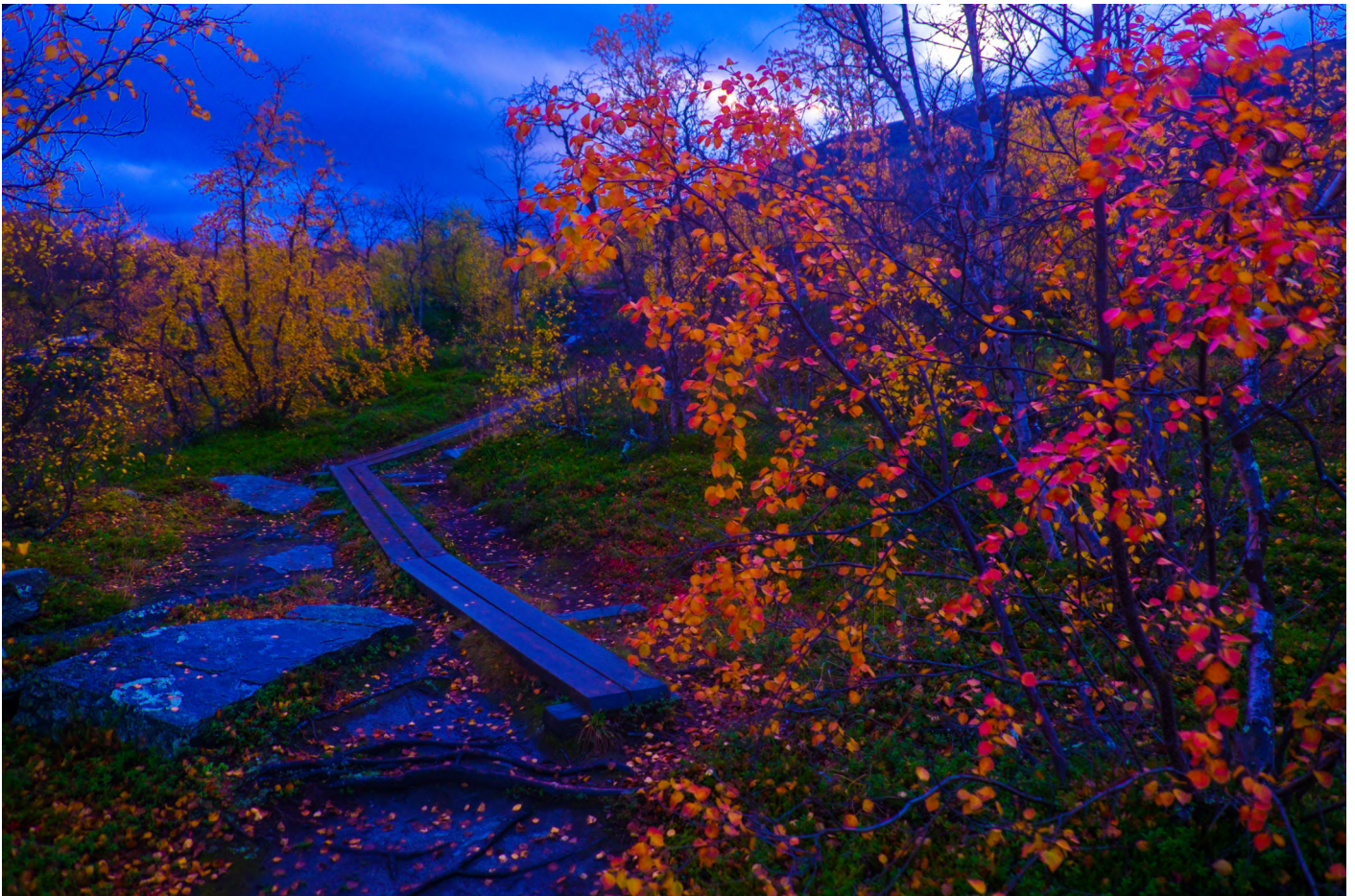


Photo above: autumn birch leaves, like glowing embers and stars. In Northern Sámi, autumn is **čakča**, and a birch tree is **soahki**. These beautiful trees are located close to the lake of **Duortnosjávri**, known in Meänkieli as Torniojärvi and in Swedish as Torneträsk. These trees are a



part of the vastness of nature that is Sápmi, the most northern part of mainland Europe, and homeland of the indigenous Sámi people.

