

The Faroese-Italian Dictionary - An attempt to convey linguistic information concerning the Faroese language as well as information about the culture of the Faroe Islands.

Gianfranco Contri

In 2004 Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, the Academy of the Faroe Islands, published the Dizionario Faroese-Italiano / Føroysk-Italsk orðabók, the first bilingual dictionary of the Faroese and Italian languages. The dictionary has 632 pages and includes 14.850 headwords, plus a few hundred sub-headwords within the relevant single entry. It was Professor Jørgen Stender Clausen of Pisa University in Italy who suggested that I compile this dictionary, and I carried it out working at the Department of Faroese Language and Literature of the University of the Faroe Islands. The dictionary is the result of some years' work and of the indispensable advice I was given by the lexicographical consultant Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen, and of the help of several Faroese and Italian collaborators. The dictionary is an attempt to create a practical means to help an Italian-speaking visitor or student to make acquaintance with both the Faroese language and the culture of the Islands, and also useful for Faroese meeting Italian-speakers on their travels. The differences between the two languages (with some structural features showing diversity), and the cultural differences between the linguistic areas (the respective everyday vocabulary is different), had to be dealt lexicographically. The compilation of the dictionary has not followed any existing lexicographic model: the list of headwords, the structure of the entries and the graphics are the result of research and experiment. One result, among others, is that many terms are related to the needs of a visitor or student interested not only in the language of the Faroe Islands but also their culture, and that therefore some entries are a combination of linguistic and 'cultural-encyclopedic' information.

In 2004 Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, the Academy of the Faroe Islands, published the *Dizionario Faroese-Italiano / Føroysk-Italsk orðabók*, the first bilingual dictionary of the Faroese and Italian languages (Fig. 1).

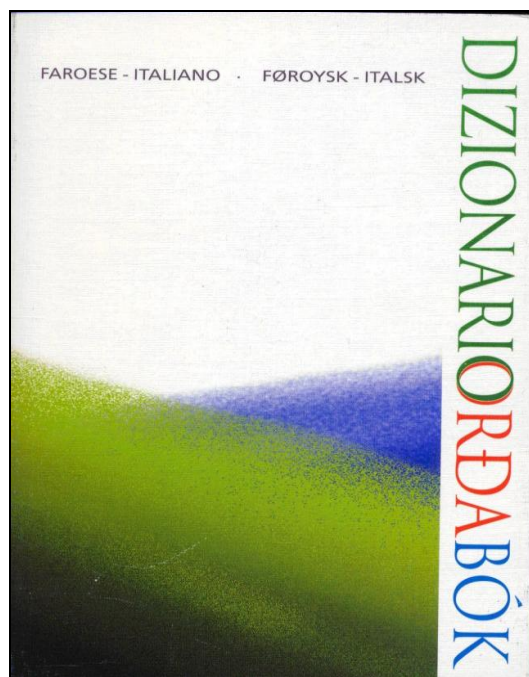


Fig. 1

The dictionary has 632 pages, about 35 of which consist of introduction, in a 13 cm x 18 cm format, and includes 14.850 headwords, plus a few hundred sub-headwords within the single entry and connected with the main headwords.

The compiling of this dictionary was suggested to me by Professor Jørgen Stender Clausen of the Department of Linguistics (Dipartimento di linguistica) at Pisa University in Italy, and I

carried it out working at the the Department of Faroese Language and Literature (Føroyamálsdeildin) of the University of the Faroe Islands (Fróðskaparsetur Føroya) in Tórshavn, the capital.

The Faroese-Italian dictionary was the result of some years' work and of the indispensable advice given to me by the lexicographical consultant Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen, of the Department of Faroese Language and Literature mentioned above, and of the help of the Faroese and Italian collaborators Eyðun Rannváarson Jensen, Óli Mortensen, Galileo Ferraresi, Massimo Lazzerini, Heini Justinussen and many others mentioned in the first pages of the book, such as the germanist-scandinavist Andreas Sanesi and the artist Ole Wich. Each of these collaborators was consulted with regard to his own competence in the various sectors of specialized terminology treated in our dictionary (for instance lexicography, linguistics, grammatics, local history, economy, traditions, literature, natural sciences, seafaring, meteorology, book graphics, computing, gastronomy, arts, music, sports, and others).

