

# On Two Myths of the Norwegian Language in America

Is it Old-Fashioned? Is it Approaching the Written Bokmål Standard?

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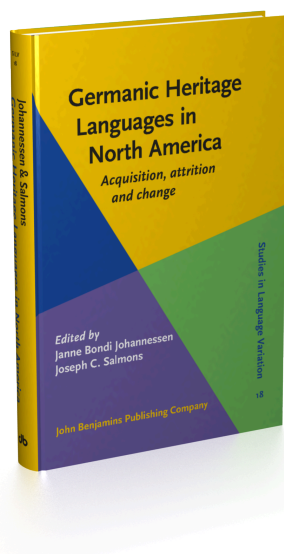
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# On two myths of the Norwegian language in America

Is it old-fashioned? Is it approaching the written Bokmål standard?

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The article discusses two claims about Heritage Norwegian in the American Midwest. One is that the Norwegian-speaking descendants of Norwegian immigrants speak an 'archaic' form of Norwegian. The other is that their language approaches the written Norwegian Bokmål standard, i.e., has moved away from the dialects spoken by original immigrants. Evidence from the lexicon and grammar help answer the questions in the title. The answer to the first question is partly positive, depending on what aspects of language are focussed on, while the answer to the second one is negative.

**Keywords:** Heritage Norwegian, Bokmål, vocabulary, grammar, comparisons with European Norwegian

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, we examine the two claims about the Norwegian heritage language in America presented in the title: that it is archaic, and that it has developed towards

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the written language standard Bokmål.<sup>2</sup> We draw data from four informants in the Midwest, selected because their grandparents all came from the same Norwegian dialect area. We will compare the language of these four informants with that of four Norwegian dialect speakers from the same area (Gausdal, Gudbrandsdalen). This way we can determine if one of the language varieties appears more archaic in its words and grammar than the other. Furthermore, we also do a three-way comparison of American Norwegian, European (dialect) Norwegian and Bokmål. This will allow us to determine whether American Norwegian is more standardized or Bokmål-like than the equivalent dialect in Norway.

Both questions are interesting from a general linguistic perspective: While it is often claimed that heritage languages are archaic, what exactly is it about them that causes this attitude amongst the general public? The idea that a heritage language develops in the direction of a standard is possibly less widespread among the public, but the claim is made several times in Haugen's seminal *The Norwegian Language in America* (1953).

## 2. Is the Norwegian language in America archaic?

Many of those European Norwegians who have Norwegian American relatives, report that their language is "just like listening to grandma." We examine to what extent the heritage variety is archaic, and in that case, which aspects of the language that may be considered old. We will study morphology and lexicon – and in the latter category, both function words and lexical words.

### 2.1 Data material: Informants

We compare two groups, one American and one Norwegian, with the same dialect background in Norway. The assumption is that if a phenomenon (grammatical or lexical) is found in American Norwegian but not in European Norwegian, then it is an old phenomenon (of course unless it is a loan from English or in other ways first emerged in the USA).

We chose four informants from the fieldwork done in March 2010 (see Johannessen and Laake 2011, 2012, forthcoming) – from Westby, WI, and Sunburg, MN: Archie, Eunice, Florence and Howard. Their grandparents or great grandparents emigrated from the southern part of the valley of Gudbrandsdalen in Eastern Norway. Not all of them know the background of all of their ancestors. We have detected a certain prestige in having roots in Gudbrandsdalen. Furthermore, it is a very long valley, so many

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2. Bokmål is one of two written standards for the Norwegian language. See Section 3.

may generalize their background to it out of convenience. Nevertheless, our findings support reports about this background with dialect features of their speech. Three of our speakers have never been to Norway, and the fourth only for two short visits. None of them read Norwegian well or have had much contact with Norwegians from Norway. They are all in their eighties, born between 1922 and 1930. Their language will be compared with that of a group of Norwegians from Gausdal, Gudbrandsdalen. This place is represented in the Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al. 2009). Here we also find four informants, all of whom are younger than our four Americans; two males under 30 and two females over 50 years.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of writing, the American Norwegian recordings are available as untranscribed video files. It has therefore been necessary to listen to the recordings (about three hours altogether; we have chosen footage in which informants are talking to each other and not to one of us), and make accurate notes. In the Norwegian dialect corpus, however, all the recordings are transcribed and grammatically annotated so that it has been easy to use this as control material. The process has been to first go carefully through the American Norwegian material, and afterwards check the various phenomena in the Nordic Dialect Corpus, using targeted searches.

When we write 'America' and 'American Norwegians' in this article, we mean more specifically the informants we have chosen, but we think the conclusions can be generalized to most of the Midwest, because we have shown elsewhere (Johannessen and Laake 2011, 2012, forthcoming) that the Norwegian language of the Midwest has so much in common that it should be regarded as one linguistic variety. When we write 'Norway' and 'Norwegians,' we mean Gausdal and the people there.

## 2.2 Investigation of pronouns

We begin by looking at the pronominal system in both Norwegian varieties. Most pronouns are frequent, providing a good basis for comparison. Example (1) suggests that there are no major differences between the two varieties.

- (1) a. *Nå ringe romm ti meg frå Minneapolis*  
       now phone they to me from Minneapolis  
       'Now they phone me from Minneapolis.' (Archie, Westby, WI)
- b. *så stirre romm bare dumt på deg*  
       then stare they only stupidly on you  
       'Then they just stare stupidly at you.' (Gausdal\_05um)

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3. The Norwegian informants are anonymous, but the informant codes reveal some information. They consist of the place name (Gausdal) followed by codes for gender and age: uk=young woman, um=young man, gk=old woman, gm=old man.

Table 1. Pronouns in America and Norway.

	America		Norway	
	subject	object	subject	object
1.PERS.SG.	/e/ /i/	/me/	/e/	/me/
2.PERS.SG.	/dʌ/, /rʌ/ <sup>4</sup>		/dʌ/, /rʌ/	/de/, /re/
3.PERS.SG.	/hæin/, /han/, /n/	<b>/hanom/</b> , /han/, /n/	/hæin/, /han/, /n/	/han/, /n/
	/hu/	/hu/	/hu/	/hu/
	/de/, /dæ/, /re/	<b>/de/</b> , <b>/dæ/</b> , <b>/re/</b>	/dæ/, /de/, /re/	/dæ/, /de/, /re/, <b>/di/</b> , <b>/ri/</b>
1.PERS.PL.	/vi/	/ʊs/	/vi/	/øs/
2.PERS.PL.	<b>/di/</b> , <b>/ri/</b>	<b>/døk/</b> , /røk/ <sup>5</sup>	<b>/døk/</b> , <b>/røk/</b>	/døk/, /røk/
3.PERS.PL.	/dem/, /dum/, /døm/, /rem/, /rum/	/dum/, /røm/, /dem/, /rum/	/døm/, /røm/	/døm/, /røm/
	Others	/inan/, /noga/, /no:go/, /noka/, /noen/, /hor/, <b>/sume/</b>	/inan/, /no:go /, /hor/	

There is variation in the use of pronouns both in America and in Norway, and mostly the same variants are found in both places,<sup>6</sup> save for a few minor differences (shown in bold in the table above, and in the examples below):

In America we find *hanom*, which in Norwegian can be both dative and accusative:<sup>7</sup>

- (2) *e tala på det åt hanom*  
I spoke on it to him  
'I talked about it to him.'
- (Archie, Westby, WI)

4. Some may think that /r/-initial pronouns are only the result of phonological rules – that they appear after a vowel (see Lie 1984: 4). We do not agree with this assumption. For arguments, see Johannessen (2012).

