Language Planning as a Sociolinguistic Experiment
Ernst Jahr

This book conveys insights into the social and political motivations and driving forces behind Norwegian language planning. Norwegian language development from 1814 has, since Einar Haugen’s book Language conflict and language planning: the case of modern Norwegian (1966), been one of the most celebrated examples of language planning in the world. This book not only tells the rest of the story till 2014, but also introduces a new analysis of the Norwegian development altogether, drawing heavily on the development and results of sociolinguistic and language contact research. The year 2014 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Norwegian nation following centuries of Danish rule. This book thus gives an account of that entire 200-year period, and analyses how Norwegians defined, fought over and developed their own independent Scandinavian language (with two written standard varieties, Bokmål and Nynorsk), differentiating it from Danish and Swedish, through language planning. Nearly two centuries of Norwegian language planning and conflict have encompassed an extraordinary and politically motivated sociolinguistic experiment (1938) which led to decades of intense linguistic struggle and which has had no parallel anywhere in the world. It contributes to language planning theory as well as to the rapidly emerging field of historical sociolinguistics.

The Emergence Of A Socialist Theory Of Language Planning: A Sociolinguistic Experiment
Ernst Håkon Jahr

in Language Planning as a Sociolinguistic Experiment: The Case of Modern Norwegian
The social dimension of the conflict between Riksmål and Landsmål up to 1917 was introduced and paralleled within Riksmål itself with the introduction, in the 1917 reform, of low-status dialect forms, which would be optional to the individual writer, into the standard. The political turmoil following the 1917 reforms made it obvious that the nationalist ideology of the previous period was insufficient as a basis for the development of one amalgamated written standard. What was needed was a theory of language planning aimed at crossing the sociolinguistic borderline between popular and upper-class speech. This theory was supplied by the Labour party, which promoted the ‘People’s Language’. This concept was meant to cover the core of all popular dialects, on which a pan-Norwegian (Samnorsk) standard could be based. If successful, this (future) standard would represent all varieties of spoken popular speech (but excluding upper-class speech). A demotion of upper-class speech was necessary for a new pan-Norwegian standard to emerge. This policy was carried through by the reforms of Bokmål and Nynorsk of 1938. A daring sociolinguistic experiment was inherent in the reform.