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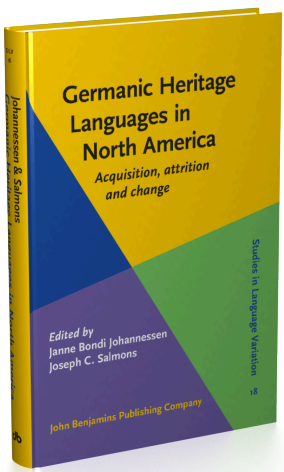

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What I talk is kind of a Nor-Coon Valley Norwegian.
Sylvia (82)

This article focuses on linguistic and cultural identity constructions in interactions between members of the last generation of a former heritage language speaking community and speakers from the homeland of their ancestors. The data come from fieldwork involving narratives of personal experience in a Norwegian heritage community in the U.S. that is currently undergoing a language shift. Results revealed that speakers negotiated various identities through their categorization strategies and positioning towards their heritage language and culture. Language is still esteemed as a marker of cultural identity; however, emphasis on cultural artifacts and traditions for accentuating ethnic identity in the U.S. is also made by those whose fluency in the heritage language was faltering. Narratives of personal experience provide a privileged site for investigating issues of language, culture and identity among heritage language speakers.

Keywords: identity constructions, Norwegian heritage community, language shift, language maintenance, narratives, language choice

1. Introduction[1]

In this article we present a study of identity constructions in interactions in which members of the last generation of a former heritage language speaking community meet speakers from the home country of their ancestors. We address the question as to how these speakers present themselves in interaction and how they negotiate their

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identities with their conversational partners – the way they present their languages and cultures, English and Norwegian; how they learned the languages; how they evaluate them and use them; and their evaluation of their own and others' ways of speaking Norwegian.

The data stem from fieldwork in a Norwegian heritage community in the state of Wisconsin in the U.S. that is currently undergoing a language shift. Speakers of the last generation that acquired Norwegian during childhood are in their eighties and have maintained the language to various degrees. The study of Norwegian in diaspora provides an interesting arena for investigating the inherent relationship between language and culture in a community that has maintained the language across several generations despite the ambient melting pot ideology prevalent in the U.S. Although the community is currently undergoing an inevitable language shift, a strong Norwegian identity is still constructed and negotiated especially among the elderly generation not only through language but also through other semiotic resources. Studies in Norway have revealed that Norwegians perceive their language as a core value of culture and identity (cf. Skjåk and Bøyum 1995), and we may ask whether language is perceived to be of equal importance in this community as well, as expressed in interactions with Norwegians from Norway (cf. Mills 2004, Lanza and Svendsen 2007). Based on data from Australia, Smolicz (1981) claimed that language is perceived as vital to the maintenance of the core values of certain cultures, communities, and religions; moreover, it may be seen as a critical feature in regards to individuals' multiple identities – language as a semiotic signal. This was indeed the finding of the Norwegian study (Skjåk and Bøyum 1995); however, in a language shift situation, a broader view of identity needs to be addressed. Moreover, a closer look at how individuals actually negotiate their identities locally in interaction deserves further attention in the study of language shift. How do speakers of the last generation of Norwegian speakers construct linguistic and cultural identities in conversations with speakers from the homeland of their ancestors?

In the following, we first present a short historical background for the community under study. Thereafter, we discuss our data collection techniques and the theoretical framework we employed for addressing our research questions. Our analysis focuses on four speakers for whom we present conversational interactions in which identity issues are highlighted. We also investigate how our role as researchers affects the data we collect and the conclusions we reach concerning language maintenance and shift, an issue that is not always addressed in such studies. In conclusion, we discuss our results in light of work on other heritage language communities and consider the implications our results have for the study of heritage communities in general.

2. Background: The Norwegian language in the U.S.

Coon Valley is situated in western Wisconsin, near the city of La Crosse, not far from the border to Minnesota. It is part of the Coon Prairie settlement along with the town of Westby, at one time an almost exclusively Norwegian community (Hjelde 2000). In 1950, 95% of the population of Westby had a Norwegian background (Munch 1954). According to the U.S. Census of 1990, still 60% of the 4165 inhabitants in the Coon Valley and Westby area maintained that they had a Norwegian background. 562 respondents said they used "Scandinavian" at home – and in this area, this means Norwegian, which represents 22% of all the Norwegian Americans there. This was a high percentage as the other Norwegian American communities in the U.S. hardly passed the rate of 10% Norwegian users (Hjelde 2000).

The Coon Prairie settlement is relatively old with the first Norwegians having arrived in 1849 from the southern part of the state, particularly Koshkonong. They settled first on the prairie around Westby, then around Coon Valley. Their Norwegian heritage was primarily from the area of Gudbrandsdalen, in particular the southern part, and the area around Lake Mjøsa (Hjelde 2000), about 100 km north of Oslo, the capital of Norway.

The reason for the strong Norwegian language maintenance in this particular area was explained by the sociologist P. A. Munch (1954) as being the result of the ethnic strategy used in building up the settlement, an 'intensive' rather than an 'extensive' strategy. An intensive strategy is characterized by the ethnic group's gathering in a clearly defined area in which this group is dominant, thus resulting in less contact with the surroundings, with other ethnic groups and other languages. In the Coon Prairie settlement, where Munch did his research, this was the case, and Norwegian was the primary language of the settlement. Another ethnic strategy is what Munch (1954) called the 'extensive strategy.' In this case the settlement underwent strong expansion into neighboring areas at the same time as people with different ethnic backgrounds were settling in the core area of the settlement. This would lead to a greater need to use English (Hjelde 2000).

Another factor for the long-lasting maintenance of Norwegian is the rather homogenous Norwegian background of the settlers – they mainly came from Gudbrandsdalen with its distinct dialect – resulting in little dialectal variation. The church was probably a third factor – there were strong bonds between Norwegians and the Lutheran Evangelical Church while the other dominating ethnic groups in the district were Roman Catholic (Hjelde 2000). Religion has proved to be a strong factor supporting language and culture maintenance (cf. Joseph 2004, Omoniyi and Fishman 2006, Lanza and Svendsen 2007). According to sociologist Ibarra (1976: 220), in 83% of the marriages in the three largest churches in Coon Prairie between 1873 and 1975, both the bride and the bridegroom were of Norwegian extraction.

The Norwegian community managed to maintain the language across several generations. In a study of German immigration to Wisconsin, Wilkerson and Salmons (2008: 260) note that:

> the basic picture is one of considerable German-only monolingualism [….] The full range of evidence shows that into the twentieth century, many immigrants, their children, and sometimes their grandchildren remained functionally monolingual many decades after immigration into their communities had ceased.

This situation is contrary to the myth stating that the old immigrants to the U.S. became bilingual almost immediately after arriving. There is no reason to believe that the Norwegian immigrant population was different from the German in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Times have changed, however, and as Hjelde (2000) points out, 70% of those speaking Norwegian according to the U.S. Census in 1990 were born before 1926. The youngest person Hjelde met on his field trip in recent years that could understand Norwegian was born in 1972, indicating that Norwegian had been in daily use in her childhood.

The pioneering work on the Norwegian language in America by Einar Haugen (1953) was to a great extent based on interviews and audio recordings from Wisconsin (and the eastern part of Iowa and Minnesota) and several of his interviewees were in fact from Coon Prairie. One of Haugen's important studies was devoted to the particular vocabulary that had developed in the American variety of Norwegian as a result of language contact, called loan words or borrowings. In his well-known two-volume work *The Norwegian Language in America,* Haugen (1953) categorizes and explains the emergence, functions and development of the variety of new vocabulary in the community's American Norwegian as an answer to the speakers' particular needs. This line of research is still vital and Haugen's work has been influential in this regard. Indeed Haugen's study of the Norwegian language in the U.S. is a hallmark study in the field of bilingualism.

3. Data collection

The data on which the analysis in this chapter is based stem from field work done in Wisconsin in 2010, a trip prepared by the project *Norwegian American Dialect Syntax* (NorAmDiaSyn).[2] The authors of this article joined this research group and collected parallel data. While the focus in the NorAmDiaSyn is on the variety of Norwegian spoken by Norwegian descendants – their Norwegian dialect – our focus and interest are on the actual language users as we explore issues of identity and ideology, dimensions important to language maintenance. We collected the data in a type of focus group setting, in which a focus group conversation involves "carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (Krueger 1994: 6). Our focus group conversations were

2. http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/NorAmDiaSyn/english/index.html

informally organized with three to four researchers from Norway at a time talking to local participants from Coon Valley, who were waiting to be video-recorded by the interviewers from the NorAmDiaSyn group. Our talk was centered on topics related to language, schooling, and visits to and from Norway, in which we encouraged the participants to tell stories. In our analysis, we also draw on the video-recorded dialogues carried out by the NorAmDiaSyn group.