5. 2. PERS.PL. object in America has been added from later fieldwork.

6. Klaus Johan Myrvoll, based on Skjeggeland (1997) and others, has made us aware that /i/ (1.PERS.SG.) and /ʊs/ (1.PERS.PL.) are unexpected because the former is found only in the very north part of Gudbrandsdalen, while the latter is found only in the western part of Gudbrandsdalen (in the valleys of Hallingdal and Valdres). He also points out that *hanom* is not typical of Gudbrandsdalen, where one would expect a rounded vowel in the first syllable, and that the contrast *di* – *døkk* has not been found in Gudbrandsdalen since the 1880s (supported by Storm 1920: 67). These facts suggest that the Norwegian Americans do not speak a ‘pure’ Norwegian dialect, but that their variety contains features from other dialects, a feature of koinéization. See Section 3.

7. Jan Terje Faarlund (p.c.) informs us that *hanom* /hænom/ can also be used as an accusative form in East Norwegian dialects.

But it is the only form we find that can be dative, so we will not generalize from this one occurrence. On the other hand, we find many examples of *di* and *ri* 'it' in Gudbrandsdal. This is a dative form that we do not find in America, see (3).

- (3) *jæu ra en jer se nå ått di*  
 yes then one makes oneself now to it  
 'Oh, yes, one does have some thought on it.' (Gausdal\_05um)

In America, we find a difference between subject and object forms in the 2.PERS.PL., with a contrast between /di/ and /døk/. This distinction is on its way out in Norway, where /døk/ or /røk/ have taken over completely. We see an example of *di* in American Norwegian in (4):

- (4) *hå va re di gjorde during recess?*  
 what was it you did during recess  
 'What did you do during recess?' (Eunice, Sunburg, MN)

Finally, the pronoun *summe* 'some' is different in the two Norwegian varieties. We return to this term in Section 2.4.

In the case of pronouns, there are, then, a couple of cases where American Norwegian is more archaic, maintaining the distinction between the two forms of 2.PERS.PL., and the pronoun *summe*. With the exception of these two (plus the *hanom* form), there is much more that unites than divides the two language varieties with respect to pronouns.

## 2.3 Morphology

### 2.3.1 Dative

Dative was a case category in Old Norse. It has been disappearing from European Norwegian for several hundred years, but there is still a belt that runs across southern Norway that has retained the dative (Eyþórsson et al. 2012). Vestad (2002: 17) writes about the Gausdal dialect that the use of dative is stable among most adults, but he believes that it is on its way out in the younger generation. Dative is triggered by certain prepositions, but also by some verbs and adjectives. It can only be found in words that express definiteness, such as pronouns and definite nouns.

We see that throughout Table 2, the America column is empty (we have left out the one example of *hanom* from Section 2.2), while the column from Gausdal is filled with dative forms. Dative in Gausdal is clearly a category that is still alive, as the examples show, and there were many more hits in the corpus to choose from. Since dative is an ancient category, the comparison shows Gausdal in Norway as the more archaic variety, while American Norwegian is far more innovative. It should be noted that case, and perhaps especially dative, is a category that is often lost in language contact situations, see for example Putnam (2003), Boas (2009) for the loss of dative case in varieties of American German. On the other hand, dative has been disappearing from

Table 2. Dative in America and Norway.

	America	Norway (all four Gausdal informants)
Pronouns	–	<i>de e nå mye på grunn tå di</i> ‘it is because of <b>that</b> ’
Nouns SG FEM	–	<i>behøve da itte utu byggd’n her</i> ‘don’t need to get out of <b>the</b> village here’
Nouns SG MASC	–	<i>menn denna ræsjtubben ifrå borrtpå garda</i> ‘but this little road from over at <b>the</b> farm’
Nouns PL MASC	–	<i>e sennte ut en lapp åt sjueneklasingom</i> ‘I sent out a note to <b>the</b> seventh-graders’
Nouns PL NEUT	–	<i>litt førænmdringer på systemom</i> ‘some changes in <b>the</b> system’
Preproprial article FEM	–	<i>vi jekk åt n Anna</i> ‘we walked to <b>ART</b> Anna’

Norwegian dialects since the 1300s, and this fact about American Norwegian might as easily be an adaption to other dialects and part of a koniézation process.

2.3.2 Two infinitival suffixes

Many dialects in the eastern part of Norway, including our Gudbrandsdalen dialect (Vestad 2002: 22), have two infinitival suffixes (rather than one, as in the Bokmål standard). This is an old system, developed from a distinction in Old Norse, where infinitives that in Old Norse had a long root syllable and a short final syllable now have an infinitive ending in *-e*, while infinitives with a short root syllable now end in *-a*. In America we find this infinitive system, but we also find it in Gausdal. See (5) and (6) for *-e* and *-a*, respectively.

- (5)

a.

*kanskje e må prøve n*  
maybe I must try it  
‘Maybe I must try it.’

(Eunice, Sunburg)

b.

*e skal kjøpe meg en slik Fiat*  
I shall buy myself a such Fiat  
‘I’ll buy myself that kind of Fiat.’

(Gausdal\_05um)
- (6)

a.

*atte rom kunne ikkje komma heimat*  
that they could not come home  
‘That they couldn’t come home again.’

(Eunice, Sunburg)

b.

*kjem te å flotta*  
come to to move  
‘Will be going to move.’

(Gausdal\_05um)

There are many similar examples in the recordings. In Table 3, we present some additional verbs.

**Table 3.** The infinitive system with two suffixes in America and Norway.

	America (Eunice)	Norway (young people from Gausdal)
Infinitives in <i>-e</i>	<i>besøke</i> 'visit,' <i>prate</i> 'talk,' <i>prøve</i> 'try,' <i>tenkje</i> 'think,' <i>travle</i> 'walk,' <i>åpne</i> 'open'	<i>hæille</i> 'hold,' <i>kjøpe</i> 'buy,' <i>knote</i> 'speak impure dialect,' <i>skjønne</i> 'understand,' <i>tene</i> 'earn'
Infinitives in <i>-a</i>	<i>baka</i> 'bake,' <i>eta</i> 'eat' <i>gjøra</i> 'do,' <i>hugsa</i> 'remember,' <i>komma</i> 'come,' <i>tørja</i> 'dare,' <i>væra</i> 'be'	<i>fløtta</i> 'move,' <i>gjæra</i> 'do,' <i>komma</i> 'come,' <i>laga</i> 'make,' <i>veta</i> 'know,' <i>væra</i> 'be,' <i>laga</i> 'make'

We have only used examples from Eunice here, but this infinitive system is equally present in the other three informants, as well as in those from Gausdal. There is, then, no difference in the two groups, and it is not possible to say that one group uses a more archaic variant.

