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Arnstein Hjelde

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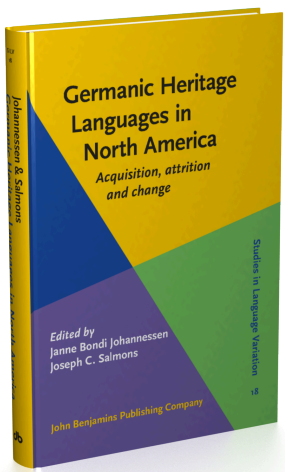

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Changes in a Norwegian dialect in America

Arnstein Hjelde
Østfold University College

In this article I investigate dialect variation in the old Norwegian settlement around Coon Valley and Westby in Vernon County, Wisconsin, with a focus on how the Norwegian dialects spoken here have changed over time. The language in this community is well documented; the oldest recordings are from 1931, the most recent ones were done in 2014. By comparing such recordings from different times, I point to some tendencies of how different Norwegian speech varieties have changed in the settlement towards the formation of a koiné.

Keywords: koiné, koinéization, Norwegian dialects, heritage language, language change, change in morphology, change in phonology

1. Background

Almost all research on the Norwegian language in America during the 20th century focused on changes due to the intense contact with English. And most scholars, from Flaten (1900–04) and Flom (1900–04, 1903, 1912, 1926, 1929, 1931) around 1900, Haugen (1956, [1953] 1969) and Oftedal (1949a, 1949b) in the mid-1900s to myself (Hjelde 1992, 1996a, 1996b) at the end of the century focused on different aspects of the vocabulary, especially how English lexical items have been introduced into Norwegian. During the last years we have seen renewed interest in the study of the America-Norwegian language, and new aspects are investigated, as seen in this volume's studies by Allen and Salmons, Golden and Lanza, Johannessen, and Westergaard and Anderssen. But at the same time, this volume's contributions by Annear and Speth, Johannessen and Laake, and Åfarli make it very evident that vocabulary is still attracting interest from scholars. Up till now, nothing has been done on how different Norwegian dialects have changed over time due to contact with other dialects from Norway. There are reasons to believe that this process has not followed the same paths in all Norwegian-American communities: Some settlements were established by people from a rather small area in Norway and where everybody spoke the same dialect when they settled. Others were populated by people from different places in Norway, speaking a greater range of dialects. It is fair to assume that in the first case,

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the dialects did not change much except for changes due to contact with English. On the other hand, in communities where different dialects met, we should expect to find that dialect contact over time results in the formation of a 'new' dialect, a koiné.

2. Coon Valley and Westby

Coon Valley and Westby are small towns in Vernon County in the southwestern part of Wisconsin. This is in the core Norwegian settlement area founded in the mid-1800s (Qualey 1938), and Norwegian influence in this area is still quite strong. The 2000 US Census (US Census Bureau 2000) shows that in Wisconsin there is an area from Vernon County in the south and up towards Polk County and Barron County in the north, where more than one out of every five inhabitants claims Norwegian ancestry. In Trempealeau County, 40% claim to have Norwegian background, while in Vernon County 36% make a similar claim. These are the two counties in Wisconsin with the highest ratio of Norwegian-American population, and where they make up the largest ethnic group. According to the 2000 census (US Census Bureau 2000), these were also the two counties in Wisconsin with the highest density of Norwegian speakers. In Trempealeau County there were 410 such speakers, 3.8% of all Norwegian-Americans in this county, while in Vernon County there were 480, 5.1% of the Norwegian-Americans. It has to be said that the 2000 Census statistics are based on samples and are only estimates. But still this is the only information available, and at least suggests something about the number of speakers.

The Norwegian settlement around Coon Valley and Westby dates back to 1848, the same year Wisconsin was founded as a state. The sociologist P. A. Munch, who studied this settlement in the 1940s, pointed out that the geographical borders of the settlement to a great extent were defined as early as the 1870s; after this point growth in population took place within these borders and did not result in any geographical expansion (Munch 1954: 114). This growth within limited borders also resulted in a pressure on other ethnic groups to leave: "the tendency having been to get rid of foreign elements within the area of the settlement itself rather than expanding into new areas" (Munch 1949: 782). Furthermore, he describes this Norwegian community as socially and economically self-sufficient, and not under any control by 'Yankees' or Anglo-Americans. In this way, the community could, at least to some extent, isolate itself from the mainstream society. Munch also writes (1954: 784):

> This community is very hard to break into, as is felt strongly by everyone who has tried it. There is a strong loyalty to the community and a correspondingly strong social pressure against any deviation from the accepted local pattern. What foreign elements have come in have either been assimilated completely to the cultural pattern of the community or they have been isolated socially until they preferred to leave.