Sámi languages are Uralic languages, like Finnish and Meänkieli, but belonging to a different branch of Uralic. The Sámi language with the largest number of speakers is Northern Sámi, **davvisámegiella**, when distinguishing it from other Sámi languages; it may more commonly be referred to as **sámegiella** 'Sámi language'.

Northern Sámi is spoken in the most northern parts of Sweden, and in the most northwestern parts of Finland. Northern Sámi is spoken in the three northern Norwegian counties of Finnmark, Troms and in a part of northern Nordland. There are three main dialect groups of Northern Sámi: the Finnmark dialects, which have the largest number of speakers, the coastal Sea Sámi dialects, and the Torne Sámi dialects, which are spoken in areas, including that in the photo around **Duortnosjávri**. Torne Sámi dialects are also spoken in Northern Finland and the Ofoten region of northern Norway. Not far to the south of **Duortnosjávri**, a different Sámi language is spoken, namely Lule Sámi. Lule Sámi is spoken around the Lule Valley in Northern Sweden, and in around Tysfjord in Northern Norway. Tysfjord is situated to the south of the Torne North Sámi speaking area of Ofoten and Sortland. The alphabet of Northern Sámi consists of these letters:

**a, á, b, c, č, d, đ, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ŋ, o, p, r, s, š, t, ʦ, u, v, z, ž**

Northern Sámi spelling is not similar to that of Swedish and Norwegian, and this will be noticeable on signs. Often the Northern Sámi sounds written by **č** and **š** are transliterated to *tj* and *sj* in the orthographies of Swedish and Norwegian on maps. The valley formation of **Čuonjávaggi**, 'goose valley', is transliterated in Swedish on maps as Tjuonavagge for instance. **Čuonjávaggi** is located just to the south of lake **Duortnosjávri**.

**b** – is often pronounced closer to the English 'p' in 'speak'

**c** – is pronounced like the 'ts' in 'let's'

**č** – is pronounced like the 'ch' in 'cheese'

**d** – is often pronounced closer to the English 't' in 'step'

**đ** – is pronounced like the English 'th' in 'this'

**f** – pronounced as in English  
**g** – often pronounced closer to the ‘k’ in ‘skip’  
**j** – pronounced like the ‘y’ in ‘yes’  
**k** – as in ‘score’ or sometimes aspirated as in ‘kite’  
**l** – is pronounced as in English ‘lake’  
**m** – is pronounced as in the English ‘mother’  
**n** – is pronounced as in English  
**ŋ** – is pronounced like the ‘ng’ in ‘song’  
**p** – pronounced as in English, sometimes aspirated as in ‘pip’  
**r** – in some dialects of Northern Sámi is noticeably rolled  
**s** – as in the English ‘sing’  
**š** – as in the ‘sh’ in ‘ship’  
**t** – like the English ‘t’ or sometimes aspirated  
**ʈ** – pronounced like the English ‘th’ in ‘thank you’  
**v** – pronounced like a softer version of the ‘v’ in ‘vast’  
**z** – pronounced like a ‘d’ followed by ‘z’, e.g. like ‘dz’  
**ž** – is pronounced like the ‘j’ in ‘jug’. Note that ‘v’ is pronounced more like ‘w’ when not as a syllable onset, for example in words such as **jávri** – ‘lake’, and **lávlla** – ‘song’. Depending on context, voiced sounds **b, d, g** can sound voiceless, like **p, t, k**, especially at the start of a word. **k, p, t** can also be pre-aspirated after a vowel.



The photo above ( on the previous page), shows the valley of **Čuonjávággi**. This wild landscape is very sacred I feel, and I feel that it must be respected, as must be the ancestors who watch over it.



Above, the island of Austvågøya in Northern Norway, July. I am unsure what the North Sámi name for the island is, but it is one of the Lofoten islands, and in Northern Sámi, Lofoten is **Lufuohtta**. The town of Svolvær is also located on this island. The type of Northern Sámi spoken in this region was one of the Tornesami dialects, which go across from Finland into this part of Northern Norway. They are also spoken in Northern Sweden from Finland towards Gällivare, Kiruna and Abisko.

Like the Finnish language, the Northern Sámi language has a number of noun cases or noun suffixes. Northern Sámi also has consonant gradation, like Finnish, a process in some ways similar to consonant mutation in Celtic languages, although the positioning and grammatical meaning is completely different.