In this particular study, the data are mainly from one focus group conversation, marked FG in the text examples (see Example (1) below at the end of the transcription), which was carried out at the home of two elderly brothers we refer to as the Bakke brothers. Furthermore, some data from five video-recorded NorAmDiaSyn conversations at the same location are brought into the analysis. These are marked NorAmDiaSyn with different numbers indicating the participants. The focus group discussion was conducted around the kitchen table while the authors of this article (Anne and Eliz in the transcripts) were present throughout the talk, guiding the conversation, first with the two whom we have given the names Sylvia and John, and then with the two speakers we named Eric and Arnold as they were waiting to be called in for video-taping by the NorAmDiaSyn group in turns. Other Norwegian researchers (named Inga, Leif, Arne and Jorun) joined in the conversation intermittently. In the interactions the speakers never oriented to the second author's U.S. background as she presented herself as a Norwegian researcher. The data were transcribed by linguistically trained students who entered the data into a database. The transcription conventions employed are listed in the appendix.

In order to give an idea of the participation of the speakers in the interactions, and hence the extent of our data that form the basis for the interactional analysis, we have counted the turns of each participant in the focus group conversation, as noted in Table 1. We define the turn at talk as the time during which the speaker has the floor, including minimal responses such as *yes/yeah* and *ja* 'yes'. Although equating turns at talk with interactional participation can be problematized, such an overview can nonetheless indicate the extent to which the different participants engaged in the interactions. Table 1 presents an overview of the two groups' turns at talk in the interactions.

Table 1. Speakers' turns at talk in the main database.

Speaker	Individual turns	Group turns
Norwegians from Norway		1516
Coon Valley Norwegians		1293
Sylvia	611	
John	383	
Eric	181	
Arnold	118	
Total		2809

The Coon Valley Norwegians participated eagerly in the conversations, as we see in Table 1, although some were more talkative than others. A further look at their language choice in their contributions to the conversations and at the topics of talk can provide insight into their identity constructions as they interact with Norwegians from Norway. The elicitation of narratives about their upbringing and their current life provided an appropriate context for investigating issues of heritage language and culture maintenance. Before we examine language choice in the interactions, we now turn to the theoretical perspectives we draw upon in our analysis of language, culture and identity among these heritage speakers.

4. Theoretical perspectives: Why narratives?

Narrative-based research has expanded in recent years and proven to be fruitful in identity studies (cf. De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). Narratives have both a cognitive and social function. Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001: 1) point out "the importance of narrative as an expressive embodiment of our experience, as a mode of communication, and as a form for understanding the world and ultimately ourselves". Narratives are "important in people's lives because it is through these forms of knowledge that our lives hang together" (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 138). Narratives "provide a window to the study of identity" (Golden and Lanza 2012: 28–29), as speakers employ narratives to construct social and cultural identities. One and the same event can be perceived very differently by various speakers, and one and the same speaker can narrate the same event differently depending upon context. Hence in narration the speaker creates a story world to tell about the event in such a way that the speaker's stance to the events is revealed (cf. Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001). Through the study of various linguistic resources (for example, lexical choice, indirect speech, pronouns, metaphors), we may study how this story world is created, and how the narrator both constructs and negotiates various identities in that story world. Narratives serve a dual function in research: as an object of study in itself and as a fruitful device for eliciting language use as people get involved in speaking about themselves.

Sociolinguistic approaches to the study of narrative have been influenced by the work of Labov (cf. Labov and Waletsky 1967, Labov 1972) in which an emphasis is on a closed temporal order in discourse with a focus on narrative monologues, the so-called 'big stories' or canonical form of narratives. More current approaches to the study of narrative examine 'small stories,' or non-canonical forms of narratives – narrative fragments (Georgakopoulou 2007), short statements about actions. A so-called 'dimensional' approach to the study of narrative proposed already by Ochs and Capps (2001) covers the span between the 'big' and 'small' stories in which a continuum of possibilities is outlined for five different dimensions of narratives: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity and moral stance. For example, there are dimensions to tellership, or who tells the story, spanning from the monologue to the

co-construction of narratives by several speakers. In other words – there are many different types of narrative, from the smallest 'snippets of talk' to the longer story of one's life. Such an approach to the study of narrative allows the analysis of possibilities at various points on the continuum and hence allows for a more in-depth study of emergent identities in interaction. Small stories are also called 'narratives-in-interaction' (Georgakopoulou 2007), and this term underpins the idea that these stories are not merely isolated fragments in the interaction, but that they are inherently part of the activity or performance.

Identity construction in narrative has also been studied through a closer look at the categorization strategies a narrator employs, as "self-identities are … often built on the basis of opposition or contrast with others" (De Fina 2003: 139) in the story world the speaker creates in narration. In this regard, we may ask what kind of categories are used for self and other descriptions and which ones are the most salient as the speakers engage in talk about their heritage. Moreover, as narratives are often built around actions, we may investigate what kinds of actions and reactions (and implicitly what kinds of values and norms) are associated with those categories. Hence narratives provide us with a means to investigate ideologies about language and culture.

5. Identity as a social construction

The approach to identity, or rather identities, we take is a post-modern one in which identities are perceived as negotiated and emergent in interpersonal communication (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2005). We view identity:

> … as performed rather than as prior to language, as dynamic rather than fixed, as culturally and historically located, as constructed in interaction with other people and institutional structures, as continuously remade, and as contradictory and situational…. Thus the practice of narration involves the 'doing' of identity, and because we can tell different stories we can construct different versions of self.
> (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 138)

This approach is in reaction to an essentialist view of identity, which dictates who we are and what we do. Such a view conceives of identity as static while through the post-modern approach, identities are viewed as dynamic and changing as an interaction unfolds, as intertwined in the performance of the narrative.

The notion of 'agency' has proved fruitful in the analysis of identity construction in interaction (De Fina 2003, De Fina et al. 2006, Lanza 2012). Agency is understood as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001: 109). Identity is indeed "a process always embedded in social practices," as highlighted by De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg (2006: 2), who further stress "the centrality of processes of indexicality in the creation, performance, and attribution of identities" (De Fina et al. 2006: 3). In other words, the individual can use various linguistic resources that index or point to

particular identities s/he wishes to construct and with a particular degree of agency in the narratives.

The role of power and power relations should not be underemphasized in this process. Agency and power are indeed interconnected, for agency is a major basis for claiming power (Al Zidjaly 2009: 177). Hence through the use of various linguistic resources, the speaker can negotiate identities in interaction that have more or less empowered or diminished agency (Golden and Lanza 2012, Lanza 2012). By describing past events, a narrator can reinforce or even create a more active, assertive self – or a more passive and victimized person – and hence different degrees of agency. And these selves may react to each other in various story worlds (cf. Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). When telling their stories, narrators often "*enact* a characteristic type of self, and through such performances they may in part become that type of self" (Wortham 2000: 158). The past events described in narratives must not be confused with so called 'objective facts': "stories, unlike propositional accounts, are not exclusively hemmed in by the demands of *verifiability*" (Bruner 2010: 45). A story of a past event told to a group of people one day might differ from the 'same' story told by the same narrator another day. The 'here and now' is different from the 'there and then' (cf. Bruner 2001).

A concept that is drawn upon in numerous studies of narratives and identity is positioning (cf. Harré and van Langenhove 1999). In interaction, the narrators will position themselves, that is, they will present different entities in different ways, the figures in their stories as well as themselves. As noted above, narrators do so by describing or categorizing an individual as a particular type of person or by representing themselves as particular sorts of people (engaging in particular activities and relating to others in characteristic ways). De Fina et al. (2006: 8) claim "Positioning provides a central theoretical construct and valuable tool for studying identity." It is important to point out that positioning is grounded in the interaction and not assumed beforehand by pre-existing structures.

We now turn to the data to investigate how the Coon Valley speakers negotiate their identities through their categorization and positioning towards their heritage language and culture.