Munch (1954) also comments on what he calls *gossip circles*, or social networks, as we probably would call them today, and he points out that these mostly consisted of people with a Norwegian ethnic background. And such a strategy, where ethnicity to a great extent regulates social interactions, is also important for explaining why the Norwegian language has been retained for such a long time in this community.

Haugen describes Coon as a settlement heavily dominated by people from Gudbrandsdalen, and he includes Biri as a part of Lower Gudbrandsdalen (Haugen [1953] 1969: 610–611). This Gudbrandsdalen dominance has been quite strong since this settlement was founded, but at the same time it is also a fact that immigrants from other parts of Norway settled here as well. Today it is very difficult to conduct a survey on from where in Norway the people living here have their background. Quite a few lack detailed information on where their ancestors came from, who have never been to Norway and who do not have contact with family there. In order to get a better picture of the background of this settlement, I have looked at the birthplace of the first immigrants. Coon Valley Church and Coon Prairie Church each published books to celebrate the congregations' fiftieth anniversaries (Holand 1927, 1928). Here we find short biographies of the first 551 male pioneers and church members who settled, i.e., the first generation male immigrants who came to America between 1839 and 1877. It is not unproblematic to use this data in order to gain information on from where the Norwegian-Americans in this area today have their background, but still I think that this will give at least an indication of what dialect background people here should be expected to have.

40% came from Gudbrandsdalen, especially from the municipalities in the lower part of the valley, such as Fron, Øyer and Gausdal. In addition 15% came from Biri. Furthermore, there were quite a few from Telemark (9%), Hurdal (5%), as well as the Sogn, Lista and Flekkefjord area (5% each). There also seems to be some difference between the Coon Valley and Coon Prairie area. Whereas Coon Prairie had many from Biri (17%), there were many from Nord-Fron (19%) and Øyer (16%) in Coon Valley. This corresponds to some degree to Einar Haugen's observation on dialect use in this settlement: He found that the prevailing dialect in most of this settlement was from Lower Gudbrandsdalen; but in the area northeast of Coon Valley, known as Timber Coulee (Skogdalen), he found many speaking a more northern Gudbrandsdal variety, especially from Fron (Haugen 1953: 611). And information from Holand (1928), paired with Plat books, indicates that immigrants from Fron showed a strong tendency to settle in the Timber Coulee area. However, today it is not possible to detect any such local geographical variation, especially since many of the Norwegian speakers today are retired people who have left the farms and moved into town.

3. The material

The Norwegian language around Coon Valley and Westby is well documented thanks to sound recordings done by Seip and Selmer in 1931, by Haugen in 1942, Kruse in 1986, myself in 1992, 1996 and 2010 and video recordings by the NorAmDiaSyn project every year from 2010 to 2015. The first recordings of Norwegian-Americans done for the purpose of linguistic studies were conducted in 1931 by the two Norwegian professors Didrik Arup Seip and Ernst W. Selmer, who spent the fall term in the Midwest, doing fieldwork with the aim of studying Norwegian dialects in the States. According to their fieldnotes, they also spent some time in the Coon area. Most of their recordings have been lost, and as far as I have been able to determine, only two from this area survive. The technical quality of this material is not very good and the recordings are very short (about 3 minutes for each); thus I have not relied on them in this study. The recordings by Einar Haugen are in a much better state; he was in this area during the fall of 1942. Altogether he had 31 informants from this area when he worked on *The Norwegian Language in America*, of which he recorded 26. The oldest recorded speaker was born in 1849 (93 years old), the youngest in 1911 (31 years), the average age was 67 years. Eight were born in Norway, the rest in the States. Some of these recordings are rather short, lasting only two minutes while the longest is 55 minutes. Altogether he did six hours of recordings in this area. In addition he also did some recordings of people who were not classified as informants. Parts of this material were also transcribed by Haugen and his assistant Magne Oftedal, and the recordings and transcriptions are now available from the Text Laboratory on the Internet.[1]

In 1992 I spent three months in Wisconsin, doing fieldwork in this area. During this period I recorded approximately 80 hours of some 60 Norwegian-Americans born between 1905 and 1932. The oldest one emigrated as a young boy together with his parents, while the others were born in the Midwest.

In 2010 I had the opportunity to take part in fieldwork organized by the NorAmDiaSyn project, and after this organized fieldwork was done, I returned to the Coon area to do more recordings on my own. This time I was especially looking for 'young' speakers, i.e., people born after 1940, a category of informants I had not encountered during the 1990s.