Photo above: the city of Narvik, **Áhkanjárga** in Northern Sámi, with the june rays of midnight sun shining magestically across the Ofotfjorden, Northern Sámi: **Uffuohtta**. In Northern Sámi, ‘sun’ is **beaivi**, which is also the word for ‘day’.

<b>mun in ipmir</b>	minä en ymmärrä	I don’t understand
<b>čakča</b>	syksy	autumn
<b>muhto</b>	mutta	but
<b>datamašiidna</b>	tietokone	computer
<b>sátnegirji</b>	sanakirja	dictionary
<b>diehtosátnegirji</b>	tietosanakirja	encyclopedia
<b>báiki</b>	paikka	place
<b>beana</b>	koira	dog
<b>boazu</b>	poro	reindeer
<b>bussá</b>	kissa	cat
<b>leat</b>	olla	to Be

Although **boazu** and *poro* are thought to be of a connected etymology, the sound differences are pretty interesting I think. It’s interesting also that Northern Sámi has **datamašiidna** for ‘computer’, which is from the Norwegian *datamaskin* of the same meaning. Finnish has *tietokone*, literally ‘knowledge device’. And it’s interesting that for the words for ‘dictionary’ though, Northern Sámi and Finnish have the same cognate word connected to knowledge.

## An introduction to the sounds of Finnish

Finnish is a Uralic language, a large family of languages that stretch from the Urals to the Baltic. Most Uralic languages are spoken in Russia, but three groups are spoken in Europe. Hungarian is one of them, and the only Uralic language in central Europe. Hungarian is related to Finnish and Estonian but only distantly, its closest relatives are actually in the Ural Mountains.

The other branches of the Uralic family in Europe are the Sámi and Finnic languages. The Sámi languages are indigenous to the interior of Scandinavia, and includes for example Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi in Finland. Other Sámi languages are spoken in the other areas of the north.