6. Interactions in Coon Valley

The entire interview in the focus group conversations may be seen as an overarching narrative (Reissman 1993) or autobiography since the participants tell and co-construct their identities not only as descendants of Norwegian immigrants to the U.S. but also in other roles. In the following, we illustrate these various identity constructions in the data. Initially, we address the issue of language choice.

6.1 Language choice

Language choice can be indexical of various identities the speaker attempts to negotiate in interaction. The choice of which language to use in a bilingual setting, however, is also influenced by language competence or language preference, which in turn may be related to language competence. Language competence and language preference may give rise to language negotiation sequences. In the documentation of heritage languages, the researcher invariably attempts to elicit that language in data collection. In this regard, the reflexivity of the researchers' role – not only how they elicit talk, but also how they affect the talk they elicit – is important to consider. When Sylvia describes her way of speaking Norwegian, she positions herself as a somewhat different Norwegian speaker and is reluctant to use her variety, but the Norwegian researchers quickly assure her of the value of her way of speaking. In the following example, we see how the Norwegian researchers encourage Sylvia to use her Norwegian, despite her reluctance initially in line 1 in which she speaks English. A language negotiation sequence ensues in which the Norwegian researchers maintain their use of Norwegian and encourage Sylvia's use of Norwegian. However, Sylvia does not switch in Example (1) except for short remarks like *ja* 'yes' and *så* 'so.'[3]

(1) 1 Sylvia: **But you understand English, so I can talk English**. @ (.)
2 Anne: *Å nei, vi må høre at du snakker eh norsk.*
'Oh no, we have to hear you speak eh Norwegian.'
3 Eliz: @
4 Sylvia: *Ja*.
'Yes.'
5 Leif: *Du snakker*, *du* [*kan snakke begge deler*.]
'You speak, you [can speak both (languages).]'
6 Sylvia: [**But eh, I**-]
I [I talk # what] I talk is kind of a Nor-Coon Valley Norwegian.
7 Eliz: [*Du kan blande*] *så mye du vil.*
'[You can mix] as much as you want.'
8 Anne: *Ja, men* –
Yes, but –
9 Eliz: *Ja, men det er det vi er interesserte i* [*å høre om*.]
'That is what we are interested [in hearing.]'
10 Anne: [*Vi er*] *interesserte i Coon Valley Norwegian.*
'[We are] interested in Coon Valley Norwegian.'
11 Sylvia: **Because of my my father talked to me in Norwegian all the time (.) and so that I would answer him in half English and half Norwegian.**

3. See transcription conventions in the Appendix.

12 Leif: *Mm #*
[*Men det*] *er det er akkurat den norsken vi har lyst at du skal* [*snakke.*]
'[But that] that is exactly the Norwegian we want you to [speak.]'
13 Sylvia: [*Så*] [@]
'[So]'
14 Leif: *Og den er god, den. Den er # det er god norsk, det.*
'And it is good. It is # it is good Norwegian.' (FG 1:32–2:04)

Initially, Sylvia attempts to negotiate English as the language choice of interaction. However, one researcher emphasizes that they want to hear her speak Norwegian (l. 2) while another states that she can use both Norwegian and English (l. 5). Sylvia overlaps (l. 6) with Leif before he states that she can also use English; she hesitates before indicating her variety of Norwegian. The use of the discourse marker *but* indexes a denial of expectation that she speak Norwegian. She refers to her individual variety of Norwegian as a "kind of a Nor-Coon Valley Norwegian" (l. 6). She indexes herself as not being competent in the language as she used both English and Norwegian in speaking to her father in growing up. Implicit in her response is an ideology of low esteem attributed to her variety of Norwegian. In line 11 she states that she spoke half in English and half in Norwegian, implying that the variety she speaks is a mixed one. Indeed in line 7, the researcher had encouraged her to mix. Leif emphasizes that *det er akkurat den norsken vi har lyst at du skal snakke* 'that is exactly the Norwegian we want you to speak' (l. 12), thus positioning Sylvia as a perfect Coon Valley speaker. In line 14, Leif assures her of the value of her Norwegian. In Example (1) we see the attempted co-construction of Sylvia's identity as a Coon Valley speaker and the researchers negotiate their identities as researchers and even teachers, who are in the position to evaluate Sylvia's Norwegian.

In a similar example, Sylvia explicitly states her negative self-evaluation of her spoken language skills (lines 1 and 6 in Example (2)), this time in Norwegian. Despite this, the researchers continue to ascribe her personal agency in her language skills as we see in Jorun's reply in line 2, that she can in fact speak the language despite her indicating the contrary. The researchers attempt to empower her as an accomplished speaker of the language throughout the interaction. In Example (2) we witness the co-construction of Sylvia's personal agency as a heritage language speaker.

(2) 1 Sylvia: *Ja*, **but** *je- jeg jeg er ikke så fælt til god å snakke norsk.*
'Yes, **but** I–I I am not so bad to good at speaking Norwegian.'
2 Jorun: *Jo, det er du, jeg har jo hørt deg masse, jeg.*
'Yes you are, I have heard you a lot.'
3 Sylvia: *Ja, men …*
'Yes, but…'
4 Jorun: *Du snakker bra nok for meg!*
'You speak well enough for me!'

5 Inga: *# Ja, men du satt jo, vi vi snakka mye norsk, du snakka jo så bra som bare det. # Ja.*
'# Yes, but you were sitting, we we talked a lot of Norwegian, you spoke really so well. #Yes.'

6 Sylvia: **It** *# eh nokså dårlig.*
'**It** # eh quite poor.'

7 Inga: *Nei.*
'No.'

8 Jorun: *Nei, men det var faktisk noe jeg kunne ha sagt i stad, jeg glemte å si det.*
'No, but that was in fact something I could have said a while ago. I forgot to say it.'
{Unintelligible background conversation.}
Men det er at det- det er dere som er ekspertene her. # Dere er jo eksperter på deres eh Coon Valley-norsk.
'But it is that- that you are experts here. # You are experts of your eh Coon Valley Norwegian.'

9 Sylvia: *Ja.*
'Yes.'

10 Jorun: *Den kan jo ikke vi.*
'That one we don't know.'

11 Sylvia: *Ja.*
'Yes.'

12 Jorun: *Så vi veit jo ikke det.* # [*Vi hører jo bare at dere snakker bra.*]
'So we don't know that. # [We only hear that you are speaking well.]'

13 Sylvia: [*Du du kan snak- snakke mere.*]
'[You you can spe- speak more.]'

14 John: *Ja*, **I don't**…
'Yes, **I don't**…'

15 Jorun: *Ja ja*, [*begge to.*]
'Yes yes, [both of you.]'

16 Inga: [*Men*] *du veit det er ikke det er ikke spørsmål om å snakke godt eller ikke godt.* (.) *Jorun vil høre hvordan dere* [*snakker norsk i Coon Valley*] =
'[But] you know that it is not a question about speaking well or not well. (.) Jorun wants to hear how you [speak Norwegian in Coon Valley]' =

17 Jorun: [*Ja, ja, ja.*]
'[Yes, yes, yes.]'

18 Inga: = *så dere skal snakke akkurat sånn som dere gjør her.*
= 'so you're going to speak exactly the way you do it here.'

19 Jorun: *Ja*, [*og*] *jeg hører jo at det er bra òg*.
'Yes, [and] I hear that it is good too.'
20 Inga: [*Og det*] *det er det det er*. # *Det er bra*. # *Det er det som er bra*.
'[and it] it is what it is. # It is good. # That is what is good.'
(FG 1:18:42–1:19:36)

Al Zidjaly (2009: 196) emphasizes the importance of "conceptualizing agency as collaborative and interactive". This exchange in Example (2) clearly illustrates how agency is co-constructed and ratified through the researchers' positive encouragement. While Sylvia complains about her Norwegian not being good, the others reject this claim. Jorun, moreover, says Sylvia is among "the experts" (l. 8), attributing to Sylvia a high degree of agency.