In this article I use these three sets of recordings. Altogether this material covers speakers born between 1849 and 1961, a time warp of more than 100 years and several generations. And by comparing the language documented in these recordings I also hope to be able to find out the direction in which the dialects have evolved over these years. The local people often refer to in their Norwegian vernacular as "Coon Valley norsk" or "Westby norsk," and my aim will also be to see if this refers to a consistent language norm, a koiné which has evolved when speakers with different dialect

1. http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/NorDiaSyn/dialektlyd.html

background have met. It is possible that such a process was well on its way in the 1940s as Haugen comments that "[t]he prevailing dialect is that of Lower Gudbrandsdalen, especially Biri; this is often referred to as 'Westby Norwegian'" (Haugen 1953: 610).

4. An America-Norwegian koiné?

Kerswill and Trudgill (2005: 196) have pointed out two archetypal situations where a koiné is formed. One involves immigration to unpopulated areas, illustrated by the colonialization of New Zealand. The other concerns the development of urban communities within a limited geographical area, where the emergence of the Norwegian industrial communities Høyanger, Odda and Tyssedal are used as typical examples. And even if the situation in Coon is different from New Zealand, as well as Høyanger, Odda and Tyssedal, we find several features in both these scenarios, relevant for Coon. First of all, emigrating to America represented a break with their places of origin in Norway; thus dialect norms and dialect change back in the Old World would not be a norm for the language spoken on the prairie. At the same time the isolation from Norway was not total, and for a long time newcomers arrived speaking unmodified Norwegian, and it is reasonable to assume that this slowed the koinéization process. Secondly, Coon can also resemble the development of new industrial communities in the sense that people with different dialects settled down here. And even if the dialects from Biri and the lower Gudbrandsdalen area dominated, they were definitely not the only varieties spoken here.

In addition to dialectal variation and contact, it is also important to remember that this was a ground for intensive contact between Norwegian and English. Over time, this proved to have a dramatic effect on the Norwegian language in America, partly because Norwegian changed as a result of this contact, but mostly because the outcome of this contact was a language shift: today Norwegian is about to disappear on the prairie. When the speakers themselves are asked to characterize "Westby norsk" and "Coon Valley norsk," they point at all the borrowed lexical elements used. But at the same time, English has obviously not always been in such a dominating position; at a micro level, Norwegian was also quite dominating in this settlement at least until World War II, at one time even people with German and Irish background had to speak Norwegian in order to function in this community. Evidence for this is found in Haugen's recorded material from Coon Valley, where one of the speakers of Norwegian (10C14)[2] had a German background and thus grew up with German as his first language.

Trudgill et al. (2000) describe the typical koinéization process in three stages, where each stage might correspond to one generation. The first stage, dominated by first generation immigrants, is characterized by dialectal variation with some

2. The informant code used by Haugen (1953).

rudimentary tendencies towards leveling. The second stage, dominated by second generation inhabitants, typically demonstrates extreme variability and further leveling. The last stage, involving the third and subsequent generation immigrants, is characterized by consolidation, dialectal leveling and the emergence of a rather unified language norm. The three different sets of recorded materials used in this study, might at least to some degree, correspond to these three stages. In the recordings from 1942 we find quite a few first generation immigrants, even if the immigration to Coon had been going on for over 90 years when these recordings were made. The informants recorded in the 1990s were with one exception born in America, and they might represent stage two in this model. The informants recorded in 2010–12 might represent the last stage, many of them were born after 1940 and were third or fourth generation Americans.

5. The language varieties

If we assume that the recordings done by Haugen document the actual language variation found in Coon in the early 1940s, we can classify the spoken varieties into three main types: East Norwegian, especially Gudbrandsdal dialects, West Norwegian dialects, and normalized speech, where the East Norwegian variety is most frequent. And in the rest of this article, I will focus on how these three types evolved over the years.

5.1 West Norwegian dialects

In Haugen's material from 1942 we find several informants speaking a West Norwegian dialect, among them a couple from Eresdalen in Romsdalen (informant 11R1 and 11R2). The wife talks about how hard it was in every way to adjust to life in this new country. The language was also a problem, but she does not mention problems with English. What she complains about is the communication with people from Gudbrandsdalen; they did not understand some words she used, and they made fun of her. The consequence was that she had to adjust to the Gudbrandsdalen dialect, and then they understood her. Most features in the dialect of these two speakers do no doubt belong to the Romsdal dialect, but with some accommodations towards the east Norwegian dialects of Gudbrandsdalen.