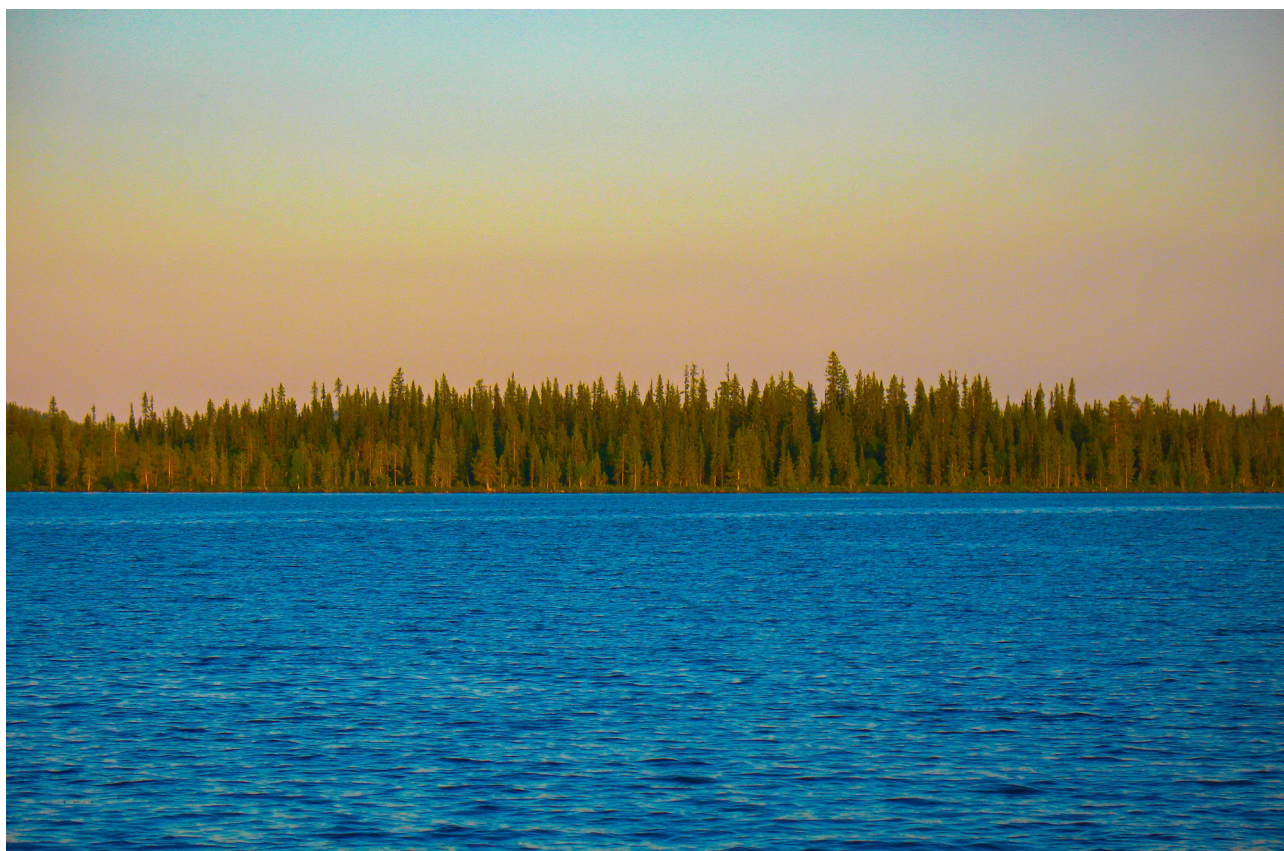


Photo above: typical nature of Northern Finland, in **Lapin Lääni** and close to **Muonio**.

The Finnic group includes two main languages, Finnish and Estonian. Estonian has two main types, north and south. South Estonian is not the standard, it is among other lesser known Finnic languages in that area. In Russia there are the Veps and Votic languages, which can be quite similar to the Karelian language in Russia and Finland. Karelian and Finnish have important phonological differences, but they are very similar. Finland also has many dialects, including the southwestern dialects and the eastern Savonian dialects. Similar languages to Finnish are also spoken in Sweden and in Norway, called Meänkieli and Kven. These are, like dialects in Northern Finland, Peräpohjola dialects.

Finnish is not related to the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish languages. And how its grammar and sounds work is not in any way similar. Finnish has very few voiced stops, like b, d, g, and z. These only occur in loanwords, the letters ng represent a single sound. Finnish does not have aspirated consonants like English does. One of the hardest things about learning Finnish for me is keeping this in mind, and that the letters k, p and t are pronounced closer to like in the English words 'score', 'explore' and 'store'. Not as in 'cap', 'pen' and 'top'. In English we don't distinguish these sounds, they are allophones of each other and vary depending on their position. Finnish on the other hand, does not possess these aspirated sounds, or the voiced stop sounds like b and z.

Generally though, Finnish pronunciation is very regular, and the language is easy to read from the spelling. The Finnish alphabet includes many of the same letters as the English alphabet. The original sounds of Finnish are written:

**a, d, e, ng, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, v, y, ä, ö**

The *d* is a weak sound, and the only voiced sound used natively in standard Finnish. But the d has a tendency to disappear for a lot of speakers, especially in quicker speech.

**h** is like the English h, but for some speakers it becomes more guttural in certain positions

**k** is pronounced closer to like the English sound in 'skip', not as in 'kite' or 'camp'.

**l, m and n** are pronounced similarly to the English l, m and n

**ng** is as in the English word 'song'

**p** is closer to like the p in 'spin' or 'spore', not as in 'pitch' or 'plod'.

**r** is a rolled r sound, similar to the r for many speakers of Italian and Spanish

**s** is like the English s, and never a z sound

**t** is like the t in stop or stare, not as in tip or tongue.

**v** is like the German w and slightly softer than the English v

**d** may be pronounced as a complete 'd' sound, like in the word 'dance', but this is more what is known as 'book-speech', speaking as though writing. The d sound wasn't originally in Finnish, but as people started to speak more like the written language, [d] emerged for some speakers. To some speakers of colloquial Finnish, the 'd' becomes a tapped 'r' sound, when 'but' is pronounced like 'bur'. For other speakers it becomes silent, hence **nähdään** and **kahdeksan** may sound like **nähään** and **kaheksan**.

**r** is rolled strongly, sometimes lengthened to show emphasis.

**s** the Finnish 's' is close to the English 's' in 'store', but with the mouth more closed, sounding a bit more like a whistle. This isn't that uncommon as languages go.

**t** is pronounced as a dental t by many speakers, with the front of the tongue placed behind the top teeth.

Finnish has eight vowels, **a, e, i, o, u, y, ä** and **ö**.