When I started this work, during a stay of some months in the Faroe Islands in 1995, I wondered about the possible characteristics of such a task. The historical and cultural points of contact between Italy and the Faroe Islands have been very limited, although translation of literature has been done in both directions, often through the Danish language. Indeed, the geographical, historical and cultural differences between the two linguistic areas - one placed in the Northern Atlantic Ocean and the other at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea – could be stimulating from a lexicographic point of view.

The project began by attempting to structure and to develop a small Faroese-Italian dictionary, mainly for Italian-speaking visitors to the Faroes but also for Faroese meeting Italian-speakers on their travels. And which, I hoped, would be a practical means to help an Italian-speaking 'curious' visitor or student of Scandinavian/Nordic languages to make acquaintance with both the Faroese language and the culture of the islands. Hence, from the beginning, I have tried to keep in mind this sort of possible user/reader of the dictionary. Becoming increasingly aware that realising this goal involved both linguistic as well as technical/graphical skills, so that a small but useful work could be the outcome, I hoped.

In the dictionary there is often evident a certain pedagogical approach, whose aim is also to introduce, in the most 'friendly' way possible with a printed dictionary, an Italian-speaker to the diversity of the structure of the Faroese language. And help them through it, so that, I hoped, they will not get too discouraged or frustrated by the differences from their own language, and therefore get to know the beauty and charm of this North Atlantic tongue.

Even the size of the printed dictionary, a 'wind-jacket pocket size' which takes into consideration also the climate of these Northern Atlantic islands, tries to adapt to the needs of its possible user/reader. For example, I had in mind a traveller or someone interested in making an attempt to communicate with the locals in their own language, and wishing to have a wider and deeper knowledge of the land they are visiting. A dictionary, in short, that one could take from the pocket and consult on the spot.

During the work on the dictionary it was of the greatest help to be able to use the lexicographical computer program named *RiSt* (a Faroese acronym for *Ritsjórnaforrit*, i.e. 'Word Editing Program'), developed by Heini Justinussen, Petur Zachariassen and Martin Zachariassen at the University of the Faroe Islands.

Section 3. Reports on Lexicographical and Lexicological Projects

This bilingual Faroese-Italian dictionary is the first of its kind to be published, as stated above. No existing model was available for use in compiling it.

The list of headwords and the structure of the entries - the content and the position of its various components - are the result of research and experiment. The graphics of the dictionary have also been carefully considered with a view to easing consultation.

With respect to the nearly 15.000 headwords of our dictionary - plus the few hundred derived forms set inside the entries - these were not taken from other already existing dictionaries or lists of words. The list of headwords of our dictionary was built up day by day during the compilation, and it was the result of the analysis of various sources: lexicographical works, school and general texts, words seen or heard in the Faroese mass media and in the daily life and work, which I annotated on a notepad.

The two principal sources, which I used from the start as the basis for our work, were the monolingual Faroese dictionary for children *Orðaskyn - Mín fyrsta orðabók* by Ingrid Sondum and others (Sondum 1994), and the phrase booklet *Frasario italiano-faroese* which, with the collaboration for the phonetic parts of the germanist-scandinavist Andreas Sanesi, I edited in 1984 (Contri 1984). From the first I took about 3.000 headwords, and from the second I used items which I had rendered into headwords from the inflected forms.

I must also point out the invaluable importance for our task of the daily and systematic reference to the *Føroysk orðabók*, the new monolingual dictionary of the Faroese language by Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen and others (Poulsen 1998), a consultation which, thanks to the kindness of its editors, was made possible even before its publication (Fig. 2).