### 2.3.3 Inflection of finite verbs

In the Gausdal dialect, weak (regular) verbs have a present tense form ending in *-e* or *-a* (and thus not *-er* or *-ar*), while the preterit of these verbs is *-te*, *-de* or *-a*. In the present and preterit tenses of strong verbs there is umlaut and no suffix (Vestad 2002: 21–22, Papazian and Helleland 2005: §3.3.2). Vestad (2002: 20–21) writes that the past participle ends in *-e* and not *-i* (unless there is an *-i* in the stem), which is otherwise common in eastern Norway. In (7) and Table 4 we see examples of weak verbs in the present and preterit, and the examples clearly show that the language varieties are the same with regard to weak verb inflection.

- (7) a. *Bruke* *dokk kjøttkaker borti der?*  
       use you meat.cakes over there  
       'Do you use meat cakes over there [i.e., in Norway]?' (Florence, Westby)
- b. *De e mange som bruke varmekabler*  
       it is many who use heating.cables  
       'There are many who use heating cables.' (Gausdal\_01um)

**Table 4.** Weak verbs in America and Norway.

	America	Norway
Weak verbs, present tense	<i>bruke</i> 'uses,' <i>kjøpe</i> 'buys,' <i>koke</i> 'cooks,' <i>stoppe</i> 'stops,' <i>tenkje</i> 'thinks'	<i>bruke</i> 'uses,' <i>heite</i> 'is called,' <i>kjenne</i> 'knows,' <i>kjøre</i> 'drives,' <i>klare</i> 'manages,' <i>tenkje</i> 'thinks'
Weak verbs, preterit tense	<i>brukte</i> 'used,' <i>døe</i> 'died,' <i>glømte</i> 'forgot,' <i>hugsa</i> 'remembered,' <i>hørde</i> 'heard,' <i>kjøfte</i> 'bought,' <i>kvilte</i> 'rested,' <i>likte</i> 'liked,' <i>pleide</i> 'used to,' <i>prata</i> 'talked,' <i>rende</i> 'ran,' <i>snakka</i> 'talked,' <i>snudde</i> 'turned,' <i>spurde</i> 'asked,' <i>tala</i> 'talked,' <i>travla</i> 'walked,' <i>trudde</i> 'thought'	<i>brukte</i> 'used,' <i>kjøfte</i> 'bought,' <i>kjørde</i> 'drove,' <i>hørde</i> 'heard,' <i>likte</i> 'liked,' <i>passa</i> 'suited,' <i>snakka</i> 'talked,' <i>spurde</i> 'asked' <i>stirra</i> , <i>trudde</i> , <i>tænkte</i>

In (8) and Table 5 we present examples of strong verbs in the present tense, past tense and past participle.

- (8)

a.

*om dem kjøm te ...*  
if they come to  
'if they are going to...'

(Eunice, Sunburg)

b.

*kjem te å fløtta*  
come to to move  
'going to move'

(Gausdal\_05um)

Table 5. Strong verbs in America and Norway.

	America	Norway
Strong verbs, present tense	<i>et</i> 'eats,' <i>feng</i> <sup>8</sup> 'gets,' <i>kjøm</i> 'comes,' <i>kjøm</i> 'comes,' <i>ligg</i> 'lies,' <i>te</i> 'takes,' <i>veit</i> 'knows'	<i>hæng</i> 'hangs,' <i>kjøm</i> 'comes,' <i>ligg</i> 'lies,' <i>lyt</i> 'must,' <i>te</i> 'takes,' <i>tek</i> 'takes,' <i>tæk</i> 'takes,' <i>veit</i> 'knows'
Strong verbs, preterit tense	<i>flaug</i> 'flew,' <i>fækk</i> 'got,' <i>ga</i> 'gave,' <i>gjekk</i> 'walked,' <i>jaug</i> 'lied,' <i>satt</i> 'sat,' <i>såg</i> 'saw,' <i>to</i> 'took,' <i>vart</i> 'became,' <i>vog</i> 'weighed'	<i>fækk</i> 'got,' <i>ga</i> 'gave,' <i>gjekk</i> 'walked,' <i>laut</i> 'had to,' <i>låg</i> 'lay,' <i>satt</i> 'sat,' <i>såg</i> 'saw,' <i>tok</i> 'took,' <i>vart</i> 'became'
Strong verbs, pres. part.	<i>vøri</i> 'been'	<i>drivi</i> 'done,' <i>vore</i> 'been,' <i>vorti</i> 'become'

Both Norwegian varieties have the system of weak and strong verbs. We have some examples of past participle *-i*. This does not seem to follow the system Vestad mentioned, but it is found in both America and Norway. There are some minor differences between the verb inflection in America and Norway, but both conform to descriptions in the dialect literature. There is thus no reason to regard one system as more archaic than the other.

2.4 Function words

We have compared the morphology of American Norwegian and Gudbrandsdal Norwegian, and there is little (apart from the dative) that distinguishes the two variants. But as we looked at the pronoun system in 2.2, we found a few minor differences. It is thus possible that if we move away from the morphological to the lexical domain, there may be larger differences. In Table 6 we present a list of function words we have found amongst the Norwegian Americans and amongst those from Gausdal. We have put in bold print those words that we will discuss in more detail below. The standard orthographical form is presented in the third column, with their English equivalent in inverted commas.

8. The form *feng* does not exist in Norway and we think it emerged on analogy with the pres. part. *fenge*, after the pattern *gjeng* – *gjenge* 'walk, walked.'

Table 6. Some function words in America and Norway.

America	Norway	Equivalent in written Norwegian and gloss
<b><i>båe</i></b>	–	<i>både</i> 'both'
<i>da ma</i>	<i>da ma</i>	<i>skjønner du</i> 'you see'
<i>fyr</i>	<i>fyr</i>	<i>før</i> 'before'
<i>hell</i>	<i>hell</i>	<i>heller</i> 'neither'
<i>horr</i>	<i>horr</i>	<i>hver</i> 'each'
<b><i>inte</i></b>	–	<i>ikke</i> 'not'
<i>itte</i>	<i>itte</i>	<i>ikke</i> 'not'
<i>messom</i>	<i>messom</i>	<i>liksom</i> 'just like'
<b><i>mykji</i></b>	<i>mye</i>	<i>mye</i> 'much'
<i>summe</i>	–	<i>noen</i> 'some'
<b><i>ur</i></b>	–	<i>av</i> 'of'
<i>visst</i>	<i>visst</i>	<i>hvis</i> 'if'
<i>ein og tjuge</i>	<i>tjuge</i>	<i>tjueen</i> 'twenty one'
<i>æller</i>	<i>æller or ældri</i>	<i>aldri</i> 'never'
<i>æu</i>	<i>æu</i>	<i>og</i> 'too'
<i>ât</i>	<i>ât</i>	<i>til</i> 'to'

The bolded words are candidates for archaisms. While pronouns and verb morphology are frequent and thus likely to be found in almost any text, individual words, even function words, are more dependent on the text type, contents and the choices of the speaker. To counteract this, we will increase the geographical search area if we get negative results amongst Gausdal informants.