This tendency to accommodate not only affects vocabulary. We also find the same on the morphological and phonological levels. And while lexical accommodation can be explained as a strategy to facilitate understanding, this is hardly the motivation for the phonological and morphological changes. One feature used to identify dialect areas in Norway, is endings in disyllabic infinitives. While all such infinitives in the Romsdal dialect end in *-e*, the East Norwegian dialects have a system of different endings, *-e* or *-a*, so-called *kløyvd infinitiv* 'divided infinitive,' and in the speech of these two informants from Romsdal, we find tendencies towards such an eastern Norwegian system, like [fo¹ʈæɽjə] 'tell,' but [²jæːra] 'do' and [²vaːra] or [²væːrə] 'be,' and it is hard

to believe that the *-e* infinitive endings in the Romsdalen dialect should cause any communicative problems. But in the Coon context, the system with only *e*-infinitives could be felt as marked, and as such it was replaced by a system with *kløyvd infinitiv* 'divided infinitives.' Furthermore, none of these two informants use the traditional personal pronoun form from Romsdal, which is [iː] 'I.' Instead we find [jeː] and [eː]. The form [iː] has a limited distribution in Norwegian dialects, found in two areas in Norway, including parts of Romsdalen. That the pronoun [iː] is regarded as marked is maybe not too strange since it stands out from the East Norwegian forms [jeː] and [eː], and more so considering how frequent personal pronouns are in speech. Eresfjorden, where these two informants come from, is furthermore a border area for the [iː] isogloss, the neighboring communities have [eː], and we should perhaps expect that this form would be the selected substitute. And [eː] is used by them, but we also find the form [jeː], probably because this was the most frequent form found in this settlement at that time. Furthermore, we find that the Romsdal negation particle [²içə] often is substituted by [²itə] or [²icə], but these three are obviously competing forms in the vernacular of these two.

Fifty years later, when I did fieldwork in Coon in 1992, I did not come across any speakers of a West Norwegian vernacular, and I did not come into contact with anybody living in this area with a West Norwegian background either. At that time the identity of the community was solely linked to Gudbrandsdalen, and people with a west Norwegian background, the so-called Sognings and Flekkefjordings, were in general associated with the neighboring town Viroqua and its surroundings, which traditionally was a West Norwegian settlement.

Western dialects in Coon were probably associated with the first generation immigrants, and my assumption is that later generations took up the Gudbrandsdalen dialect which they learned from their peers, or they became monolingual English speakers. Since in the 1990s West Norwegian dialects were no longer found in Coon, or even in the traditional West Norwegian communities in Vernon County like Viroqua, there are now very few people left who speak these dialects.

5.2 Normalized speech

In the Haugen material from 1942 we do find quite a few examples of people trying to moderate their speech towards the written Dano-Norwegian standard. Today it is of course difficult to know if the recordings really reflect the way these people normally spoke, or if the informants have several registers, and that the formal atmosphere associated with a professor and his recording equipment also triggers a more formal register of speech. Field notes made by Magne Oftedal when he assisted Haugen in 1948 reveal that it was not uncommon for informants to change their speech towards the written standard during the recording sessions. And as can be expected, the use of normalized speech is especially found among educated people and urban dwellers. One of these represented in the recorded material is the minister of the Coon Prairie

church. He prepared a written manuscript for the recording session, from which he read. It is somewhat puzzling that Haugen afterwards chose to spend time transcribing this recording. One of the other informants, 11C2, was raised in Coon Valley, but she was a trained nurse and lived in La Crosse at the time these recordings were done. Even though she says at the beginning of the interview that she is going to speak the traditional Coon Valley dialect, she is not able to live up to that intention fully. Thus we find dialectal forms like the pronoun [jeː], the negation particle [ite], palatal consonants, *kløyvd* infinitive 'divided infinitives' and tendencies towards the use of the dative case. However, we also find many examples of more 'bookish' forms like [²ike] *ikke* 'not,' [¹vʊɖan] *hvordan* 'how,' [¹tiːd-n] *tiden* 'time,' [eːn gaŋ] *en gang* 'once,' [miːn fa¹miːliə] *min familie* 'my family'. Her brother, on the other hand, who was a farmer in Coon Valley, does not show any such tendencies.

The fact that informants were able to normalize their speech towards the written Norwegian standard shows that they were familiar with this variant. It is reasonable to believe that such knowledge was quite widespread in this community in the 1940s. Newspapers and books were still printed in Dano-Norwegian, most people were confirmed in Norwegian and had training in reading Norwegian through the so-called 'summer school' or 'religious school,' offered by the church for a few weeks during the summer. In Coon Valley and Westby, Norwegian was also used in church on a regular basis even after World War II, so the congregation would have been quite familiar with this spoken variety. It can also be mentioned that the cinema in Westby showed Norwegian movies without dubbing from the 1940s and well into the 1960s, thus this was another arena where people would be exposed to a spoken standard of Norwegian.