6.2 Sylvia: "I don't know how to say all that in Norwegian"

We have noted Sylvia's way of excusing her choice of English in interaction, through her explicitly saying so as demonstrated in both Examples (1) and (2). And turning to John (l. 13) in Example (2), she says *Du kan snak- snakke mer* 'You can spe- speak more.' But we also find that she repeatedly asks *How do you say that*?, meaning 'How do you say that in Norwegian.' Moreover, she also often shifts to English even when the language of conversation has been successfully negotiated to Norwegian. In the end, she actually exclaims: *I'm all talked out*, not only referring to things to talk about, but also to her apparent struggle to construct utterances in Norwegian. These examples illustrate her negotiation of an identity as an insecure Norwegian speaker, as she excuses herself towards the interlocutors from Norway. In the conversation, Sylvia employs metaphors that reveal her conceptualization of language as an entity that you possess more or less of ('you can talk more'), an entity with varying quality ('it's not very good', 'it's kind of bad') and an entity that has its limits ('I'm all talked out'). Metaphor is here defined in line with Conceptual Metaphor Theory as presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and further developed by Lakoff (1993), Gibbs (1994), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), and Kövecses (2002). In this framework, metaphor is seen as a mapping between two domains, a source domain and a target domain. It is a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another. As Kövecses (2006: 130) points out, "The connections between the two are set up either because the two domains display some generic structural similarity or because they are correlated in our experience." The primary function of metaphors is understanding: complex or abstract phenomena – like languages – are seen as things that are well known – like objects – and as such, may be dealt with and reflected upon.

> Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them – and, by this means, reason about them. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 25)

Metaphors are also employed in identity constructions (cf. Golden and Lanza 2013). By presenting her Norwegian language as an object of poor quality and as almost vanished, Sylvia negotiates an identity of a low proficient Norwegian language speaker. However, in spite of her reluctance to speaking Norwegian, Sylvia speaks for longer stretches and uses a direct communication strategy of asking for help, indicating her willingness to construct a Norwegian identity in talk. The topic of conversation is inevitably focused on the Norwegian language in the U.S. as the researchers are on fieldwork to investigate the phenomenon. Nonetheless Sylvia speaks often about modern Norway as opposed to the Norwegian community of her youth, as some of the speakers do. Her initiatives almost consistently touch upon topics associating her with Norway. Hence this choice also indexes her attempts at negotiating a Norwegian heritage identity. Furthermore, Sylvia showed letters to the researchers (and asked for help in translating them), old tickets and pictures. Later she insisted on our visiting her home where she had many Norwegian cultural artifacts on display. Moreover, she encouraged her husband Arnold to tell stories involving people they refer to as "Norwegians." She also often refers to herself doing (what she perceives as) Norwegian activities such as baking for Christmas: *Jeg baker alt norsk* 'I bake all Norwegian things.' Her maintaining of Norwegian traditions is an asset that she flaunts. One of the researchers even commented upon this and Sylvia reveals an implicit obligation to her heritage to do so in her reply, as we see in Example (3).

(3) 1 Inga: *Jeg trur dere nesten er flinkere til å holde på de gamle norske juletradisjonene enn vi er i Norge.*
'I think you (PL.) are almost better at keeping the old Norwegian Christmas traditions than we are in Norway.'
2 Sylvia: *Vi må gjøre det.*
'We have to do it.' (FG 58:48–58:53)

Sylvia is positioned by Arnold, her husband, as being a 'bone fide' Norwegian. She is the one that has been most often to Norway and has the most Norwegian relatives. Hence he co-constructs her Norwegian identity with her. We assisted her in reading a book she had bought in Norway during an extended family reunion. In the book she learned that her grandfather in fact had had a child before marriage to her grandmother. This excited her as it implied she had more relatives in Norway and implicitly had a further claim to a Norwegian identity. Her Norwegianness is constructed through her relations to Norwegians in Norway, and having more Norwegian relatives seems to make her more Norwegian. Hence other semiotic resources are also construed as part of heritage identity construction (see 6.3 below).

(4) 1 Sylvia: **I want you to translate something for me. # I'm wondering # eh about this book.**
Jeg var på Solørlag-stevne. # Og jeg kjøpte denne boka. # Og inni her s- #ehm #

'I was at the Solørlag reunion. And I bought this book. And inside here s- #ehm #'
now I was wondering # did my grandpa have a child before he got married?

2 Others: @ (.)
3 Eliz: **The secret comes out.**
4 Inga: *Du # det var svært vanlig # det hadde oldefaren min også. @ # Så det var helt – det var ganske vanlig.*
'Well # that was very common # my great-grandfather also had one (child). @ # So it was completely – it was quite common.'
5 Sylvia: **I'm trying to figure that out.**
6 Jorun: **Who is your grandfather?**
7 Sylvia: Paul.
8 Inga: Paul.
9 Sylvia: *Ja.*
'Yes'
10 Inga: *Han hadde ei datter som var født ehm #*
'He had a daughter that was born ehm.'
he he had a daughter born in 1887.
11 Sylvia: **Yeah, I see (.) he married Grandma in 1900, I think.**
12 Jorun: OK, **yes.**
13 Sylvia: **So.**
14 Jorun: **That's right, yes.**
15 Sylvia: **So I might have a lot of other relatives I don't even know about?**
16 Anne: [*Det er*] *sant.*
'[That's] true.'
17 Jorun: [**Yes.**]
18 Leif: @
19 Anne: *Du må reise til Norge igjen.*
'You have to travel back to Norway.'
20 Sylvia: *Ja*!
'Yes!' (FG 27:25–28:27)

In Example (4) we see how Sylvia's Norwegian identity is reassured with the others in the conversation as she discovers she has more relatives than she previously realized.

6.3 Other semiotic resources in identity construction

Identity construction also occurs through non-verbal behavior and the use of cultural artifacts. Norskedalen (http://norskedalen.org/) is a Nature and Heritage Center in Coon Valley that was founded in 1977 and has activities all year long. Sylvia clearly made a point of her involvement in the center stating "Arnold and I were along from the very beginning." When we later visited her home, we found it highly decorated

with pictures and hand-sewn tapestries on the walls with inscriptions, most of which had something to do with Norway. For example, at the door there was a welcome sign (*Velkommen*) and outside there was a Norwegian mailbox. Pictures of Vikings, trolls and Norwegian landscape scenes donned the walls inside her home.

Hence despite her seeming reluctance to use her variety of Norwegian and her implicit ideology toward that variety as having low esteem in comparison with present-day Norwegian from Norway, Sylvia attempts to construct a Norwegian identity, of which she is proud. In interaction with the Norwegian researchers, she co-constructs this identity with them, also through her narratives of her youth but particularly through her involvement nowadays in extended family reunions in Norway. Her pride in her Norwegian heritage, however, is most demonstrable through her adherence to Norwegian Christmas traditions and her cultural artifacts that decorate her home. In Section 9 below, we return to the use of other cultural artifacts in identity construction. We now turn to the other Coon Valley Norwegians in the focus group.

6.4 John and Eric: Hard-working Norwegians

A common motif among the Coon Valley Norwegians we spoke to was that of a hard-working individual. Stories of childhood attested to the challenging times these people were confronted with in the Midwest. John and Eric are brothers ('the Bakke brothers') who have held together throughout their lives. Both men present themselves as hard-working, frugal men who enjoyed being self-sufficient. However, farming had its price; in particular John's health was affected. In Example (5), we see how the conversation takes place entirely in Norwegian, including Sylvia's participation, until line 16 when John inserts an English word into his utterance. John's switch triggers Sylvia's switch to English in line 18. Throughout the focus group discussion, John spoke mostly Norwegian. John, however, renegotiates language choice in the conversation by switching back to Norwegian in line 21, although his minimal response in line 19 is Norwegian. In line 23 John repeats in English what he has said in Norwegian and then continues in English. Repetition for emphasis by code-switching is a common discourse strategy in multilingual encounters (Auer 1998). John's repetition in line 23 serves to underscore the hard time he had had, and this is confirmed in line 25.

(5)

1	Inga:	*Å, dere hadde mjølkekyr*? 'Oh, you had dairy cows?'
2	John:	*Ja.* 'Yes.'
3	Inga:	*Ja*, *akkurat*. 'Yes, exactly.'
4	John:	*Vi selde ut de to i 2002*. 'We sold out the two in 2002.'
5	Inga:	*Jaha # akkurat*. 'Oh yeah # exactly.'