***båe*** (*både*) 'both': While this term does not appear in the Gausdal recordings, there are many examples in the other recordings of the county of Oppland, for example in Vang, Skjåk and Lom, and east of Gausdal, in Hedmark. In Gausdal we have found no examples of the standard *både* either. We assume, therefore, that this word represents an accidental gap in the material, and that *båe* is also used in Gausdal.<sup>9</sup>

***inte*** (*ikke*) 'not': We have found examples of this negation form in the border areas next to Sweden, namely Aremark, Fredrikstad, Rømskog, Råde and Trysil, but not in Gausdal or the rest of the Oppland County. We thus assume that *inte* in the Midwest is borrowed from another dialect, or from Swedish.

***mykji*** (*mye*) 'much': The pronunciation *mykji* /<sup>2</sup>myçi/ was not found in Gausdal, but there are some hits in the corpus further west; in Valdres and Hallingdal. In Gausdal, however, there are numerous examples of the standard *mye* /<sup>2</sup>my:e/. East of Gausdal, in Hedmark, there are no examples of *mykji*. We assume that the isogloss for *mykji* runs west of Gausdal, and that the Norwegian American variant is borrowed from

9. Klaus Johan Myrvoll informs us that according to Jenshus (1986:79), *båe* is found in Fron in Gudbrandsdalen, which supports our assumption of an accidental gap.

western dialects.<sup>10</sup> A corpus search for various realisations of *mye* gives us the picture in Figure 1 (showing southern Norway), where the dark markers indicate the fricative pronunciation (*mykji*), and the light show variants with only vowels. We see that Gausdal, located just southeast of the word *Norway* on the map, is clearly in the area without the fricative.



**Figure 1.** Pronunciation of *mye* ‘much’: Dark markers show forms with fricative, *mykji* /2myçj/; light markers show those without, *mye* /2my:e/.

**summe** (*noen*) ‘some’: We have not found this word in Gausdal, but it occurs elsewhere in the county in the Nordic Dialect Corpus. Of the 33 hits in the county 28 are from the part of the corpus containing old recordings from the Oslo Dialect Archive, which are 40–50 years older than the rest of the recordings. The five informants that are not from the Dialect Archive recordings are all in the ‘old’ age group. When almost all the hits are from the Dialect Archive part of the corpus, this indicates a phenomenon that is not frequent in the modern language. Informants in the older material have a total of 255,000 words in the corpus, which is negligible compared with the modern material of 1,874,000 words. The modern part is therefore more than seven

10. We have actually checked whether *mykji* exists amongst old people in Gausdal. We phoned the now recently deceased, 85 year old Ruth Grimstad, who according to both herself and others spoke old-fashioned, pure Gausdal dialect. During that conversation she never used any other pronunciation than *mye*, even when we tried to trigger the fricative form. We asked for example *Var det mykji snø i år* ‘Was there much snow this year?’ and she answered *Ja, veldig mye* ‘Yes, very much.’

times larger than the old part. If the word *summe* was equally common in the modern language, we would expect seven times more occurrences of it in the modern part of the corpus. But since there are more occurrences in the older part, we conclude that *summe* is old-fashioned and it follows that this also is true for American Norwegian. (Grammatically, *summe* is interesting, see Sandøy 1996).

**ur** (*av*) 'of': There are no examples of *ur* from Gausdal in the Nordic Dialect Corpus. Only one person uses this word in the whole corpus, in the old Dialect Archive part of the corpus, in a recording of a man from the valley of Østerdalen. It might be tempting to think that this word is borrowed into American Norwegian from another dialect, but Vestad (2002: 98) gives a caption that reads: *Svatsum held på å ta ei rype "utur snørur"* 'Svatsum is taking a grouse out of the snare' [quotation marks in original]. And indeed we find some more examples by searching for *tur* as well. Most are from the Swedish border, but Bardu in North Norway (with its immigrant population from Østerdalen) and the area of Hadeland in the central parts of East Norway are represented. Again, the examples are either from the old Dialect Archive recordings or from old informants in the Nordic Dialect Corpus. We can then conclude that *ur* is an archaic feature of American Norwegian.

We have looked at 16 function words. Of these, 11 were used by the Gausdal informants in the Nordic Dialect Corpus. Five function words found in America were not found in Gausdal. Two are certain archaisms: *summe* and *ur*. We conclude this based on the fact that while we have found examples of these words in the areas around Gausdal, they were only in the older recordings or amongst older informants. That we did not find *båe* is probably an accidental gap in the material, while we believe that *inte* and *mykji* have been borrowed from other Norwegian dialects in America.

## 2.5 Lexical words

To determine whether American Norwegian is old-fashioned when it comes to lexical words, we selected some words we thought might be candidates for this. They are shown in Table 7. Again, we have highlighted in bold the words that only exist in America, without equivalents in the recordings from Gausdal.

With function words, we noted a methodological problem that a particular word we were looking for could just happen not to be represented in the corpus. We had to investigate thoroughly and look at other dialects to try to determine in each case what the lack of an equivalent would mean. In the case of lexical words, this becomes more of a problem, as we cannot expect informants in the two investigated areas to speak about the same topics, and hence use the same lexical items. Here, too, we must extend the basis for comparison as needed. Table 7 gives some words from American Norwegian that we believe are typically dialectal, and potentially archaic. We have bolded those words that we have not found amongst the informants from Gausdal, and examine these below.

Table 7. Lexical words in America and Norway.

America	Norway	Gloss
<i>beint (fram)</i>	–	‘straight’
<i>bøte</i>	–	‘repair’
<i>flaug</i>	<i>flaug</i>	‘ran’
<i>færdug</i>	<i>ferdig</i>	‘finished’
<i>fælt adv</i>	–	‘very’
<i>gamlaste</i>	<i>gamlar</i>	‘oldest’
<i>gæli</i>	<i>gæli</i>	‘wrong’
<i>heimat</i>	<i>heimat</i>	‘home again’
<i>koma i hau</i>	<i>koma i hau</i>	‘remember’
<i>kropp</i>	<i>kropp</i>	‘person’
<i>krøtter</i>	–	‘cattle’
<i>li på</i>	–	‘pass’ (about time)
<i>rumpe</i>	–	‘tail’
<i>stutt</i>	<i>stutt</i>	‘short’

**beint** ‘straight’: We have not found this word in Gausdal, and only two cases in the rest of Oppland. There are 25 hits in total in all of Norway, but only four amongst young informants, and as many as eight from the Dialect Archive recordings. The alternative word *rett* ‘straight’ gave 41 hits in the Oppland county, and three in Gausdal. Together this suggests that *beint* may be on its way out, and that American Norwegian thus may be old-fashioned here.