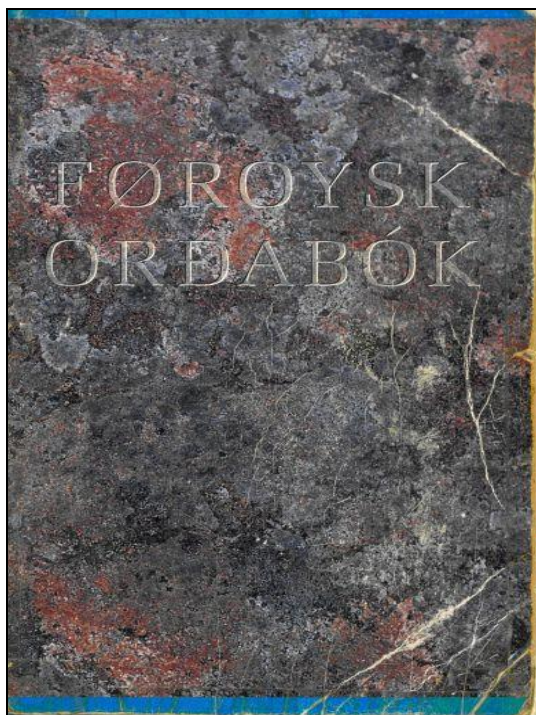


Fig. 2

A lexicographical work linking two languages, Faroese and Italian, poses a problem that we had to face from the start, seeing that there were no previous dictionaries of this sort. The aspects of the problem are:

- a) that, although they belong to the same Indo-European family, they have some differing structural features (for example in Faroese an inflectional system of cases and substantives in the definite forms);
- b) and that Faroese and Italian have an everyday vocabulary very different from each other (this because everyday life in the Faroe Islands presents a quite different situation from that in Italy, and maybe not only in Italy but also compared with many other countries, even within the Nordic/Scandinavian area).

Now, with the help of a few examples, I will try to show you some of the solutions which, among others, have been adopted in the effort to tackle lexicographically some of these linguistic and cultural aspects, and therefore some of the features that characterize our Faroese-Italian dictionary.

1. *In the dictionary extensive use has been made of cross-references which point from the inflected forms of some Faroese words to the main headword, in order to help the Italian-speaking user/reader to find the meanings more easily. These cross-references are used mainly for the most common substantives (also in the definite form), adjectives, verbs, and pronouns (Fig. 3):*

<i>Inflected form</i>	<i>Grammatical category of the inflected forms</i>	<i>Dictionary headword ('English translation')</i>	<i>Cross-reference as it appears in the dictionary</i>
degi	substantive, singular, dative	dagur (‘day’)	degi → dagur
døgum	substantive, plural, dative	dagur	døgum → dagur
báturin	substantive, singular, nominative, definite form	bátur (‘boat’)	báturin → bátur
manni(n)	substantive, singular, dative (in the definite form)	maður (‘man’, ‘human’, ‘being’)	manni(n) → maður
veðri(ð)	substantive, singular, dative (in the definite form)	veður (‘weather’)	veðri(ð) → veður
kalt	adjective, neuter, nominative/accusative	kaldur (‘cold’)	kalt → kaldur
køld	adjective, feminine, nominative	kaldur	køld → kaldur
sigur	verb, present, 2nd/3rd singular person	siga (‘to say’)	sigur → siga
segði	verb, preterite, 1st/2nd/3rd singular person	siga	segði → siga
søgdu	verb, preterite, 1st/2nd/3rd plural person	siga	søgdu → siga
eri	verb, present, 1st singular person	vera (‘to be’)	eri → vera
mær	pronoun, dative	eg (‘I’)	mær → eg

Fig. 3

2. *In the entries the inflected forms are written in full, and not only with the endings as is often done by convention in many dictionaries. The reason for this choice is that it is difficult, or impossible, for an ordinary Italian-speaker to separate exactly the different parts of a Faroese word between the stem and the ending, particularly in the many compound words present in this language. The criteria applied for indicating the paradigms vary depending on the grammatical category of the headword; in order to facilitate the consultation, such criteria, apart from being duly dealt with in the introduction at the beginning of the book, are also*

exemplified in the graphic guides situated inside both the cover-flaps, which make it easier to consult the book also when the volume is already open. Here are some examples (Fig. 4):

- The substantives are indicated in the headword in the *nominative singular*, followed by two paradigms in the:
 - 1) *genitive singular*
 - 2) *nominative plural*

For example: **bátur** *sm* (**báts bátar**) ...
bók *sf* (**bókar bøkur**) ...
orð *sn* (**orðs orð**) ...

- Adjectives are indicated in the headword in the *masculine singular*, followed by two paradigms in the:
 - 1) *feminine singular*
 - 2) *neuter singular* (and sometimes also by other useful indications such as *comparative* and *superlative*):

For example: **vakur** *agg* (**vøkur vakurt**) ...
kaldur *agg* (**køld kalt**) ...
ungur *agg* (**ung ungt; compar yngri superl yngstur**) ...