6 John: *Men vi heldt att fem @*
'But we held onto five @'
7 Sylvia: *Og vi avla tobakk.*
'And we cultivated tobacco.'
8 John: *Og så tobakk.*
'And then tobacco.'
9 Sylvia: *Vi ha- vi hadde mye tobakk her.*
'We ha- we had a lot of tobacco here.'
10 Inga: *Åja, så dere hadde t- eh -*
'Oh yeah, so you had t- eh'
11 John: *Nei, det var mye # å gjøre # tre æker.*
'No, there was a lot # to do # three acres.'
12 Inga: *Med tobakk? Ja.*
'With the tobacco? Yes.'
13 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
14 Inga: *Men var det vanlig å dyrke tobakk eh # her i Wisconsin?*
'But was it common to cultivate tobacco eh # here in Wisconsin?'
15 Sylvia: *Det var lortete arbeid*
'It was dirty work'
16 John: *og drevet på med å @ #* **exercise** *@*
'and used to @ # **exercise** @'
17 Inga: *Jaha.*
'Oh yeah.'
18 Sylvia: **But it was a good cash crop.**
19 John: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
20 Inga: *Jaha?*
'Oh yeah?'
21 John: *Nok åt skatten.*
'Enough for taxes.'
22 Inga: [*Akkurat.*]
'[Exactly.]'
23 John: [**Ta- taxes.**] @
24 Inga: *Ja # ja # ja. # Så, ja vel.*
'Yes # yes # yes. # So, ok.'
25 John: **I've done too much hard work.** @ (FG: 33:42–34:34)

The Bakke brothers are positioned by Sylvia as capable, not only of farming, but also of preserving and using products from the animals, the fields and the garden in the kitchen. Their activities go beyond normal cooking, they even churn butter. Their rationale for this was their eagerness to be self-sufficient. John remembers when he had to buy milk in Example (6).

(6) 1 Inga: *Så du kan kinne*?
'So you can churn butter?'
2 John: *Ja, jeg bruker # elektrikk.*
'Yes, I use # electric.'
3 Inga: *Å, du bruker, jaha.*
'Oh, you use, yeah.'
4 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
5 Eliz: **Wow.**
6 John: *Du, den går fort.*
'Hey, it goes fast.'
7 Eliz: *Eget smør, det er ikke så verst. @*
'Your own butter, that's not bad. @'
8 Anne: *Så du kjøper ikke smør i* =
'So you don't buy butter in' =
9 John: [*Jeg har ikke kjøpt*] *sia et heilt år.*
'[I haven't bought] since a year ago.'
10 Anne: =[**eh in the store?**]
11 Inga: *Nehei.*
'Really?'
12 Eliz: **Wow**. @
13 Anne: *Ikke me- ikke mjølk og ikke smør og*
'Not mi- not milk and not butter and'
14 John: *Vi kjøpte mjølk når kua var tørr i januar.*
'We bought milk when the cow was dry in January.'
15 Eliz: [@]
16 Ing: [*Ja*]
'[Yes]'
17 John: @
18 Anne: *Og ikke epler og ikke # ikke brød, og*
'And not apples and not # not bread, and'
19 John: *Men vi må kjøpe egg.*
'But we have to buy eggs.' (FG 41:27–41:58)

John presents himself as being particularly faithful to his work and duty from childhood on. After school he and his brother would go straight to the cow shed (*når vi kom att så var det å gå beint borti fjøset*). The one time he missed his milking was, he said, when he was appointed to jury duty (Example (7), l. 12, 14). Talking about work, he often connected it with health problems: his health was affected by hardship. In his interactions, he persistently used Norwegian, not only when addressed but also when initiating an interaction. Examples (7) and (8) illustrate this. Note that in Example (7), the English insertions are of cultural borrowings (l. 6, 14).

(7) 1 Inga: *Hadde dere andre dyr? # Hadde dere andre dyr # på eh -*
'Did you have any other animals? # Did you have any other animals # on eh -'

2 John: *Jeg hadde høner mange år sia, men* =
'I had hens many years ago, but' =

3 Inga: *Ja*, akkurat, *ja*.
'Yes, exactly, yes.'

4 John: = *81 slutta vi*.
= '81 we stopped.'

5 Inga: *Jaha # ja, ja. # Ja*.
'Ok # yes, yes. # Yes.'

6 John: *Etter vi solgte, så kjøpte vi # vi hadde att fem ## kuer*. (.) *Så # kjøpte kalver borti #* **sales barn** *og # avla dem opp*.
'After we sold, then we bought # we had left 5 ## cows. (.) Then # bought calves over at the # **sales barn** and # bred them.'

7 Inga: *Jaha*.
'Ok.'

8 John: *Solgte de att*.
'Sold them back.'

9 Inga: *Akkurat # ja, ja # ja. Var det kanskje lettere å drive med enn mjølkekyr*?
'Right # yes, yes # yes. Was it maybe easier to work with than with dairy cows?'

10 John: *Kneet mitt vart # jeg mjølka # i 47 år*.
'My knee became # I milked # for 47 years.'

11 Inga: *Jaha # ja*.
'Well # yes.'

12 John: *Så missa jeg éi mjølking på 47 år*.
'So I missed one milking in 47 years.'

13 Inga: *Ja, det var # det var bra*.
'Yes, that was # that was good.'

14 John: *Og det var* **jury duty.**
'And that was **jury duty.**' (FG 37:22–37:58)

(8) 1 Jorun: *Så du har vært hjemme # heime og vært her, du*.
'So you have been at home # at home and been her.'

2 John: Ja.
'Yes.'

3 Eliz: [*Stelt huset, ja*.]
'[Took care of the house, yeah]'

4 Jorun: [Ja, passa] =
'[Yes, looked after]' =

5 John: *Ja, passa på # passa på farmen*.
'Yes, looked after # looked after the farm.'

6 Anne: Mm.
7 Jorun: [Ja]
'[Yes]'
8 Eliz: [Hm]
9 Jorun: *Men det er trivelig.*
'But that's nice.'
10 John: *Jeg har gjort så mye hardt arbeid. @*
'I have done so much hard work. @'
11 Inga: *Ja, ja. # Du har* [*jobba hardt.*]
'Yes, yes # You have [worked hard.]'
12 John: [*Jeg kan ikke*] *kan ikke løfte opp hånda heller.*
'[I can't] lift up my hand either.'
(FG 44:15–44:34)

Hence the Coon Valley speakers negotiate identities of hard workers, identities that actually intertwine with the traditional conception of the Norwegian immigrants that migrated to the Midwest in the US, as described by Lovoll (2006).

6.5 The old school and community in Coon Valley

Earlier experiences with the Norwegian language are important, for example, attendance at school. Attitudes towards Norwegian and the use of Norwegian in school and elsewhere in the community are important aspects of identity formation. Sylvia talks about the old Norwegian community, but as she grew up talking both English and Norwegian (in Westby) and received her religious confirmation in an English-language ritual, most narratives about Norwegian in the schools are from the Bakke brothers who grew up at a farm in Coon Valley. John says that in their school most of the children were Norwegian-speaking, and that he learned more English after he quit school. They spoke Norwegian outside the classroom, but were supposed to talk English in class. There seemed to be variation in how the individual teachers reacted to Norwegian being spoken in class. Eric said it was 'dangerous' as they would be punished (l. 4). Such a remark reflects his personal perception of the situation, as constructed in his story world.

(9) 1 Inga: *Ja. # Men lærerinna ville vel at dere skulle snakke engelsk* =
'Yes. # But the teacher wanted you to speak English I guess' =
2 Eric: *Ja, i* [*klass- i klassa*], *så.*
'Yes, in the [class- in the class], so.'
3 Inga: = [*inne? I klassa?*]
= '[inside? In the class?]'
4 Eric: *Var farlig det å snakke* [*engelsk*] *inne ## eller norsk inne.*
'Was risky to speak [English] inside. ## or Norwegian inside.'
5 Inga: [@]

6 Anne: *Var det farlig*?
'Was it risky?'
7 Eric: *Å det var-, da måtte en sit- sitte att etter skolen* =
'Oh it was-, then you had to sit- stay back after class' =
8 Inga: *Da @*
'So @'
9 Eric: = *lenge*.
= 'a long time.' (FG 1:38:50–1:39:05)

Such attitudes among some of the teachers surely contributed to negative attitudes towards the heritage language. Both Eric and John say that they could not speak English when they started school, and that they were both set back one year. This was common, they say. They went to school for eight years. The teachers' attitudes are, however, not always revealed as negative. Sylvia and John recalled a boy who answered back to the teacher, saying, according to Sylvia *Jeg kan ikke forstå alt det tull som du skriver på der* 'I cannot understand all that nonsense you are writing there,' referring to English. The teacher, who understood Norwegian, just laughed. Hence the positioning of a strict teacher at school could be the recall of how hard learning the new language in school was for a child who only spoke Norwegian at home as well as the frustrations the country boys felt by being set back a year. As pointed out by Wilkerson and Salmons (2008), monolingual immigrants were common into the 20th century.