**fælt** ‘very’: There are no results for this word, used as an adverbial negative polarity item followed by an adjective in Gausdal, but there are six hits in Oppland County, and three from the Dialect Archive recordings. Conversely, we have searched for the alternative, by searching for *ikke* ‘not’ followed by *veldig* ‘very’ and then an adjective. This yielded 14 hits in Oppland, and almost all informants were young, 12 of 14. There is no doubt that for the word *fælt*, American Norwegian is archaic.

**li på** ‘pass’ (about time): There are only two hits of the verb *li på* in Oppland, and both are from the Dialect Archive of old recordings. Again American Norwegian is old-fashioned.

**rumpe** ‘tail’: There are a total of six relevant hits (those meaning ‘tail’) throughout the Nordic Dialect Corpus, and four of them are from Dialect Archive, while the other two are from an old man. It may seem that this, too, is somewhat archaic. However, we find only four relevant hits with the alternative *hale* with the same meaning from all over Norway, so the basis of comparison is too small to draw a firm conclusion.

**krøtter** ‘cattle’: There are nine matches for this word in Oppland, by one young and six old informants, plus two from the Dialect Archive. There are 32 hits for the alternative *ku/kyr*, amongst these six in Gausdal. It thus appears that the latter is more modern,

unless there are significant meaning differences that we do not see. It is most likely, however, that *krotter* is old-fashioned, which means that American Norwegian is, too. *Krotter* can strictly speaking have a meaning that is broader than that *ku/kyr* because sheep can also be used with this term. However, we know that our informants have only meant *cattle* ‘cows,’ so the question is not relevant.

**bøte** ‘repair’: In Oppland there is only one hit in the corpus, from the old Dialect Archive, while there are three hits for the alternative *reparere* (two young and one old). There is a possibility that there is a meaning difference for the different hits (*bøte* applies to for example fishing nets, while *reparere* applies to cars, tractors and furniture). If we look at the whole of Norway, the picture is clear: *bøte* occurs only five times (two from the Dialect Archive, two by old informants and one by a young informant). There are a total of 27 hits for *reparere*, and from all groups of informants, but only three from the Dialect Archive. It seems reasonable to conclude that the *bøte* is archaic, and that American Norwegian is, too.

It looks like American Norwegian is more old-fashioned than Norwegian (represented by the Gausdal dialect) at the lexical level. We had selected 14 words that we thought likely candidates for archaisms. Of those, eight were also used by the people in Gudbrandsdalen (in Gausdal), while six words were not. Five of these seem to be on their way out, when we take into account the age of those who use it elsewhere in Oppland and Norway, and the date of recording, and the comparison with words that could be regarded as alternatives. The archaic words are: *beint*, *fælt*, *li på*, *krotter*, *bøte*. One of them,  *rumpe* ‘tail,’ is harder to determine. We have many hits in the oldest sources (the Dialect Archive recordings and old informants), but we have only few for the alternative *hale*. When there are so many hits from the Dialect Archive, this may be because the people recorded generally talked more about animals than the new informants. So for the word  *rumpe*, we cannot draw a conclusion. But otherwise, on the basis of the lexical words we have investigated, we conclude that American Norwegian is more archaic than the Norwegian spoken in Gudbrandsdalen.

As noted in Section 2.1, at the lexical level, there are great similarities amongst Norwegian Americans across the whole Midwest (see Johannessen and Laake 2011, 2012, forthcoming), when it comes to loan words and new meanings of old words. Since we have seen that morphology and lexicon contain material from more than one dialect, we see this as a sign of koniézization in American Norwegian.

## 2.6 Conclusion on whether American Norwegian is archaic

All in all, we can conclude that American Norwegian is not more old-fashioned when it comes to pronouns and morphology. Although we have seen a case of a pronominal contrast in the 2.PERS.PL. in American Norwegian not found in Gudbrandsdalen, the latter still has a fully functional dative system not found in America. At this point Gausdal Norwegian appears more archaic. When it comes to vocabulary, the situation

is somewhat different. Many of the function words and lexical words used by our four informants in the Midwest, are no longer used amongst young people in Norway; we often find them in use only amongst the oldest informants in the Nordic Dialect Corpus and in the old recordings of the Dialect Archive. It thus appears that the first myth, that American Norwegian is archaic, may be true, but first and foremost when it comes to vocabulary. The grammar is more or less the same.

When it comes to pronouns and function words, we saw some examples of variation that suggest that American Norwegian has elements from more than one Norwegian dialect area. We also saw that the dative is gone. This suggests that the language of Norwegian Americans has undergone an incomplete koniëization process (see also Annear and Speth, Hjelde, Smits and van Marle, all in this volume).

### 3. Has the Norwegian language in America approached Bokmål?

#### 3.1 Einar Haugen on the development of American Norwegian

*The Norwegian Language in America* (1953) by Einar Haugen, professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and later at Harvard University, is a significant and insightful book on the Norwegian language in America in the 1940s; it has also had great influence on research on American immigrant languages in general. Here he argues that “the dialects in the Midwest could be characterized as a ‘gradual elimination of conspicuous forms,’” and that “many speakers have departed from their native speech in the general direction of the BL [book language] without of course attaining the norms of the latter” (1953: 352). About linguistic change, he says that it is “nearly always moving from a less to a more widely-used form, which is often that of urban DN [Dano-Norwegian]” (1953: 353). He says about the language that children learnt: “they adopted as their own that dialect which was most generally used in the community, which often meant the dialect that was most close to DN [Dano-Norwegian]” (1953: 350).

Before we pursue this question, we must clarify what Haugen meant by Book Language and Dano-Norwegian. He was well versed in the history of written languages. His doctoral thesis was about Ivar Aasen’s Nynorsk written standard, and he wrote extensively on language planning and written language standards, especially in the comprehensive *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* from 1966. Even if he used different terms, both Book Language and Dano-Norwegian, he was not necessarily referring to two different things. Over the years, both Nynorsk and Bokmål been called by different names. Haugen (1966: 19) talks about *Danish Norwegian* and puts *Riksmål* in parentheses. Later (36ff.) he discusses the written language that contrasted with the *Landsmål*, and explains that several terms were used before 1899: *det alminnelige Bogsprog* (the Common Book Language), Norwegian-Danish and Danish-Norwegian, until it was called *Riksmål*.