- Verbs are indicated in the headword in the *infinitive* mood, followed by five paradigms (and sometimes also by other useful indications such as the *imperative*):
 - 1) *present tense in the 3rd person singular*
 - 2) *preterite tense in the 1st/2nd/3rd person singular*
 - 3) *preterite tense in the 1st/2nd/3rd person plural*
 - 4) *supine*
 - 5) *past participle*

For example: **skriva** *v* (**skrivar skrivaði skrivaðu skrivað skrivaður**) ...
lesa *v* (**lesur las lósu lisið lisin**) ...
lata *v* (**letur læt lótu latið latin; imper lat latið**) ...

- Pronouns are indicated in the headword in the *nominative*, followed by three paradigms in the:
 - 1) *accusative*
 - 2) *dative*
 - 3) *genitive*

For example: **eg** *pron* (**meg mær mín**) ...

Fig. 4

3. Many terms in the dictionary concern meteorology and nautical conditions, for instance winds and marine currents, given the importance that such knowledge has in the Faroe Islands' daily activity, and therefore in conversations (Figs. 5 and 6):

eystfall *sn senza pl (eystfals)* corrente di marea che nelle Føroyar scorre verso est (in generale ma localmente anche in altre direzioni; è la corrente di riflusso, di bassa marea o scendente, *contr. di* → **vestfall**); **fallandi/vaksandi** *e.* corrente che va a est calante/crescente; **eystfallið er í hæddini** la corrente che va a est è al culmine; **eystfallið ger fjøru** la corrente che va a est provoca il riflusso

Fig. 5

landnyrðingur *sm senza pl (landnyrðings)* 1 nord est (*prop. 'da/di terra nord', un termine che deriva dal norreno, v. nota in* → **útnyrðingur**^{0.1} *cfr* → **landsynningur, útnyrðingur, útsynningur**); **l. eystan** est nord est; **l. norðan** nord nord est; **í ein landnyrðing (úr)** a nord est (di); **í ein landnyrðing úr Føroyum** a nord est delle Føroyar; **fara/ganga í ein landnyrðing** andare a nord est; **há-**

Fig. 6

4. Many words concern the local flora and fauna, with their scientific Latin name added, in order to help visitors interested in the outstanding natural history of these beautiful North-Atlantic sub-Arctic islands, for example ornithologists, botanists, and others (Figs. 7 and 8):

svarthálsa *sf (svarthálsu svarthálsur)* (*ornit.*) corriere grosso (*Charadrius hiaticula*)
svartkalvi *sm (svartkalva svartkalvar)* (*ittiol.*) ippoglossa nera (*Reinhardtius hippoglossus*)

Fig. 7

heimahvonn *sf (heimahvannar heimahvannir)* angelica arcangelica (*Angelica archangelica; anche bjargahvonn cfr* → **bakka-sløkja**)

Fig. 8

5. In the entries relating to place names, the examples give systematically the inflection that such terms have according to the inflectional system of cases of the Faroese language (Fig. 9):

Gjógv *sf sing (Gjáar)* (*topon.*) villaggio nell'isola di Eysturoy; **fara til Gjáar** andare a G.; **koma frá G.** venire da G.; **vera við G.** essere a G.

Fig. 9

6. In the dictionary many terms are related to local history, culture, arts, music, entertainment, sports and gastronomy, given also the opportunity for conversation that such topics have when people from different countries meet (Figs. 10-13):

løgting *sn* (**løgtings løgting**)
 1 parlamento faroese **Føroya**
1. er elsta ting í Evropa il parlamento faroese è il più antico d'Europa; **løgtingið** il parlamento faroese; **løgtingið verður sett á Ólavsøku** il parlamento faroese viene aperto ufficialmente per la festa di Sant'Olav
 2 (*stor.*) tribunale (*nelle Føroyar e in Norvegia*)

Fig. 10

tónleikur *sm senza pl* (**tónleiks**)
 musica → **popptónleikur**;
klassiskur t. musica classica;
livandi t. musica dal vivo; **læt-
 tur t.** musica leggera; **lesa tón-
 leik** studiare musica; **læra tón-
 leik** imparare la musica; **dámar
 tær tónleik?** ti piace la musica?;

Fig. 11

ítrótt *sf* (**ítróttar ítróttir**)
 1 sport, attività sportiva **í fyrri
 brekað** sport per disabili; **íðka
 í.** fare/praticare dello sport 2
 (*scol.*) educazione fisica, ginnastica *parte di par comp* → **inni-
 ítrótt, útiítrótt, vetrarítrótt**