Arnold grew up in another district and he spoke English when he started school. All three men – Eric, John and Arnold – had a Norwegian Lutheran confirmation, and the priest gave them religious instruction in Norwegian. As noted above, religion is closely connected with language maintenance in immigrant communities. In Examples (10) and (11), Eric expresses the difficulties he experienced in his initiation into English.

(10) 1 Jorun: *Når tid # e lærte du engelsk*?
'When # was it that you learned English?'
2 Eric: *var var da jeg begynte på skolen da jeg var en seks år ## jeg visste ikke forskjell på # "ja" og "nei" vet du på engelsk # e når jeg begynte*.
'was was when I began at school when I was 6 years old ## I didn't know the difference between # "yes" and "no" you know in English # e when I started'
(NorAmDiaSyn 03)

(11) 1 Anne: *Kan du huske det hvor vanskelig det var da du begynte på skolen*?
'Can you remember it how difficult it was when you started school?'
2 Eric: [*Det var vanskelig*] *eh* =
'[It was difficult] eh' =
3 Anne: [*Kan du huske*?]
'[Can you remember?]'

4 Eric: *var i andre klasse ## hun satte meg bak att fra tredje* =
'was in second grade ## she sat me back from third' =
5 Anne: [*Ja*.]
'[Yes.]'
6 Eric: = [*til andre*] =
= '[to second]' =
7 Arnold: [*andre*] *klasse*.
'[second] grade.' (FG 1:38:03–1:38:18)

Sylvia confirmed the tradition of intermarriage in the Norwegian community in Coon Valley (cf. marriage statistics by Ibarra 1976, noted above) and even mentioned the Church's involvement in keeping the community Norwegian. Sylvia resorts back to English in lines 4, 6 and 8 in Example (12).

(12) 1 Arne: *da dere var unge # var det viktig å gifte seg med norske*?
'when you were young # was it important to get married to Norwegians?'
2 Sylvia: *å ja*
'oh yes'
3 Arne: *ja*?
'yes?'
4 Sylvia: *ja # em #* **how shall I say the minister encouraged it**
'yes'
5 Arne: [*jaha*] # *det gjorde han ja*?
'[yeah] # that he did yes?'
6 Sylvia: [@] **don´t leave @ you know # and eh they encouraged # if you sold your place # to sell it to a Norwegian**
7 Arne: *jaha # det òg ja*?
'yeah # that too yes?'
8 Sylvia: [*ja*] # **but now that´s gone sort of**
'[yes]'
9 Arne: [*ja*]
'[yes]' (NorAmDiaSyn 01–02)

Gender differences have often been invoked in studies of language maintenance and shift (cf. Mukherjee 2003). According to Eric, though, there was no prestige in talking Norwegian: "Norwegian goes with the dirty and the untidy… the boys". The girls wanted to be refined (*fine* in Norwegian) thus revealing a traditional attitude towards women and female behavior. However, just this wish to aspire socially is explained by Eric as one of the main reasons for the decrease in Norwegian use by women. Another is the elder generation's passing away.

(13) 1 Eric: *Det var eh jenten- # jentene som eh # slutta # å snakke norsk*, *visst*.
'It was eh the girl- # the girls who eh # quit # talking Norwegian, certainly.'

2 Inga: *Det var det*?
'It was?'
3 Eliz: *Åh*.
'Oh.'
4 Eric: *Det var # eh forskjell # guttene # var ikke så nøye om de var lortete og* =
'There was # eh a difference # the boys # were not so fussed if they were dirty and' =
5 Inga: @
6 Anne: *Nei*.
'No.'
7 Eric: = *og bustete hår, og # men jentene ville være fine* =
= 'and tousled hair, and # but the girls wanted to be refined' =
8 Inga: *Jaha*?
'OK'
9 Eric: = *å snakke norsk, det var ikke riktig fint* =
= 'to talk Norwegian, that wasn't really refined' =
10 Inga: *Å nei, det var ikke det, så de ville*
'Oh no, not that, so they wanted'
11 Eric: = *var ikke fint nok*.
= 'were not good enough.'
12 Anne: *Nei*.
'No'
13 Inga: *Nei*.
'No'
14 Eric: *Så en brukte engelsk, da*.
'So one used English then.' (FG 1:40:23–1:40:49)

In Example (13) we witness a direct attestation of the impact of attitudes to language maintenance and how that interacted with the gender variable.

6.6 Identities as elderly people

All of the participants in the interactions negotiate many identities, among them, an identity as elderly people with several family members, friends and neighbors all having passed away. They connect this to their lack of Norwegian practice and hence what they see as inaccuracy in speaking 'good' Norwegian.

(14) 1 Arnold: *De ble borte foreldra, og kusiner og onkler, så blir det # veit # eh mindre og mindre ut av det norske* [*språket*.]
'They passed away parents, and cousins and uncles, so there is # know # less and less of the Norwegian [language.]'
2 Anne: [Mm.]
3 Inga: [Mm.]

4 Eric: *Jeg minker på det*. (.)
'I decrease in it.' (.)
5 Arnold: *Det minker på*. @
'It decreases @'
6 Anne: [*Ja*] # *ja*.
'[Yes] # yes.'
7 Inga: [Mm.]
8 Eric: *Ja*, *nå sist # denne uka*, *de gravde nå # eh om torsdagen ho* **Paula**.
'Yes, just recently # this week, they buried now # eh on Thursday **Paula**.'
9 Arnold: **Paula.**
10 Eric: *Hun var med i klassen vår*.
'She was in our class.' (FG 1:39:07–1:39:36)

The Coon Valley heritage speakers' conversation often touches upon comparisons between 'now' and 'before,' not only concerning language, but also health – John needs a cane now so he feels that he does not get much done. 'Before' he would work; he would feel his strength and speed, and would speak Norwegian more often. 'Now' is described more or less as the opposite, a matter of going to funerals. The demise of family members and friends is equated with the demise of the Norwegian language in Coon Valley.

7. Identity as Norwegians and Americans

We investigated the narratives in which Norway or Norwegians are a theme – where the Coon Valley Norwegians identify themselves with Norway. This is of course the most natural topic in this setting since the researchers were visiting to collect data on Norwegian. All of the participants emphasized when Norwegians were present in different events in the story worlds they created, as when Sylvia in talking about her grandfather going to war adds: "And eh (.) there were mainly (.) Norwegians." She also mentioned Norwegians when talking about Christmas and bringing cakes to the elderly residing in nursing homes: "there (.) are many Norwegians who live there." Norway and Norwegians were highly topicalized.

The Coon Valley participants were also positioned as Norwegians by the researchers present as well as by the other participants. When John asked how we – the research team – found him and Eric, Eliz positions them in line 2 as 'real' Norwegians (and Anne chimes in in line 3) because many had indicated they were the best ones to speak to. John confirms this appraisal in line 5. Sylvia agrees, notably in English (l. 7). John maintains Norwegian in the conversation in line 9, pointing out that he has been in many newspapers. Sylvia points out that he is famous in line 15 to which he distances himself yet at the same time appreciates the compliment, indicating a certain amount of pride in the fact that he has gained attention as a Norwegian.

