

## Re: Literary phonetic alphabet

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-09/msg00929.html>

---

- *From:* Trond Engen <[trondnet@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:trondnet@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Sun, 28 Sep 2008 17:18:37 +0200
- 

John Atkinson skreiv:

Another example: Norwegian and Swedish (the main dialects, anyway) are much closer to each other than SE and Scots, and are readily mutually comprehensible. But, apparently for historical reasons, they use different spelling systems. The difference is not so great that a Norwegian can't read Swedish and vice versa, but it makes it very obvious at first glance which language you're looking at. I'll leave it to the locals to tell us whether this is a Good Thing or not, but, AFAIK, no one has ever proposed that the Norwegians should switch to the spelling system used by their larger neighbour.

It's not necessarily a Good Thing that Swedish is so different in writing. When I was seven or eight and traveled through Sweden I had a hard time understanding written Swedish, and I know there's many who don't get beyond that threshold. Likewise, or rather moreso, the other way. I've several times been stopped and asked for help by Swedish tourists who don't understand written Norwegian. Once, in Bergen, a Swedish couple couldn't find "Håkongsgaten" on their map. The reason was the spelling "Haakongsgaten" with double a, an archaism that's everywhere in Danish and Norwegian names but almost unknown in Swedish. Also our preserved hv- (or Nynorsk kv-) in pronouns can be difficult. I use to think that Swedish would have been better off without some of the elements of the spelling reform of 1903 (or so).

—  
Trond Engen  
– local  
.