But the situation changed dramatically for this spoken variety during the next decades: When I did fieldwork in this area in 1992, I only found two individuals who spoke a standard-like variety of Norwegian, and both had strong ties to Norway or Norwegian written culture, more than to the local Norwegian-American community. One had a background as a teacher, while the other was very interested in contemporary Norwegian literature. But even if there were not many who spoke this variety of Norwegian, most of the informants were familiar with it as many of them were confirmed in Norwegian and had been to the Norwegian 'summer school.' And as late as the 1990s, the church offered services in Norwegian a couple of times a year.

In 2010 I encountered only one speaker using a standardized variety of Norwegian, and this was one of the two I found during the 1990s who still was alive. Today the written standard cannot serve as a norm for a spoken *lingua franca*, simply because very few Norwegian-Americans are familiar with written Norwegian (cf. Johannessen and Laake 2012). Very few can read Norwegian, and it is not heard in church anymore. And it is interesting to note that the situation here is very different from what has happened in the American Swedish communities, where the dialects have vanished and what can be found today is in general standardized Swedish (Larsson et al. this volume).

However, it is likely that this standardized speech will be the last to survive in America. Some of those growing up as monolingual English speakers, but with an interest for their ethnic background, might compensate the lack of Norwegian

learning at home by studying Norwegian at the university. But such individuals will use Norwegian to keep contact with their background across the Atlantic, not to be a part of any traditional Norwegian-American speech community.

5.3 East Norwegian dialects

Most of Haugen's informants from 1942 had dialect backgrounds from the lower part of Gudbrandsdalen, including Biri; however, they did not all speak the same. We find phonological and morphological variation which for the most part correlates with the variation in dialect features found in the Gudbrandsdalen area between Biri in the south and Fron to the north. We can reasonably assume that much of this variation relates to where in the Gudbrandsdalen area they have their roots, but we also find individual variation which indicates instability or even change in the language system. We can for example see this variation in the competing personal pronoun forms [eː] and [jeː] for 1st person singular. Traditionally, [eː] is found from Gausdal and Øyer and northwards, while [jeː] is found south of this area. Informants from Fron seem to be the only ones consistently using [eː] as the sole pronominal form, for the others it is hard to find any consistent pattern. Some individuals vacillate between the use of [jeː] and [eː], and this is especially common among those born in America. The only 1st person plural pronoun found is [viː], even if the northern part of Gudbrandsdalen, from Fron, has [ʊs]. However, this latter form is obviously marked and avoided. As can be expected, the only negation particle found is [²itə]. This is in accordance with the areas of distribution for this particle in Norway, the area around Lake Mjøsa and north up to Nord-Fron.

Palatalization of dental consonants in stressed syllables is a dialect feature that we find in the speech of most speakers of East Norwegian dialects in Coon, like in [²haʌiŋ₁daːɽ] *Hallingdal*, [laɲ] *land*, [stʉɲ] *stund* 'while' and [²kaʌə] *kalle* 'call.' This palatalization is in some dialects quite weak, and can also be realized as so-called 'palatal segmentation,' a process where the palatalization has resulted in a segment [i] instead of a palatal consonant, like [²æⁱlə] *alle* '*all*,' [²pæⁱno] *panner* 'pans' and [bjøⁱn] *bjørn* 'bear.' In northern parts of Gudbrandsdalen we also expect palatalization of dental consonants in unstressed syllables, but we do not find much evidence for this in the Haugen material: only one of the informants has this feature, as in [²kaːraɲ] *karane* 'the men,' and this man was born in Fron. But palatalization of dental consonants in unstressed syllables seems to be regarded marked and thus avoided by the second generation immigrants. On the other hand, other dialect features typical of the northern part of Gudbrandsdalen seem to be more robust, as with short root syllables in words with vowel balance, as in [²jɛra] *gjera* 'do' and [²moɽo] *mala* 'grind,' and also the 'European u' ([u]) is still quite frequent, like in [²uksər] *oksar* 'oxen,' [²uɲə] *unge* 'young' and [²sumə] *somme* 'some.'