(15) 1 Anne: = *Men jeg vet at det var flere som hadde nevnt deg og Eric*, "*dere må opp og snakke med med John og Eric*".
= 'But I know that there are several (people) who had mentioned you and Eric, "you all have to go up and talk with John and Eric".'
2 Eliz: *Ekte nordmenn*.
'Real Norwegians.'
3 Anne: *Ekte nordmenn*.
'Real Norwegians.'
4 Sylvia: *Ja*.
'Yes.'
5 John: *Ja*, [*det er vi*.]
'Yes, [that we are.]'
6 Anne: [*Det var mang-*] =
'[There were man-]' =
7 Sylvia: **That's for sure**.
8 Anne: = *flere som hadde sagt fra ulike-*
= 'several who had said (that) from various-'
9 John: *Vært i så mange aviser, så.*
'Been in so many newspapers, so.'
10 Sylvia: *Ja*.
'Yes.'
11 John: *Trur sju-åtte paper*.
'Believe seven-eight papers.'
12 Sylvia: [**I think so**.]
13 John: [@]
14 Anne: *Har du det*?
'Have you?'
15 Sylvia: **You're famous, you're famous**.
16 John: *Uff, ja*. @
'Uff, yes @' (FG 1:07:49–1:08:10)

As Blommaert (2005: 205) points out, "in order for an identity to be established, it has to be *recognized* by others." In Example (15) it seems like the ascribed identity (how people see us, as 'real' Norwegians) and the assumed identity (how we see ourselves, as 'famous' Norwegians) to a certain extent coalesce. Being known as a Norwegian, however, is also demanding, as John points out in Example (16).

(16) 1 John: *Det var en som var ifra # La Crosse-revyen* =
'Once there was someone from # the La Crosse journal' =
2 Inga: *Akkurat*.
'Right.'
3 John: = *Han var femten ganger* =
= 'He was fifteen times' =

4 Inga: *Jaha*?
'Yeah?'
5 John: = *og tok bilde* =
= 'and took pictures' =
6 Inga: [*Ja*, *akkurat*.]
'[Yes, right.]'
7 John: [*Jeg ble så lei.*]
'[I got so tired.]'
8 Sylvia: [@]
9 Anne: [*Ja*, *jeg skjønner*.]
'[Yes, I understand.]'
10 John: *Kunne nesten ikke snu seg før* =
'Couldn't turn around before' =
11 Anne: *Nei, han tok* [*bilder hele tida*]?
'No, he took [pictures all the time]?'
12 John: = [*jeg ble sku-*] *ble skutt*.
= '[I got sho-] got shot.'
13 Eliz: [*Ja.*] @
14 Sylvia: [@]
15 John: @ <XXX> *han var*.
'@ <XXX> he was.'
16 Inga: *Ja # så da syns du det ble litt for mye*?
'Yes # so then you think it got to be too much?'
17 John: *Ja, det va # litt for mye*. @
'Yes, it was # a little too much. @' (FG 1:09:08–1:09:33)

Interestingly, John and Eric did not yearn to return to the fatherland, Norway, despite their linguistic and cultural maintenance. Eric went once, John never did. In Example (17), he recounts his experience.

(17) 1 Anne: *Ja*, *kan du fortelle hvordan det var å være i Norge*?
'Yes, can you tell how it was to be in Norway?'
2 Eric: *Å eh* …
'Oh eh…'
3 Eliz: *Når var du*?
'When were you?'
4 Eric: *Jeg var da fornøyd med # etter tre dager*, *så kunne jeg reist hjem att*.
'I was satisfied with # after three days, so I could have traveled back home.'
5 Anne: *Er det sant?*
'Really?'
6 Eric: *Ja.* @
'Yes. @'

7 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
8 Eric: *Jeg syntes jeg har sett eh hva # jeg ville se. # Jeg ville se vikingbåten.* =
'I think I have seen eh what # I wanted to see. # I wanted to see the Viking ship.' =
9 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
10 Eric: = *Det var første tingen jeg ville vite av.*
= 'That was the first thing I wanted to know about.'
11 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
12 Eric: *Etter jeg så den, så da var jeg ferdig.*
'After I saw it, then I was finished.'
13 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
14 Inga: *Jaha*?
'Yeah?'
15 Eric: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
16 Anne: *Men traff du noen eh slektninger*?
'But did you meet any eh relatives?'
17 Eric: *Å ja.*
'Oh, yes.'
18 Anne: *Ja # likt-, men var det morsomt å snakke med dem, eller*?
'Yes # did (you) like-, but was it interesting to talk to them, or what?'
19 Eric: *De hadde ikke svært mye å snakke om, syns jeg det.*
'They didn't have too much to talk about, I think.'

(FG 1:20:37–1:21:11)

In Example (17) we see that Eric's goal in going to Norway was merely to visit the Viking ships, cultural artifacts. Once the mission was accomplished, he was ready to return home. Moreover, he did not really socialize with his relatives, finding them rather quiet. For Eric Norway was not paradise, and he did not like the forests, as they seemed threatening, as noted in Example (18).

(18) 1 Anne: *Me- # hadde du hørt # syns du Norge var annerledes enn det du trodde? # Det du hadde hørt fortellinger om*?
'Bu- # had you heard # do you think Norway was different from what you thought? # What you had heard stories about?'
2 Eric: *Jeg visste ikke at det var så mye skog som det.*
'I didn't know that there was so much forest as there is.'
3 Anne: *Nei*?
'No?'
4 Eliz: *Åja.*
'Oh yes.'

5 Anne: *Var skog,* [*mere skog.*]
'Was forest, [more forest.]'
6 Eric: [*Det var mye*] *mer skog enn jeg trudde det var.* (.)
'[There was much] more forest than I thought there was.' (.)
7 Anne: [*Ja.*]
'[Yes.]'
8 Inga: [*Ja.*] *Ja.*
'[Yes.] Yes.'
9 Eric: *Jeg kunne blitt borte på fem minutter.*
'I could get lost in five minutes.'
10 Inga: @
11 Eric: *De kjørte på sideveg- # snudde av vegen og # og kjørte inn i skogen* =
'They drove on a side road- # turned around # and drove into the forest'=
12 Anne: *Ja.*
'Yes.'
13 Eric: = *Jeg ikke kunne* =
= 'I couldn't' =
14 Anne: *Nei.*
'No.'
15 Eric: = *funnet vegen ut att.*
= 'find the way out again.' (FG 1:22:41–1:23:09)

Arnold, on the other hand, emphasizes that he was well acquainted with Norwegian customs; he relates this to his father, indicating the importance of his family in his life. Even though his father died when Arnold was young (that is the explanation for why Arnold started to speak English at an early age), he must have introduced Arnold to Norwegian customs, as he was not surprised when he went to Norway. According to Arnold, his father was born at Tretten – he felt that was important even if his father had left Norway in 1916, only 16 years old.

(19) 1 Anne: *Syns du Norge var eh # annerledes enn du tenkte på forhånd*? ## *Var det # forskjellig fra # du trodde*?
'Do you think Norway was eh # different from what you thought beforehand? ## Was it # different from # you thought?'
2 Inga: *Var eh* # var Norge slik som eh du hadde hørt deg fortalt om?
'Was eh # was Norway like eh what you had heard told about?'
3 Arnold: <XXX>, *var vel det meste, ja.*
'<XXX>, was that for the most part, yes.'
4 Anne: *Ja, så du ble ikke overrasket*? # *Var ingen eh* # **surprise**?
'Yes, so you were not surprised? # was no eh # **surprise**?'
5 Arnold: **No**. (.)
6 Inga: @
7 Anne: @

8 Arnold: *Far min var født på Tretten*, *han*, *veit du så*.
'My father was born in Tretten, ya know.'
9 Anne: *Ja*, *men hadde han fortalt* [*mye om*] …
'Yes, but had he told you [much about]…'
10 Arnold: [*Ja*, *jeg vet*] *jeg vet # vi visste nokså mye om det før* =
'[Yes, I know] I know # we knew quite a lot about it before' =
11 Anne: *Ja*.
'Yes.'
12 Arnold: = *før vi reiste*.
= 'before we left.'
13 Inga: *Og det var slik som han hadde fortalt*?
'And it was the way he had told you?'
14 Arnold: *Ja*.
'Yes.' (FG 1:29:01–1:29:18)

Interestingly, the researcher Anne inserts an English word in line 4, a translation of what she has just said in Norwegian. And Arnold then responds in English in line 5. However, he renegotiates Norwegian as the language of interaction in line 8.

In connection with the video-recorded NorAmDiaSyn conversations, the principal investigator followed a protocol including a questionnaire with one of the questions requiring the respondent to answer if she/he were Norwegian or American. Implicit in this type of question is an essentialist conception of identity, that is, that one has one or the other identity (see Section 5 above). This conception is in contrast with the understanding that we espouse in our analysis in which the participants' negotiation of various identities is traced in interaction – the speakers constructed both Norwegian and American identities. Nonetheless such a pointed question revealed interesting responses, as we see below.