**a** is similar to the a in 'father'

**e** is similar to the French é

**i** is like the English vowel in leap, not as in 'bin'

**o** is like the English o in ghost

**u** is like the English u in moon

**y** is like the German ü or French u

**ä** is like the English a in fan, not like the German or Swedish ä sounds

**ö** is like the German ö

These vowels can be either long or short, the long versions are doubled and written **aa, ee, ii, oo, uu, yy, ää, öö**

Finnish has several diphthong sounds, which are pronounced as one vowel followed by the other. So **au** is similar to the vowels in the word now, **äy** sounds like an **ä** followed by **y**, **yö** sounds like **y** followed by **ö**.

The consonants can occur double as well, this prolongs the sound of the consonant, but the second consonant is always a part of the next syllable in the word. This is important for understanding the flow and prosody of Finnish.

**kissa**, a cat, sound like **kis-sa**

**alla**, above, sounds like **al-la**

**kymmenen**, ten, sounds like **kym-me-nen**.



Photo above: a tranquil lake close to some hills, not far from **Kemijärvi** in Northern Finland.



Finnish has something called vowel harmony, or **vokaaliharmonia**, which means that all the vowels in the connected syllables of a word must agree with each other. **e** and **i** are neutral vowels, so can occur with any of the others. Words with **a**, **o** and **u**, cannot have **ä**, **ö** and **y**, and vice versa. All noun and verb ending have to agree to this rule.

Finnish does not use many prepositions like the English to, from, over, and against. In Finnish these are normally indicated using suffixes on the end of a noun, or using postpositional words which come after the noun.

A common locative suffix, the inessive case **-ssa** or **-ssä**, often translates to 'in', e.g. **talo** – a house, **talossa** – in a house, **huone** – a room, **huoneessa** – in a room.

If the noun contains **ä**, **ö**, **y**, then the ending has to be changed to **-ssä**. **Jyväskylä**, a city in central Finland, **Jyväskylässä** – in Jyväskylä.

## Iceland and Icelandic

Icelandic is an insular north-Germanic language, closely similar to the Old West Norse language, and via that to Faroese and to some extent the languages of mainland Scandinavia.

Some of the sound changes found in Icelandic, are also found in some Western Norwegian dialects for example. Icelandic spelling and pronunciation is an interesting topic, but I won't delve into it here, as I want to talk more about Icelandic in the landscape of Iceland. Unlike say Danish or Norwegian, Icelandic doesn't have many loanwords from other languages, including in the sciences, often an Icelandic word is pretty different from the Norwegian, Swedish or Danish. Faroese is pretty conservative with its vocabulary formation as well, but perhaps slightly less so than Icelandic. For example, the Norwegian word for 'tourist' is *turist*, whereas in Icelandic it is **ferðamaður**, Norwegian *nasjonalpark* for 'national park' is **þjóðgarður** in Icelandic.

Icelandic	Norwegian	Swedish	English
ég	eg	jag	I
þú	du	du	thou
hann	han	han	he
hún	ho	hon	she
það	det	det	it, that
við	me	vi	we
þið	dokker, di	ni	you plural
þeir, þær, þau	dei	dom	they



The photo above is from near **Kirkjufell**, which means ‘church mountain’. The photo itself looks towards **Grundarfjörður**, with a river and lagoon in the foreground. On the next page I describe the magic I feel there.

In Iceland I found it very easy to feel the spirit in nature and to understand how Iceland, a vivid and untamed land, reflects so accurately some of the themes in Norse mythology, such as the worlds of fire and ice, **muspelheim** and **niflheim**.

The Icelandic language and mythology also gives us English speakers a glimpse into the reality behind many of our words and concepts. In Icelandic, **heim** is 'home' and is cognate to the English word 'home'.

But in the examples of these two words, we may see that **heim** may refer to something vaster than a domestic place, in Icelandic mythology, **heim** may essentially refer to a realm, on this world, partially celestial perhaps, connected to this world and perhaps visible in its patterns, but distinct from **Miðgarður**, which refers to our, central, physical world. Kirjufell may be such a place, where perhaps one may feel the magic of those other worlds, in the clouds, sounds of waterfalls, and in the gentleness of the amber midnight sun.

The photo on the page previous shows a very beautiful and magical part of Iceland, where I felt this magic.

## A Norwegian Dialect comparison



Photo above: a typical fjord in southwestern Norway

The following is a short comparison of different Norwegian dialects. I am very appreciative to all those who helped me with this. Note:

.These examples are written accordingly to how folk may tend to write that dialect, the spellings do not distinguish all sounds. For instance the pronunciation of **ei** is often not distinguished, although in Northern Norway it is generally not [ai] or [æi].