Before 1899 the term *Rigsmaal* was used for the general book language, which did not show marked dialect traits (Haugen 1966:38). In 1928, the Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education, KUD, decided that *det alminnelige Bogsprog* should now be called *Bokmål* (Haugen 1966:90). It seems reasonable that Haugen with his terms *Dano-Norwegian* and *Book Language* referred to *Riksmål* as a rather general term, a Danish-Norwegian book language without general dialect, as he himself describes the early use of this word. We are then talking about a fairly conservative, Danish-influenced language, significantly more so than the current Bokmål. For this paper we choose to use the current Bokmål as a standard of comparison because we know it best, and because there are good reference works. Since current Bokmål has more dialect features than the old Riksmål, any language that has moved in the direction of the latter, should even more so have moved towards the former. If Haugen is right in his assertion, then, American Norwegian should at least have moved towards Bokmål, which is more Norwegian than Riksmål was at the beginning of the century. We use the word Bokmål in the rest of this paper, and take that to include Bokmål, Riksmål, Book Language, and Dano-Norwegian.

Let us now examine Haugen's claim. We assume that if American Norwegian has moved towards Bokmål, then it will be at least as Bokmål-like as the Gausdal dialect, and possibly more. We choose a number of features for further investigation: pronouns, verb inflection, function words (other than pronouns), lexical words, and some syntactic phenomena, like preproprial articles, possessives, and word order in constituent questions.

### 3.2 Pronouns

Building on Section 2, we compare pronouns with both Gausdal dialect and Bokmål:

**Table 8.** Nominative pronouns in America and Norway.

	America	Norway	Bokmål	Bokmål standard pronunciation
1.PERS.SG	/e/, /i/	/e/	<i>jeg</i>	/jæi/
2.PERS.SG	/dʊ/, /rʊ/	/dʊ/, /rʊ/	<i>du</i>	/dʊ/
3.PERS.SG.MASC	/hæin/, /han/, /n/	/hæin/, /han/, n/	<i>han</i>	/han/
3.PERS.SG.FEM	/hu/	/hu/	<i>hun</i>	/hʊn/
3.PERS.SG.NEUT	/de/, /dæ/, /re/	/dæ/, /de/, /re/	<i>det</i>	/de/
1.PERS.PL	/vi/	/vi/	<i>vi</i>	/vi/
2.PERS.PL	/di/, /ri/	/døk/, /røk/	<i>dere</i>	/de:re/
3.PERS.PL	/dem/, /dum/, /døm/, /rem/, /rum/	/døm/, /røm/	<i>de</i>	/di/

In general the two spoken languages pattern together, and Bokmål stands alone with its own forms. There is therefore no change in the direction of Bokmål Norwegian in America on this point.

3.3 Verb inflection

We have already seen that American Norwegian has an infinitive system with two alternative suffixes. This is a feature found in East Norway, but not in Danish. It was accepted as an alternate form in Bokmål in 1938, and removed again in 2005. It was clearly not part of the Bokmål that Haugen’s informants had been exposed to at school, given that these recordings were done with adult speakers in the 1930s and 1940s. The infinitive system in American Norwegian, with two suffixes, is thus something that exists in spite of rather than because of Bokmål.

Consider now the inflection of finite verbs, as introduced in Section 2.

Table 9. Inflection of finite verbs, present and past tense, weak and strong conjugations.

America	Norway	Bokmål	Bokmål standard pronunciation
/2çø:pe/ ‘buys’	/2çø:re/ ‘drives’	<i>kjøper, kjører</i>	/2çø:per/, /2çø:rer/
/2spu:de/ ‘asked’	/2spu:de/ ‘asked’	<i>spurte</i>	/2spu:te/
/1haft/ ‘had’	/1haft/ ‘had’	<i>hatt</i>	/1hat/
/1çæm/ ‘comes’	/1çæm/ ‘comes’	<i>kommer</i>	/1komer/
/1ljæug/ ‘lied’	/1læut/ ‘ought’	<i>jugde, måtte</i>	/2jugde/, /2måte/
/2vø:ri/	/2vo:re/	<i>vært</i>	/1væt/

The table shows that American Norwegian and Gausdal Norwegian hardly differ from each other at any point, while both are clearly different from Norwegian Bokmål with respect to whether a verb belongs to the weak or strong class (seen in the past tense by the presence of a past tense dental suffix or umlaut, respectively), and also with respect to the nature of the various suffixes (presence or absence of *-r* in the present tense in the weak conjugation class, voiced or unvoiced dental suffix in the past tense etc.). Nothing in the verb inflections approaches Bokmål.

3.4 Function words

Having looked at grammatical phenomena, we now turn to the lexicon. We begin with function words, and reproduce the table from Section 2, Table 6, this time with Bokmål forms as well.

**Table 10.** Function words in America, Norway and in Bokmål.

America	Norway	Bokmål	Bokmål standard pronunciation
/ <sup>2</sup> bo:e/ 'both'	–	<i>begge</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> bege/
/ <sup>1</sup> da ma/ discourse particle	/da ma/	–	–
/ <sup>2</sup> fy:ri/ 'before'	/ <sup>2</sup> fy:ri/	<i>før</i>	/ <sup>1</sup> fø:r/
/ <sup>1</sup> hel'/ 'either'	/ <sup>1</sup> hel'/	<i>heller</i>	/ <sup>1</sup> heler/
/ <sup>1</sup> hor/ 'each'	/ <sup>1</sup> hor/	<i>hver</i>	/ <sup>1</sup> væ:r/
/ <sup>2</sup> inte/ 'not'	–	<i>ikke</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> ike/
/ <sup>2</sup> ite/ 'not'	/ <sup>2</sup> ite/	<i>ikke</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> ike/
/ <sup>2</sup> mesom/ 'about'	/ <sup>2</sup> mesom/	<i>liksom</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> liksom/
/ <sup>2</sup> myçi/ 'much'	/ <sup>2</sup> my:e/	<i>mye</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> my:e/
/ <sup>2</sup> sume/ 'some'	–	<i>noen</i>	–
/ <sup>1</sup> u:tʌr/ 'out of'	–	<i>ut av</i>	/ <sup>1</sup> u:tav/
/ <sup>1</sup> vist/ 'if'	/ <sup>1</sup> vist/	<i>hvis</i>	/ <sup>1</sup> vis/
/ <sup>2</sup> çu:ge/ '20'	/ <sup>2</sup> çu:ge/	<i>tjue</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> çu:e /
/ <sup>2</sup> æ:ler/ 'never'	/ <sup>2</sup> æ:ler/, / <sup>2</sup> ældri/	<i>aldri</i>	/ <sup>2</sup> aldri/

Here too, American Norwegian does not resemble Bokmål more than the Gausdal Norwegian does. Indeed, the two spoken varieties have something in common, while Bokmål is the odd one out. So there is no movement towards Bokmål here.

### 3.5 Lexical words

Here we investigate the lexical words first explored in Section 2. When we compare the lexical words in American Norwegian with the Gausdal dialect and Bokmål, we cannot ask what is allowed in the Bokmål standard. The Bokmål of today has a great many words which are typically Norwegian, and often found in the dialects. So if we are to compare, it must be to investigate whether the actual use of our particular words is found in all three sources, and to what extent. In Table 11 we have put a percent sign in the Bokmål column to indicate the words used in American and Gausdal Norwegian that can also be used in Bokmål. We have also added the more common expression for comparison, as we will show below. To study the actual use of these words in Bokmål, we used the large Lexicographical Bokmål Corpus (LBC). This corpus contains over 40 million words from many different sources, including novels, which are in principle more close to speech (and hence possibly to dialects) than scientific reports or newspapers. In this corpus, we have looked for a number of the American Norwegian words we found earlier. The number for each hit is given in parenthesis.