Fig. 12

skerpikjót *sn senza pl* (**skerpi-
 kjøts**) carne ovina stagionata
 (*spesso per circa un anno nel* →
hjallur, *cf* **ræst/turt kjøt** →
kjøt)

Fig. 13

7. Some entries are a combination of linguistic and 'cultural-encyclopedic' information. This happens in the case of Faroese terms that are uncommon or unknown in Italian, especially for the 'specific-Faroese-words', which are of great importance, being of familiar and daily use in the Faroes but whose extreme 'faroesity' requires further explanations for a foreigner, since in many cases impossibile to render them with a direct translation. In the dictionary these entries are graphically distinguished from the other entries by having a grey background colour (Figs. 15-17):

hjallur *sm* (**hjals hjallar**) casotto/deposito del cibo (*dove viene appeso il pesce e la carne a frollare, stagionare o seccare, costruito con pareti in tavole di legno non combacianti che permettono all'aria di penetrare e circolare al suo interno*); **í
 hjalli(num)** nel casotto del cibo

Fig. 14

ólavsøka *sf* (**ólavsøku ólavsøk-
 ur**) 1 29 luglio (*propr. orig. festa di Sant'Olav (o Olaf o Olao) dedicata alla memoria di Olav Haraldsson, re di Norvegia morto nella battaglia di Stiklestad il 29 luglio 1030*) 2 festa nazionale delle Isole Føroyar (28 e 29 luglio, durante la quale si tiene anche la cerimonia ufficiale di apertura del → **Løgting**, il parlamento faroese);

Fig. 15

tjaldur *sn* (**tjaldurs** **tjöldur**)
 beccaccia di mare, ostrichiere
 (*Haematopus ostralegus*; *uccello nazionale faroese* → **grækari-**
messa, tjaldursdagur); **hygg:**
eitt t.! guarda: una beccaccia di
 mare!; **tjaldrið er tjóðfuglur**
okkara la beccaccia di mare è il
 nostro uccello nazionale; **tjaldri-**
ð verpur oftast trý egg la

Fig. 16

varði *sm* (**varða** **varðar**) segna-
 via, ometto (*cioè un cumulo di sassi*
dalla forma conica che serve come se-
gnalazione e guida lungo i sentieri
fra i villaggi e nei pascoli; propr.
'guardiano, protettore, difensore');
hygg, har stendur ein v.!
 guarda, là c'è un segnavia!; **varð-**
in il segnavia, l'ometto; **ganga**
eftir varðunum seguire i se-
 gnavia / gli ometti; **tú skal**
fylgja varðunum fyrri at finna
rætta vegin (tu) devi seguire i
 segnavia per trovare la strada
 giusta

Fig. 17

8. Also in the case of 'cultural-encyclopedic' entries an extensive use of cross-references is made, in order to illustrate better the connection between the words (Figs. 18 and 19):

bøur *sm* (**bøar**/**bíggjar** **bøir**)
 1 campo, terreno coltivato, prato
 (*cioè la terra coltivata situata nelle*
immediate vicinanze dei villaggi fa-
roesi, separata con muri in sassi →
gardur dai pascoli → **hagi**);
fara/koma inn a bøin andare/
 entrare nei campi; **vera inn á**
bønum essere nei campi; **á/í**
bønum nei campi; **koma úr**
bønum venire dai campi; **bøur-**
in/bøin il campo 2 *nome spesso*
comp di un luogo, per es. → **Bøur,**
Kirkjubøur

Fig. 18

hagi *sm* (**haga** **hagar**) pascolo
 (*cioè la terra non coltivata lontana*
dal villaggio, separato dal muro di
confine → **gardur**^{0.2} dal →
bøur, *cioè il terreno coltivato nei*
pressi del villaggio; → **hagapart-**
ur); **fara/ganga burtur í haga**
 andare nei pascoli; **skera upp**
haga bonificare un pascolo
 costruendo fossi di scolo; **velta/**
bróta upp úr haga mettere a
 coltura un pascolo; **í haga(n)/**
haganum nei pascoli; **ganga í**
haganum camminare nei pa-
 scoli

Fig. 19

And this is how a page of our dictionary appears; you can see the entries **kvæði** and **kvöldseta** highlighted with a grey shadow background, which concern headwords with the 'cultural-encyclopedic' content whose characteristics have been explained above (Fig. 20):

kvæði

kvæði *sn* (**kvæðis kvæði(r)**)