.Palatal consonants vary in realisation and there is also no preferred way of writing them, that I am aware of. Some prefer to write palatals by placing **j** after the consonant, e.g. **lj**, **nj**, whilst others might take about a sort of pre-palatalisation, written often by placing **i** before the consonant, a bit like how slender vowels influence slender consonants in Scottish Gaelic, e.g. **aille** for **alle**, **kainn** for **kan** etc.

.Most of these dialect spellings don't distinguish between the different pronunciations of **kj** and **tj**. Note that Gren. Stands for Grenland

English	Bokmål	Gren.	Bø	Vossa.	Ålen	Hessdal	Leka	Onøya
I	jeg	jæ	eg	eg	e	e	eg	eg
you (s)	du	du	du	du	du	du	du	du
he	han	han	han	han	hain	hainn	hannj, n	hainn
she	hun	hun	ho	hó	ho	ho	ho	ho
it (c)	den	den	den	dan	dæin	deinn	dennj	den
it (n)	det	de	det	da	det	det	de	dæ
we	vi	vi	vi	me	vi	vi	vi	vi
you (p)	dere	dere	dekkán	dikkan, de	dåkk	dokk	dokk, di	dåkker
they	de	dem	dom, dæi	dei	døm	døm	dæm	di
the water is deep	vannet er dypt	vanne er jupt	vatnet e djupt	vatné è jupt	vatne e jupt	vatne e djupt	vatne e jufft	vatne e jupt
the fjords are deep	fjordene er dype	fjordane er jupe	fjordane e djupe	fjórane è jupe	fjoLæin e djup	fjoLan e djup	fjoLan e jup	fjoLan e jup
the beach was long	stranden var lang	stranna va lang	stránda va lang	strándè va lang	stranda va lang	stranda va lang	strannja va lang	strainnæ va lang
the fish were	fiskene var	fiskene var	fiskane va	fiskane va	feskæin va	fiskan va	feskan va	feskan va
I can	jeg kan	jæ kan	eg kan	eg kann	e kan	e kainn	eg kannj	eg kainn
I think	jeg tenker	jæ tenkær	eg tenker	eg tenkjé	e tænkje	e tenkje	eg tænki	eg tænk
I thought	jeg tenkte	jæ tenkte	eg tenkte	eg tenkte	e tenkte	e tenkte	eg tænktt	eg tænktt
I have thought	jeg har tenkt	jæ har tenkt	eg har tenkt	eg ha tenkt	e har tenkt	e ha tenkt	eg ha tænktt	eg ha tænktt
I come	jeg kommer	jæ kommær	eg kjem	eg kjemma	e kjæm	e kjæm	eg kjæm	eg kjæm
I came	jeg kom	jæ kom	eg kom	eg komm	e kom	e kom	eg kom	eg kom
I have come	jeg har kommet	jæ har kommet	eg har kommi	eg è komminn	e har kømmi	e ha kømmi	eg ha kommi	eg ha kommen
I go	jeg går	jæ går	eg gjeng	eg gaor	e går	e går	eg går	eg går
I went	jeg gikk	jæ gikk	eg gjekk	eg jekk	e gikk	e gjekk	eg gjekk	eg gjækk
I have gone	jeg har gått	jæ har gått	eg har gjingi	eg ha jenjé	e har gått	e ha gått	eg ha gått	eg ha gådd
I have been	jeg har vært	jæ har vært	eg har vori	eg ha våré	e har vør	e ha vørri	eg ha vørri	eg ha vørre
I would like to	jeg vil gjerne	jæ vil gjerne	eg vil gjønne	eg ve jedna	e vil gjæinne	e vil gjænne	eg vil gjern	eg vell gjærne

