Language mixing and diachronic change
- patterns of change in mixed American Norwegian noun phrases

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American Norwegian I

Norwegian variety spoken by Norwegians who came to the US roughly from the 1850s to the 1920s + their descendants

1850

1920

2016

Flaten (1900-04), Flom (1900-04, 1903,1926) ➔ word lists

1930s and 1940s: Einar Haugen (1953)

1931: Seip and Selmer


American Norwegian II

• Einar Haugen
  o *The Norwegian Language in America* (1953)
    o Ch. 17: The grammar of loanwords
    o Ch. 20: A selected vocabulary of English loans
    o 260 informants

• CANS (Corpus of American Norwegian Speech)
  o Johannessen (2015)
  o Online, searchable corpus
  o Recordings from 50 individuals digitalized so far
Language mixing

• “mixture” of elements from two or more languages
• lexical and grammatical items from different languages appearing in the same sentence
  (see e.g. Muysken 2000)

• jeg teacha # første graden (CANS; coon_valley_WI_07gk)
  I teach.PAST first grade.DEF.SG.M
  ‘I taught the first grade’
Outline

• Typical pattern
• Diachronic change
  o Number
  o Definiteness
• Discussion
  o What is changing?
  o Why is it changing?
• Conclusions
Typical pattern

Flaten, 1900-04: 115
«Some words are, indeed, used without any appreciable difference in pronunciation, but more generally the root, or stem, is taken and Norse inflections are added as required by the rules of the language»

Haugen, 1953: 440
«A single form is usually imported and is then given whatever endings the language requires to make it feel like a proper word and to express the categories which this particular language requires its words to express»
Typical pattern II

• Norwegian structure with English content words

1. English stem with Norwegian determiner
   a. en svær crop a. INDF.SG.M huge.INDF.SG.M crop (Haugen 1953: 571)
   b. ei gammal basin a. INDF.SG.F old.INDF.SG.F basin (Haugen 1953: 561)
   c. et rent towel a. INDF.SG.N clean.INDF.SG.N towel (Haugen 1953: 601)

2. English stem with Norwegian suffix
   a. harvest-en harvest-DF.SG.M (Haugen 1953: 579)
   b. field-a field-DF.SG.F (Haugen 1953: 575)
   c. train-et train-DF.SG.N (Haugen 1953: 602)

3. English stem in a Norwegian word order
   a. trunk-en min trunk-DF.SG.M my (Haugen 1953: 603)
Diachronic change – *number 1*

**Haugen 1953:**
«In AmN [American Norwegian] the lw. [loanword] was almost universally given the most common plural ending of the gender to which it had been assigned»

- **piec[e]-ar**  piece-INDF.PL.M
- **bluff-er**  bluff-INDF.PL.F
- **team-**  team-INDF.PL.N

(Haugen 1953: 450)

«The only inflectional form imported into AmN from E [English] was the plural suffix –s»
## Diachronic change – *number II*

### CANS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Norwegian</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mange lawyers</td>
<td><em>mange</em> advokater</td>
<td><em>(sunburg_MN_03gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fem dialects</td>
<td><em>fem</em> dialetter</td>
<td><em>(portland_ND_01gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andre tools</td>
<td><em>andre</em> verktøy</td>
<td><em>(sunburg_MN_03gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alle slags pills</td>
<td><em>alle slags</em> piller</td>
<td><em>(westby_WI_02gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de samme genes</td>
<td><em>de samme</em> genet</td>
<td><em>(flom_MN_02gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alle disse minutes</td>
<td><em>alle disse</em> minutter</td>
<td><em>(stillwater_MN_01gm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alle things</td>
<td><em>alle ting</em></td>
<td><em>(albert_lea_MN_01gk)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diachronic change – *number III*

**CANS:**

- åtte grade  
  *eight grades*  
  (coon_valley_WI_07gk)
- fire hundre member_  
  *four hundred members*  
  (decorah_IA_01gm)
- fleire store_  
  *more stores*  
  (westby_WI_03gk)
- mange building_  
  *many buildings*  
  (billings_MT_01gm)
- disse garden snake_  
  *these garden snakes*  
  (sunburg_MN_03gm)
Diachronic change – definiteness I

Haugen 1953:
«Whether words were singular or plural […] they had to add the N[orwegian] definite article under appropriate circumstances» (p. 451)

- **harvest-en** harvest-DF.SG.M (Haugen 1953: 579)
- **field-a** field-DF.SG.F (Haugen 1953: 575)
- **train-et** train-DF.SG.N (Haugen 1953: 602)

«E[nglish] the would not be acceptable» (p. 451)
Diachronic change – definiteness II

CANS:

- denne cheese_ this cheese (blair_WI_04gk)
- denne country_ this country (decorah_IA_01gm)
- den school_ that school (gary_MN_01gm)
- den birdhouse_ that birdhouse (coon_valley_WI_12gm)
- den store building_ the big building (chicago_IL_01gk)
- det gamle stuff_ the old stuff (chicago_IL_01gk)
- det norske settlement_ the Norwegian settlement (albert_lea_MN_01gk)
- nephew_ min my nephew (portland_ND_02gk)
- cistern_ min my cistern (westby_WI_01gm)
Diachronic change – definiteness III

CANS:

- **the** by **the city** (chicago_IL_01gk)
- **the** ungdom **the youth** (harmony_MN_01gk)
- **the** gamle kirke **the old church** (chicago_IL_01gk)
- **the** penger **the money** (albert_lea_MN_01gk)
- **the** andre dag-en **the other day-DEF.SG.M** (harmony_MN_02gk)
- **the** gård-en **the farm-DEF.SG.M** (gary_MN_01gm)
- **the** rest-en **the rest-DEF.SG.M** (vancouver_WA_03uk)
Summary of the changes

1. Increased usage of the English plural -s
2. Omission of functional suffixes, both in plural and in definite phrases
3. Usage of the English determiner the
What is changing?

• Theoretical framework:
  o Exoskeletal approach to grammar
  o Distributed Morphology
Analysis I: *change in the exponents*

- Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (Lardiere 2000)
- Avoidance strategies
  - Omitting functional suffixes
  - Inserting the suffix -s for plurality
- What about the determiner *the*?
Analysis II: change in the structure

• Structural differences in heritage grammars (e.g. Polinsky 2016)
• Features or feature bundles being altered, weakened or erased from the structure
• English DPs with Norwegian nouns
  o the by - the city
Why is it changing?

- Incomplete acquisition?
- Attrition?
- Cross-linguistic influence?
Timeline challenges

- Lack information about their input
- Lack data from their childhood or early usage of American Norwegian

1850 | 1920 | 2016
--- | --- | ---
Wave of immigration

Haugen (1953)
- 1st - 4th generation
- Norwegian still used in the community

Johannessen (2015)
- 2nd-5th generation
- Less usage of Norwegian
Investigating in retrospect

- We can only assume that Haugen’s informants represent today’s speakers’ input.
- Tendencies of change on a group level
- Cross-linguistic influence
Conclusion

• Evidence of diachronic change in the patterns of language mixing in noun phrases in American Norwegian
  o Omission of functional suffixes
  o English functional morphemes

• Cross-linguistic influence

• «Timeline challenges»
  o Tendencies of change in the larger language community