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In August 2019, I attended a Danish language programme at Askov Højskole in Jutland, Denmark. Højskole programmes (literally translated as high-schools, although usually translated as Folk High Schools) are a very traditional Danish institution, associated with N. F. S. Grundtvig, a Danish intellectual from the 19th century. He believed that a democratic country needed an engaged and educated population, and so created the Folk High School movement to educate the lower classes of Denmark. The first school was opened in 1844 in Rødding, Jutland. Askov was founded a short while later in 1865, not very far from Rødding.

Askov Folk High School offers Danish as a residential programme. Students are allowed to stay on the school campus, which also functions as an efterskole during the school year and are given traditional Danish food. As is traditional in Folk High Schools, every morning (and some evenings) we sang from the Folk High School Songbook, which includes both older Danish pop musik by Benny Andersen, as well as old Lutheran hymns and psalms, some of which were written by Grundtvig himself. Particular favourites included 'Tit er jeg glad' (Often am I happy) and 'Tiden er en gåde' (Time is a riddle).

Language instruction took up the morning and early afternoon, and our teachers did a combination of grammatical instruction and pronunciation practice. My speaking was my weakest area on going to Askov, but I could tell that I had improved a lot in pronunciation, intonation, and confidence speaking. Other activities included acting out scenes in Danish, discussing ethical problems and current events, taking dictations, and writing passages about our experiences.

The rest of the afternoons and evenings were devoted to cultural activities. These included film nights, talks by local politicians, sports, walks, folk dancing, and extra classes

(in Danish) on phonetics, history, and language history. All of these activities gave us a greater understanding of Danish culture than can be learnt abroad, and also offered new areas to learn specialised vocabulary.

Askov also took us on several trips to places like Ribe, the oldest town in Denmark, Jelling, the home of the Jelling runestones, Aarhus, and Trapholt art museum. Each of these trips gave me invaluable cultural knowledge and experience, and also gave me plenty of opportunities to speak Danish with other people in natural contexts.