In morphology we also find several examples of variation. This is the case for past tense of the 1st class of weak verbs, the so-called 'a-verbs.' In Gudbrandsdalen

dialects, we expect to find the past tense suffix *-a*, while in Biri and around Lake Mjøsa, we find *-e ([-ə])*. In Coon this pattern is partly intact in the sense that people with a Gudbrandsdalen background in general apply the *-a* formative, while people from Biri in general apply the *-e ([-ə])*. However, people from the area around Mjøsa show instability, and the same speaker may use both [²fiskə] and [²fiska] *fiska* 'fished.' For one consultant the distribution of these two endings seems to be ruled by the origin of the verb, borrowed elements are assigned *-a*, while Norwegian ones get *-e*. She talks about [²kastə] *kasta* 'threw' and [²rɛknə] *rekna* 'counted,' but [²çuːsa] 'chose' and [²saɪsa] 'sized,' but the material is too limited to draw decisive conclusions. We also find other speakers who clearly do not follow this distribution, like [²fiska]/[²fiskə] *fiska* 'fished', [²stʊpa] *stoppa* 'stopped', [²hʊntə] 'hunted' and [²kɛtʃə] 'catched.' The only explanation I can see for this variation is a general instability in the system.

In this context it is also relevant to look at the use of *-r* to mark present tense of weak verbs and also as a marker of plural indefinite form of nouns. It has to be said that the Haugen material does not show many present tense verbs, mostly because the speakers are invited to talk about the 'old days.' The dialects of Fron and Ringebu do not have the *-r* formative in present tense of weak verbs, nor in plural indefinite form of nouns, while in Biri, *-r* is found in both these types. In the geographical area in between, *-r* is present for nouns, but not for verbs. In the Haugen material we find that the distribution is unchanged for nouns, those with a background from Fron do not have this formative, while all the others have kept it. When it comes to the present tense of weak verbs, the picture is less clear. We find it in the speech of all coming from Biri, but we can also find that it has spread to others as well. I find it reasonable to look at this as the result of some kind of dialect leveling.

We also find use of dative in nouns in these recordings, but it is also obvious that the use of dative case is on its way out. Only the first generation immigrants seem to have this system intact. Examples of dative forms are also found in the speech of others, but its use is no longer consistent.

In general it is fair to say that in the 1940s we cannot talk about "Westby norsk" and "Coon Valley norsk" as a narrow, coherent norm without any dialect variation. What we find is phonological and morphological variation, but within clear limits. This variation is only partly determined by the dialectal background of the speaker, and we also find individual variation which is the result of competing norms in a rather labile linguistic environment.

In the 1990s the different East Norwegian dialects have still not merged into a consistent koiné, in fact the recordings done at that time document more dialectal variation than what is found in Haugen's material from the 1940s, and we find several dialectal features that are not found in Haugen's recordings. An example of this is the system of personal pronouns. Like in 1942 we find [jeː] and [eː] used for 1st person singular form, both are commonly used, and even the same speaker can use these two different forms. Most speakers use the personal pronoun [viː] in 1st person plural, but now we also find a handful informants using [os] as the subject form, in accordance with dialects from the upper part of Gudbrandsdalen. The fact that such

forms are documented in 1992, but not in 1942, does of course not mean that this is a new development in Coon. The recorded material collected in 1992 is more than ten times as big as the one from 1942, thus we can expect that it documents language variation to a higher degree. A similar increase in the variation is found for the negation particle. As in the 1940s, [²itə] is still the most frequent form, but in addition we also find realizations with palatal fricative [²içə] or palatal plosive [²icə]. It is not surprising to find forms with palatal fricative [²içə], since this corresponds to the upper Gudbrandsdalen dialect. But the form with palatal plosive [²icə] is hard to explain, as it does not belong to any dialect in this part of Norway. It is a typical feature in some dialects from Østerdalen, but hardly any immigrants came to Coon from this area. The only explanation I have is that it is the result of a neutralization strategy, based on the two forms [²itə] and [²içə], where the plosive realization of [t] is combined with the palatal realization of [ç], resulting in [c].

When it comes to syllable structure in words with vowel balance, we find a few examples of realization with short root syllable, like [²komo] *koma* 'come' and [²jɛra] *gjera* 'do,' but most speakers do now have a realization with long syllable. The so-called 'European u' is still quite common, like in [huːs] *hus* 'house' and [²uksə] *okse* 'oxen.' As in the 1940s, palatalization of dental consonants in stressed syllables is common, like in [laɲ] *land* 'land', [¹syɲ$_1$daːn] *søndagen* 'the Sunday,' [²kafi$_1$kaɲa] *kaffikanna* 'the coffee pot,' [²aʎri] *aldri* 'never,' [²kvɛʎan] *kveldane* 'the evenings,' [rʉɲc] *rundt* 'around,' [rɛɻ] *redd* 'scared' and [²skøɻə] *skodde* 'fog.' And similarly, some of the speakers do also have such palatalization in unstressed syllables, like [²skʉɽiɲ] *skolen* 'the school,' [²bɽɔfiɲ] 'the bluffs,' [²nɔʃkəraɲ] *norskarane* 'the Norwegians' and [²ʊŋaɲ] *ungane* 'the children.' However, this is an area of individual variation, and the same speaker can vary between forms with and without such palatalization, like in [²çæʈ[aɲ] *kjertlane* 'the glands', but [²hɛstan] *hestane* 'the horses.'