a boat	en bát	en bát	æin bát	ain baot	en bát	en bát	ein bát	ein bát
a tidal stream	en strøm	ei strøm	æin straum	ain straum	en strøm	en strøm	ein straum	ein strøm
the boat	báten	báten	báten	baot'n	báten	báten	bátn	báten
a man	en mann	en mann	æin mann	ain mann	en mainn	en mainn	ein mannj	ein mainn
the man	mannen	mannen	mannen	mann'n	mainn'	ma'ainn	manj	mainn
an island	en øy	en øy	æi øy	ai áy	i øy	i øy	ei øy	ei øy
the island	øyen	øya	øya	áyè	øya	øya	øya	øyæ
a woman	en jente	ei jente	æi jente	ai jenta	i jeinte	i jeinte	ei jennjt	ei jeinntæ
the woman	jenten	jenta	jenta	jentó	jeinta	jeinta	jennjtå	jeinntæ
boats	båter	båtær	båtar	baota	båta	båtæ	båta	båtæ
women	jenter	jenter	jenter	jentå	jæinta	jeinta	jennjtår	jeinnte
the boats	båtene	båtane	båtane	baotané	båtæin	båtæinn	båtan	
the women	jentene	jentene	jentun	jent'na	jæintæin	jeintainn	jennjtån	
the big stone	den store steinen	den store steinen	den store stæinen	dan stóré staidn	dæin store ste'en	deinn store ste'en	dennj store stein	deinn store stein
the big tree	det store treet	det store tre'e	det store treet	da stóra tréé	det store tree	det store treet	det store tree	dæ store treet
the big stones	de store steinene	di store steinane	dæi store stæinane	dai stóré stainané	di store stenæin	døm store stenainn	di store steinan	di store steinan
the big houses	de store husene	di store husa	dæi store husa	dai stóra husè	di store husa	døm store husa	di stora husa	di stora husan
to travel	å reise	å reise	å ræise	å raisa	å rese	å rese	å reis	å reis
I travel	jeg reiser	jæ reiser	eg ræiser	eg raisé	e rese	e rese	eg reisi	eg reis
I travelled	jeg reiste	jæ reiste	eg reste	eg raisté	e reste	e reste	eg rest	eg for
I have travelled	jeg har reist	jæ har reist	eg har rest	eg ha raist	e har rest	e har rest	eg ha rest	eg ha førre
to swim	å svømme	å svømme	å svømme	å symja	å svømme	å svømme	å svøm	å svømm
I swim	jeg svømmer	jæ svømmær	eg svømmær	eg symmá	e svømme	e svømme	eg svømmi	eg svømm
I swam	jeg svømte	jæ svømte	eg svømte	eg sumdé	e svømte	e svømte	eg svømte	eg svømte

I have swum	jeg har svømmet	jæ har svømmi / svømt	eg har svømt	eg ha sumd	e har svømt	e ha svømt	eg ha svømt	eg ha svømmt
to eat	å spise	å ete	å eta	å eta	å åtå	å eta	å eta	å et
I eat	jeg spiser	jæ eter	eg et	eg etå	e et	e et	eg et	eg et
I ate	jeg spiste	jæ åt	eg åt	eg aot	e ot	e åt	eg åt	eg åt
I have eaten	jeg har spist	jæ har eti	eg har eti	eg har eté	e har iti	e har etti	eg ha eti	eg ha ette
I am called	jeg heter	jæ heter	eg hæiter	eg haité	e hete	e hete	eg heita	eg heitæ
I dream	jeg drømmer	jæ drømmer	eg draumer	eg dråymé	e drømme	e drømme	eg drømmi	eg drømm
here	her	hær	her	her	her	her	her	her
there	der	dær	der	dar	der	da	der	der
sure	sikker	sikker	sikker	sikkor	sikker	sikker	sekker	sekker
to	til	til	te	té	te/åt	åt	te	tell
for	for	for	fær	fø	ferr	fer	ferr	førr
under	under	under	onder	óndé	puinni	punni	onnjer / ponnj	uinner
over	over	over	over	yve/øve	over	ovai	åver	åver
through	gjennom	gjennom	gjønnum	jønó	gjænnøm	gjennom	gjønnå	gjønnum
between	mellom	mellom	mellom	mydló	i mijlla	milla	millå	mellom
on	på	på	på	pao	på	på	på	på
with	med	med	med	mè	med	me	med	mæ
which /that	som	som	som	só	som	søm	som	som
what?	hva?	hva?	hått?	ka?	ker?	ker?	ke?	ka?
where?	hvor?	hvor?	hårre?	kar/kór?	kerhæn?	ker hen?	kor?	kor?
why?	hvorfor?	hvorfor?	håffer?	kåffø?	keffer?	kefer?	keffer?	keffør?
how?	hvordan?	hvordan?	håssen?	kórlais(ne) /kåss'n?	kest?	kest?	kelles?	korsn?

I hope this book was an interesting read, and I thank especially those who helped me to gather information about Norwegian dialects. Thank you for reading.