1 ballata popolare faroese (di origine medievale, che si danza collettivamente in tondo tenendosi per mano e cantando; simile probabilmente alla 'carola' italiana per es. descritta da Boccaccio nel Decameron nella introduzione alla prima giornata: „... che la reina coll'altre donne, insieme co' due giovani presa una carola, con lento passo (...) a carolar cominciarono“; *cfr* → **táttur**, **vísa**); **skipa eitt k.** iniziare e condurre una ballata popolare; **kvæðið** la ballata popolare faroese; **kvæðini** le ballate popolari faroesi; **um kvæðini** sulle ballate popolari; **í kvæðinum** nella ballata popolare; **í kvæðunum** nelle ballate popolari 2 componimento poetico, poesia, poema, carme

kvæðini → kvæði

kvæðinum → kvæði

kvæðir → kvæði

kvæðunum → kvæði

kvøddi → kvøða²kvøða¹ *sf* (**kvøðu kvøður**) saluto, augurio

kvøða² *v* (**kvøður kvað kvóðu kvøðið kvøðin**) 1 cantare e danzare le ballate popolari faroesi, carolare → **kvæði**, **táttur**, **vísa** *cfr* → **syngja** 2 (*ball.pop.*) dire, parlare, nominare 3 comporre poesie, scrivere (in) versi, far(e) poesia, poetare **sum skaldið kvøður** come dice il poeta

kvøða³ *v* (**kvøður kvaddi/kvøddi kvaddu/kvøddu kvøtt**) salutare, rivolgere il saluto **hann/hon kvaddi vinum og frændum** (lui/lei) salutò amici e parenti

kvøðið → kvøða²kvøðin → kvøða²kvøður → kvøða²

kvöld *sn* (**kvølds kvöld**) sera, serata **gott k.** buonasera, buona sera; **í annað k.** domani sera; **í k.** questa sera, stasera; **til í k.** per questa sera di sera; **seint á kvöldi** a sera tardi; **fara út á kvöldi** uscire alla sera; **um kvöldið/kvöldarnar** di sera, alla sera; **til kvølds** fino a sera; *parte di par comp* → **mánakvöld**, **týskvöld**, **mikukvöld**, **hóskvöld**, **fríggjakvöld**, **leygar-kvöld**, **sunnukvöld**

kvöld(ar)- *parte di par comp derivante da* → **kvöld** *col significato attinente a* '(di) sera, serale'

kvöldarnar → kvöld

kvöldi(ð) → kvöld

kvöldmál *sn* (**kvöldmáls kvöldmál**) mungitura serale *cfr* → **morgunmál**

kvølds → kvöld

kvöldseta *sf* (**kvöldsetu kvöldsetur**) 1 veglia serale (cioè una serata trascorsa con familiari e amici a conversare, raccontarsi storie, cantare, giocare, ecc.; un tempo nelle Føroyar questo accadeva mentre contemporaneamente venivano svolti dei lavori come per es. cardare la lana, filare e lavorare a maglia) 2 trattenimento serale, serata

kvøldskeið *sn* (**kvøldskeiðs****kvøldskeið**) corso serale**kvøldskúli** *sm* (**kvøldskúla****kvøldskúlar**) scuola serale**ganga í kvøldskúla** fre-

quentare la scuola serale

kvørkrar *sm pl* 1 (*anat.*) gola2 (*ornit.*) mento**kvørkveggja** *sf* (**kvørkveggju****kvørkveggjur**) merlo (*Turdus**merula*)**kvørn** *sf* (**kvørnar/kvarnar****kvørnir/kvarnir**) macina, mola

References

- Contri, G. (1984). *Frasario italiano-faroese - con trascrizione e istruzioni per la pronuncia di Andreas Sanesi*. Tórshavn: privately printed.
- Poulsen J.H.W., Simonsen M., Jacobsen J. í L., Johansen A., Hansen Z.S. (1998). *Føroysk orðabók*. Tórshavn: Føroya Fróðskaparfelag.
- Sondum I., Danielsen P. M., Nattestad N., Dalsgarð. D. (1994). *Orðaskyn - Mín fyrsta orðabók*. Tórshavn: Føroya Skúlabókagrunnur.