**Table 11.** Lexical words in America, Norway and Bokmål.

America	Norway	Bokmål
/ <sup>1</sup> bæint <sup>1</sup> fram/ ‘straight ahead’	/ <sup>1</sup> ret <sup>1</sup> fram/	<i>beint fram</i> (0), <i>rett fram</i> (338)
/ <sup>2</sup> bø:te/ ‘repair’	–	<i>bøte</i> (%), <i>reparere</i>
/ <sup>1</sup> flæug/ ‘ran’	–	<i>flaug</i> (%), <i>løp</i>
/ <sup>2</sup> fædug/ ‘finished’	/ <sup>2</sup> fædi/	<i>ferdig</i>
/ <sup>1</sup> fæ: t/ ADV ‘very’	–	<i>fælt</i> (%), <i>så</i>
/ <sup>2</sup> gamɾaste/ ‘oldest’	/ <sup>2</sup> gamɾer/	<i>eldste</i>
/ <sup>2</sup> gæ:ɾi/ ‘wrong’	/ <sup>2</sup> gæ:ɾi/	<i>galt</i>
/ <sup>1</sup> hæimat/ ADV ‘home’	/ <sup>1</sup> hæimat/	<i>heim</i> (253), <i>hjem</i> (20,737)
/ <sup>2</sup> koma i hæu/ ‘remember’	/ <sup>2</sup> koma i hæu/	<i>komme i hug</i> (2), <i>huske</i> (8899)
/ <sup>1</sup> krop/ ‘person’	/ <sup>1</sup> krop/	<i>kropp</i> (%), <i>person</i>
/ <sup>1</sup> krøter/ ‘cattle’	–	<i>krøtter</i> (10), <i>ku</i> (951)
/ <sup>2</sup> læi po:/ ‘as time went by’	–	<i>lei på</i> (%), <i>det hadde gått en stund</i>

This comparison is slightly more difficult than the previous ones, given that some of the American words have more than one meaning. If we do a search in the corpus and get thousands of hits, the task of calculating how many we have found with the desired meaning would be too time-consuming. For example, for the verb *flaug* (past tense of *fly*) we are only looking for the meaning ‘run,’ but the corpus contains nearly 12,000 examples, most of which probably mean ‘move in the air.’ For such examples of homonymy we cannot determine how many are used with the intended meaning.

Our findings are startling clear. We first go through the words or expressions that have a single meaning, which we are able to compare properly. *Beint fram* ‘straight ahead’ is commonly used in American and Gausdal Norwegian. In the LBC this expression has no hits, while the alternative *rett fram* has 338. We then looked at word *heim* ‘home,’ which has 253 hits in the LBC, as against 20,737 for the alternative *hjem*. *Komme i hug* ‘remember’ has only 2 hits, while the alternative *huske* has 8,899. The last of the words we have been able to count is *krøtter* ‘cattle’ has 10, while *ku* has 951. There is thus a massive discrepancy between the typically American Norwegian lexical word or expression and the Bokmål one.

Next, consider those words that we cannot count. *Bøte* is polysemous in Bokmål between ‘repair some concrete thing’ and ‘repair some abstract damage.’ This word is used frequently in Bokmål in the latter meaning, but not in the former. We present the overall numbers, but the reader should keep this fact in mind. *Bøte* gives 449 hits, and *reparere* 1,096, showing the infrequency for the former. We mentioned *flaug* above, and we choose to do a search in spite of the homonymy problem. We get only 11 hits for *flaug* in all meanings, and 4,539 for the alternative *løp* (specified as a verb, to avoid hits for the homonymous noun). *Færdug*, *gamlaste* and *gæli* cannot be used as search expressions, since they have non-standard morphological suffixes. The negative polarity adverb *fælt* ‘very,’ used in phrases like *itte fælt langt* ‘not very far,’ with *fælt* being

unstressed, is used in Bokmål in its original meaning 'bad,' and so it will be very hard to search in a way that will distinguish these meanings. In addition the alternative *så* can be used both as a negative polarity item *ikke så langt* 'not very far,' but also as an ordinary adverb meaning 'that,' as in *ikke så langt* 'not that far' with a different stress pattern (with stress on the adverb *så*). A count would therefore need for every hit to be investigated either by audio (impossible in a written text corpus) or by studying the surrounding text in each case. This is totally impossible. The adverb *så* with all its meanings has 238,597, i.e., nearly quarter of a million hits in the LBC, and these will not be investigated here. The word *kropp* meaning 'person' is relatively rare in Bokmål. However, the word itself is frequent given its meaning 'body.' A count is not feasible for this reason. The expression *lei på* 'time went by' is impossible to compare with anything else, given that there are so many alternatives, including a variety of alternative words like *timer* 'hours,' *dager* 'days,' *uker* 'weeks,' *måneder* 'months,' *år* 'years,' *en stund* 'a while,' etc.

Haugen does not mention the Nynorsk written language standard, but since our Norwegian Americans have a heritage background from some of the areas in Norway in which Nynorsk was used in the schools, we find it natural to compare the American Norwegian with this standard, too. Nynorsk was created by the great grammarian Ivar Aasen as a written standard based on the Norwegian dialects rather than on Danish (Aasen 1864). The council of Eastern Gausdal introduced Nynorsk into all schools already in 1908, which was 30 years earlier than other villages in central and southern Gudbrandsdalen (Holthe 2011:6).

It is immediately clear that when we do searches in the Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts, the Nynorsk part, we find greater correlation between the American Norwegian language and this written standard. We get, for example, 80 hits for *beint fram*, and 24 hits for *rett fram*. Compared with the Bokmål corpus the difference is enormous, recall that the ratio there was 0:338. Another example is *bøte*, which gives 43 hits, while *reparere* only gives 28. In Bokmål the latter had more than double the hits of the former.

The lexical words we have chosen for this section, originally selected as candidates for being archaic, are clearly not close to the Bokmål standard. Instead, they are, with a few exceptions, very close to the equivalent language variant at home, in Gausdal, Gudbrandsdalen. They are closer to the Nynorsk standard, which is not surprising, since Nynorsk is based on the Norwegian dialects. But this standard was not the one Haugen had in mind, and American Norwegian cannot be said to have approached Bokmål.

### 3.6 Syntax

Johannessen and Laake (2011, 2012) show some typical syntactic constructions in American Norwegian. We present some of them here, to compare with Bokmål.