Plural indefinite forms of nouns are marked with *-r* by most speakers, even if we also find examples without this ending, like in [²hɛstər] *hestar* 'horses' and [²tiːər] *tider* 'times' but [²hɛstə] *hestar* 'horses' and [²kʉːə] *kuer* 'cows.' Here we might also have individual variation and the same speaker can produce plural forms both with and without *-r*.

In present tense of weak verbs, *-r* is not commonly used, even if it can be found. Examples: [²pɽaɲcə] *plantar* 'plant,' [²snakə] *snakkar* 'talk' and [²brʉːkə] *bruker* 'use' but also [²arbeiər] *arbeider* 'work.' And the past tense of weak verbs of first declination, the so-called *a*-verbs, does in most cases employ *-a* as the formative. However, we can also find a few instances where *-e* ([-ə]) is used. Examples: [²snaka] *snakka* 'talked,' [²tryska] *trøska* 'threshed,' but [²pɽantə] *planta* 'planted' and [²hʉntə] 'hunted.'

It is obvious that the dative case was in decline during the 1990s, as it was fifty years earlier. Very few have dative at all in their dialect, and those who have it, do not use it consistently. Examples of dative use in the material is [ɛ va dən ²yŋstə tɔ ²jɛntʊm] *eg var den yngste av jentene* 'I was the youngest of girls.DEF.DAT' and [²høːna mə ²cçʉkɽiŋʊm] *høna med kjuklingane* 'hen.DEF with chickens.DEF.DAT).' The collapse of the dative system is not only found in American Norwegian, it is also common in

many dialects in Norway, thus this is a process that very well might have started in Norway and continued in the New World. This development is however not a general phenomenon affecting all Norwegian dialects in America. In the Trønder communities visited in the 1980s as well as during the last years, it was possible to find speakers with a rather intact dative system (Hjelde 1992). But while these Trønder speakers came from communities with roots in only one small area of Norway and where all spoke a rather consistent dialect where dative was morphologically marked in only one way, the population in Coon comes from a larger area where dative can be marked by several formatives. And I find it reasonable to assume that the fact that dative could be formed in several different ways in the different Norwegian dialects originally represented in Coon has led to instability and finally the collapse of dative marking of nouns.

The recordings done in Coon during the last years confirm that still today there is a lot of dialectal variation in the speech of those with an East Norwegian (especially Gudbrandsdal) background. And in general, the situation today is quite similar to what it was during the 1990s. Most of the variation documented at that time is still heard today. But if we look at the speakers from 2010–11, this is not a surprise; the NorAmDiaSyn project has many of the same informants as I had in 1992, or they come from the same age group and social networks as informants I had back then. Thus, the conclusion of this article could be that 160 years of inter-dialectal contact has not resulted in the formation of a koiné in Coon, and the Norwegian language will disappear before such a process is completed. This is not unique for this particular community, as the same is reported from German-speaking communities in the Midwest (Seifert 1993: 323–324).

But if we look at the youngest speakers, i.e., those born between 1940 and 1961, a rather different picture emerges. These were all together 13 informants (12 men and 1 woman), and most had similar backgrounds to the informants in the 1940s and 1990s, being closely associated to farming in one way or another. In this group we find a rather coherent language without much variation.

One of the few dialectal features where we can find variation in this group of 'young' speakers, is the personal pronoun, 1st person singular form, where most use [eː], but where we also find [jeː]. It is somewhat surprising that [eː] has become the most frequent form among this age group, as [jeː] was more frequent in the recordings done in the 40s and 90s, and I am not able to give any good explanation for this. All have [viː] as the personal pronoun in plural and [²itə] as the negation particle. Furthermore we find palatalization of dental consonants in stressed syllables, but we do not find such palatalization in unstressed positions. Examples: [haɲ] *han* 'he,' [brɛɲc] *brent* 'burned' and [skrɛʎ] *skrell* 'crash.' However, the realization of these palatal consonants is rather weak. The system of kløyvd infinitiv 'divided infinitive' is still intact, like in [²taːɽa] *tala* 'talk,' [²jæːra] *gjera* 'do' but [²snakə] *snakke* 'talk' and [²drɛkə] *drikke* 'drink.' We do not find infinitives with a short root syllable, and also the 'European u' is quite rare among members of this age group.

Plural indefinite forms of nouns are marked with -r, resulting in forms like [²tʊmər] *tommer* 'inches,' [²kʉːər] *kyr* 'cows,' [²goŋər] *gonger* 'times' and [²viːkʉr] *veker* 'weeks.' But *-r* is not used in the present tense of weak verbs, as in [²reisə] *reiser* 'travel,' [²cçøːrə] *køyrer* 'drive' and [trʉː] *trur* 'believe.' In past tense of 1st class of weak verbs, we only find the formative *-a*, not *-e*, as in [²skrata] *skratta* 'laughed,' [²mjøɽka] *mjølka* 'milked' and [²laːga] *laga* 'made.' All this is in accordance with tendencies seen in 1992, when these forms were most frequent. The dative case, well on its way out in the 90s, is now totally gone. And since we hardly find any variation in this age group, it is reasonable to argue that a koiné has evolved among these speakers in Coon.

6. Conclusion

The literature often posits that the formation of a koiné normally is done in three generations; Kerswill (2002: 670) states that "(k)oineization … typically takes two or three generations to complete, though it is achievable within one." In Coon we find that process is not yet completed, but among the youngest speakers, i.e., those born in the 1940s or later, we can argue that such a norm is established. It is remarkable how long this process has taken. It is more than 160 years since Norwegians started to settle in this area, and for a century the language was handed down to new generations. It is difficult to say why this process has taken so long, but one important factor here is that the immigration from Norway into this area lasted for many years, and that the continuous inflow of new immigrants slowed down this process.

It is also worth noting that the Norwegian-Americans themselves are not aware of the dialectal variation found in this area. Hardy any of the informants in 1990s or the 2010s reflected on this variation, instead claiming that everybody in Coon spoke the same Norwegian dialect. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that there were any differences in social status related to the various dialectal variants. And since the variation found was not noticed by the Norwegian speakers and status was not relevant, there was probably no strong social driving force facilitating the formation of a koiné.

Another factor which might have slowed this process, is what Ibarra (1976: 245) and Munch (1954: 197) call "clannish(ness)." Munch and Ibarra emphasize the strong family ties found among Norwegian-Americans in this community and social activities are to a high degree directed towards the family. This loyalty towards roots and family might also have linguistic consequences, in the sense that the family was an important agent for the choice of linguistic norms, more important than peer groups. An argument for such an interpretation is that we find among Haugen's recordings an informant talking a dialect very similar to the dialect of the 'young' speakers of today. This man, 10C14, did not have a Norwegian background. He grew up with German as his first language and learned Norwegian from his Norwegian friends and classmates when he started at school. He was in his late 40s when the recordings were done, and at that time he claimed to speak Norwegian better than German. The point here is

that his own family has not influenced his Norwegian dialect, and it is fair to assume that he does not attach special attitudes to different Norwegian dialectal variants. As he learned Norwegian from his peers, it is also reasonable to assume that his language reflects the most frequent forms heard in his surroundings.

He has acquired the system of divided infinitives. We do find palatalization of dental consonants in stressed syllables, but not in unstressed ([køɲ] *korn* 'corn,' but [²moron], not [²moroɲ] *morgon* 'morning'), a system similar to what we find in Gudbrandsdalen south of Fron. We find *-r* as a marker of plural indefinite form of nouns, [²hæstər] *hestar* 'horses,' [²kʉːər] *kyr* 'cows,' but *-r* is not used to mark present tense of weak verbs, [²kɛʎə] *kalle* 'call,' a distribution which we traditionally find in Gausdal, Øyer and Fåberg, but not Biri. He does not use *-n* to mark plural definite forms of nouns [²ʊŋa] *ungane* 'the kids,' as found in the area from Fåberg and southwards. He has the [eː] as personal pronoun singular, which we find north from Øyer and Gausdal, while the plural form is [viː], which we find southwards from Øyer and Gausdal. Most phonological and morphological features in this informant's dialect corresponds with the dialect as we find it in the area around Øyer and Gausdal, an area which geographically, as well as dialectally is in the middle between the two 'extremes' represented in Coon, Fron and Biri.

When Norwegians in the same age group as this informant did not acquire the same variety, it might be because of their loyalty to family and the dialect spoken at home. But even if the formation of a koiné took a long time in Coon, we can clearly recognize the two first stages outlined by Trudgill and Kerswill in the recordings from the 1940s and 1990s, and we also see the third and final step in the speech of the youngest Norwegian speakers today.

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