### 3.6.1 Preproprial articles

Preproprial articles can be found in dialects across great parts of Norway (see Torp 1973, Håberg 2010). Gausdal is one of the areas where this article is used, and so is our American Norwegian. Consider some examples in (9):

- (9) a. *n Hans og n Anton*  
he Hans and he Anton  
'Hans and Anton' (Archie)
- b. *ho Lina Bakkom*  
she Lina Bakkom  
'Lina Bakkom' (Florence)
- c. *ho Jane*  
she Jane  
'Jane' (Eunice)
- d. *ho Susan Galstad*  
she Susan Galstad  
'Susan Galstad' (Howard)

Preproppial articles are not part of the Bokmål standard, and normally not in Nynorsk either.

### 3.6.2 Possessives

In many dialects a version of the preposprrial article is used to express possession. They are common in American Norwegian:

- (10) a. *mor hennes Karen*  
mother her Karen  
'Karen's mother' (Archie)
- b. *syster hass Ray*  
sister his Ray  
'Ray's sister' (Florence)
- c. *innkjøringa hass Howard*  
drive his Howard  
'Howard's drive' (Archie)

This construction, too, is not used in the written language. So this has not been an approach toward Bokmål.

### 3.6.3 Word order in constituent questions

Many Norwegian dialects have a special word order in constituent questions. They can have the verb as the third constituent (V3) rather than the second (V2), which is normally required in Norwegian main clauses (see Nordgård 1988, Rognes 2011, Westergaard and Vangsnes 2005, Åfarli 1986). We also find the word order in American Norwegian:

- (11) a. *Hå ru kalla herring på norsk?*  
 what you call herring in Norwegian  
 'What do you call herring in Norwegian?' (Florence)
- b. *Håkke som va president da?*  
 who that was president then  
 'Who was president then?' (Florence)

This word order is not used in Bokmål, so there is no change toward it here.

### 3.7 Conclusion on whether American Norwegian has moved toward Bokmål

In this section we have looked at pronouns, verb inflection, other function words, lexical words and syntax in American Norwegian, Gausdal Norwegian and Bokmål. At no point is American Norwegian closer to Bokmål than to the Gausdal dialect. Indeed, both are far from Bokmål. But in Section 2, where we investigated whether American Norwegian is old-fashioned, we actually found that it is more innovative than the Gausdal dialect in that it does not have dative, a fact probably caused by the language or dialect contact situation. There is nothing else that justifies Haugen's claim.

One could ask whether our method is optimal. A possible scenario is that both American Norwegian and Gausdal Norwegian have approached the Bokmål standard. If that were the case, Haugen's claim would not be wrong, just incomplete, since he did not mention Norwegian in Norway at the same time. In order to leave out this possibility, we would have to find samples of very old Gausdal Norwegian, which is not feasible for the purposes of this paper. However, if they really had developed in such a way, independent of each other, we should have expected that they would have approached Bokmål in different ways, but as we have seen so far, American Norwegian and Gausdal Norwegian are very similar to each other. We therefore leave out this scenario.

We should ask why Haugen made this claim. There are several possibilities. First, he met many educated people who were well acquainted with the Norwegian written language. It is likely that their language, more than that of farmers and workers, was closer to Bokmål. It is possible that Haugen met a disproportionate number of wealthy, educated people, given that he needed electricity for the recordings, something not everybody might have been able to offer. Second, his observation may have been colored by his own view on standardization. He grew up with the dialect that originated in Opdal, Norway, but gradually changed his own Norwegian towards Riksmål (Bokmål) (Haugen 1966: unpaginated p. 2 in the preface). Maybe it influenced his view on the language of others, as well. A third possibility is that some of Haugen's informants actually knew two varieties of Norwegian; one standardized Bokmål, and one dialect. In this case it could be that these people exposed the standard Bokmål when talking to the distinguished professor, while they spoke the dialect at home and with each other. Many of Haugen's informants were actually 1st generation immigrants, and had themselves immigrated to America. These may have had a better grasp of the Bokmål standard than those who were born in America.

By and large, there is very little reason to think that Norwegian Americans should change their language in the direction of Bokmål. Over the years, few have had Norwegian education, and most have only heard spoken Bokmål in the occasional church service or (in the early years of immigration) by a school teacher at the country school. Very few of the speakers we have met have attended Norwegian country schools in America; these had been closed down many years before, and seemingly had little impact on the language. There had been Norwegian-language newspapers, but this language was far from anybody's spoken vernacular, and it is unlikely that they should be influenced by a written source. Most of the Norwegian Americans we have met on our travels have clearly not been exposed to Bokmål. To this we add that the authors of the paper have had to change our dialect in our meetings with the Norwegian Americans. Our dialect from Oslo, which is very well-known to any person in Norway independent of geographical background and close to the written Bokmål standard, was like a foreign language to our informants. Question words like *hvordan*, *hva*, og *når* 'how, what, and when' were not understood, and it was only when we changed to *håssen*, *åssen*, *hå*, *å*, *å tid* (dialectal form of the same question words) that our informants could understand us. This tells us that their speech is far removed from Bokmål standard.<sup>11</sup>

It is interesting that Hjelde (this volume) also discusses the possibility of normalization in American Norwegian. He says that while in the 1940s there were people who had an idea of a language standard via newspapers, church, school and first generation immigrants, this idea slowly disappeared since there were fewer who could read Norwegian or who heard it in church. We have further shown that there is nothing in American Norwegian that seems to be influenced by Bokmål. So to the extent that there used to be people who knew this standard, their influence has been limited. The Norwegian situation is therefore very different from the Swedish one, in which the spoken language has been undergoing normalization, and the dialect variation has been disappearing, for several hundred years before the emigration to America even started (see Larsson et al. this volume).

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed to myths of American Norwegian. One is the popular idea that it is an old-fashioned variety. The other, expressed by the great linguist Einar Haugen, is that it is standardized in the direction of Bokmål. To evaluate these claims, we have studied different aspects of the language: the pronominal system, inflection patterns, function words and lexical words, and syntax, and we have compared these

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11. But there are arguments that there has been a change towards a common eastern Norwegian language variety. This variety has little in common with Bokmål, but has a lot in common with the dialects in the valleys and villages north of Oslo. (See Johannessen and Laake 2011, 2012, forthcoming.)

with the language of modern Gausdal (Gudbrandsdalen, Norway), which is the area from which the people investigated in this study originate. We have also compared the same language with Bokmål.

The results are quite clear. The American Norwegian language is not archaic from the point of view of grammar. The dative system has disappeared, which makes American Norwegian rather modern, but there is some variation in the area of function words, suggesting a koinéization process. On the other hand, looking at the vocabulary, we have shown that it is fair to say that it is more archaic than that in Gausdal Norwegian. There are, however, also great lexical similarities amongst American Norwegians across the whole Midwest (see Johannessen and Laake 2011, 2012, forthcoming), which supports the koinéization hypothesis. The American Norwegian language has not been standardized in the direction of Bokmål. It lacks dative, but this is most likely caused by other factors. In all other linguistic areas, American Norwegian and Gausdal Norwegian are on the same side of the dividing line, while Bokmål is on the other.

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- Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts, the Nynorsk Part: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/norsk/korpus/nynorsk/netscape/treord/okntn.shtml>