(20) 1 Jorun: [..] *er du norsk eller amerikansk*?
'[..] are you Norwegian or American?'
2 Sylvia: *norsk*
'Norwegian'
3 Jorun: *du er norsk*?
'You are Norwegian?'
4 Sylvia: *ja* @
'Yes @' (NorAmDiaSyn 01–04)

In line 3, Jorun appears surprised at Sylvia's response that she is Norwegian. This is surely since Sylvia repeatedly switched over to English. Interestingly, Sylvia reconfirms her response in line 4 finishing off with a chuckle, implying that she understands Jorun's surprise.

(21) 1 Jorun: *er du norsk eller amerikansk*?
'Are you Norwegian or American?'
2 Arnold: *norsk eh*
'Norwegian eh'
3 Jorun: *eh kan jeg spørre deg også Eric er er du norsk eller amerikansk*?
'eh can I ask you too Eric are are you Norwegian or American?'
4 Eric: *jeg er # amerikaner # norsk-amerikaner # norsk* **American**
'I am # an American # Norwegian American # Norwegian **American**'
5 Jorun: *ja # ja nei men det er bra svar det # ja # nei men da*
'yes # yes no but that is a good answer # yes # no but then'
6 Eric: *jeg har norsk # norsk blod men # men jeg bor i Amerika* (.)
'I have Norwegian # Norwegian blood # but I live in America' (.)
7 Arnold: *men man prøver å holde seg på n- # norsk så mye som en kan da veit du*
'but we try to stick to N- # Norwegian as much as we can you know' (NorAmDiaSyn 02–03)

Sylvia, who often tried to negotiate language choice in the conversations over to English and hesitated in speaking Norwegian, assuredly acclaims a Norwegian identity, as we see in Example (20). Eric, who attempts to stick to Norwegian, points out that he indeed is both Norwegian and American – Norwegian American. Quite poignantly, he ascribes to himself a Norwegian – American identity in which he uses both languages, as we see in line 4.

8. Multilayered positioning work

We have many identities and in interactions, various identities can be constructed depending on various interactional goals and contexts. The four participants from Coon Valley in the interactions we have analyzed speak from different positions and construct various identities in their narratives – as an elderly person, as a farmer/factory worker, as a brother /wife/ relative, as an American in Coon Valley (and Norway), a Norwegian in Coon Valley, a heritage language maintainer (2nd–3rd generation), a polite host, a humorous person – to name but a few. Their competence and ease in using their variety of Norwegian vary.

Language negotiation is indeed an important feature of a multilingual context (cf. Auer 1998). To study the relationship between cultural identity and language preference (which may be related to linguistic competence), we have analyzed in more detail the extent of the Coon Valley speakers' language use in the focus group conversations. We have compared the four individuals' actual language use in the conversations, including switches into English, the use of English loan words, or the use of English initiated by some of the researchers. We have measured the proportion of turns in

Norwegian for the four speakers in relation to their total number of turns involving discernible elements of English or Norwegian. Turns with the particular Coon Valley /American English vocabulary (established loan words from English into their Norwegian like *fence, rubber, barn, travle*) are coded as Norwegian, but turns with various English elements (insertions of English words not integrated into Coon Valley Norwegian, tags as well as full English turns) are counted as English. Turns with only names, sounds (*hmh, oi*), laughter, and so forth, are considered 'undefinable' and are not counted. Table 2 presents an overview of the four speakers' use of the two languages in the conversations.

Table 2. Speakers' turns at talk in English and Norwegian in the focus group conversations.

Speaker	Sylvia	John	Eric	Arnold
Norwegian	227 (40.8%)	262 (80%)	168 (98.2%)	98 (89.1%)
English	330 (59.2%)	66 (20%)	3 (1.8%)	12 (10.9%)
Total Norwegian & English turns	**557**	**328**	**171**	**110**
Undefinable turns	54	55	10	8
Total turns	**611**	**383**	**181**	**118**

In Table 2 we see that the three men had a greater use of Norwegian in their turns than did Sylvia, who had slightly more turns in English. Note that percentages are of turns at talk that are definable as Norwegian or English.

As for the use of English, what is of particular interest is the speaker's use of English in the conversation in response to the use of English in a preceding turn by another person in the interaction (researchers or other participants). In other words, we investigate to what extent the four speakers in focus **initiate** a language negotiation sequence by switching to English or whether they **maintain** English as the language of interaction used by the prior speaker. Table 3 presents the results of this inquiry.

Table 3. Speakers' turns at talk in English in the focus group conversation: Self-initiated or other-initiated.

Speaker	Sylvia	John	Eric	Arnold
English initiated by self	274 (83%)	29 (42%)	3 (100%)	11 (91,7%)
English initiated by others	56 (17%)	37 (58%)	0	1
Total English turns	**330**	**66**	**3**	**12**

Table 3 indicates that Sylvia not only had more turns with English, she initiated switches to English more often, thus renegotiating language choice in the interaction.

We see that Eric and Sylvia are at different ends of the continuum, with Eric hardly ever switching into English, and Sylvia doing so very frequently. Arnold and John are in the middle and it seems like John also switches into English at times. However, a

closer analysis of the speakers' turns reveals that most of John's English turns are a result of other people talking to him in English. In other words, English is initiated by the others. Sylvia, with her frequent switches into English, is present in the conversation with John. Hence, John initiates English more seldom than Arnold although in general John has more Norwegian turns than Arnold.

As we did not measure each participant's linguistic proficiency in Norwegian, we portray the actual language choice as language preference; this is particularly evident in the case of Sylvia. However, it appears clear from the interactions that these preferences reflect the individual's present proficiency in the language or at least the individual's ability to access that knowledge. In this comparison of the speakers, we suggest a scale, from Sylvia on the one end to Eric on the other, indicating their preference for Norwegian, which implicitly indicates their proficiency in the language.

Sylvia	Arnold	John	Eric
Less preference (proficiency)			Most preference (proficiency)

We have also taken heed of how the speakers actually spoke, their differences in comprehending different dialects used by the Norwegian researchers, their awareness of dialects as well as their own comments on their language competence and use. Our evaluation of their fluency is supported by this consideration. An example is how John uses some English words, probably frequent in the Coon Valley or American variety of Norwegian, where Eric uses the expected Norwegian word, e.g., John: *sh- sh-* ***shut****e døra att døra* ('sh- sh- **shut** the door') (NorAmDiaSyn-data 03-04) as opposed to Eric: *stenge* ('close'), and John: *var* **square # square** (.) *spiker før den tida* ('were **square # square** (.) nails before that time'), as opposed to Eric's utterance: *det er firkanta spiker* ('they are square nails') (NorAmDiaSyn-data 03-04).

Interestingly, Sylvia who uses Norwegian much less in the conversations is the one who stresses her Norwegian identity the most, along with her husband Arnold. Also she refers to other semiotic resources for underscoring this identity as through her many Norwegian artifacts and her maintenance of cultural traditions. The Bakke brothers, on the other hand, did not display such cultural artifacts in their home and they were the ones who used Norwegian the most. However, they had kept Norwegian newspapers and letters, and Eric wrote regularly to a Norwegian relative who had visited them in Coon Valley quite a few years before.

Nonetheless we have to stress that there are other factors rendering Sylvia (or the others) so involved in Norwegian and Norway. Sylvia expresses greater interest in decorating her house and she was more involved in various activities in the community, for example, visiting elderly people in the nursing home. Moreover, both she and her husband were involved in Norwegian heritage activities: this was part of their family activities, doing things together as a couple. The two brothers have spoken Norwegian to each other all their life. Hence gender may also be a factor, and the family situation as well, and last, but not least – these are all elderly people – and hence they like to talk about the old days. And these old days involve aspects of their Norwegian heritage.

9. Discussion and conclusion

The complexity of ethnic identity and the relative importance of language as a marker of ethnic identity are discussed in other heritage language studies. King (2001) provides an insightful account of indigenous communities in South America where the heritage language is threatened. A comparative perspective is applied in King's study of two indigenous yet mostly Spanish-speaking communities in the Ecuadorian highlands whose heritage language is Quechua with the Ecuadorian varieties referred to as Quichua. While the heritage language is the same, each community accorded different values to the language. In the urbanized community, which also comprised non-indigenous arenas, and where the distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous has faded away, Quichua was highly esteemed as a marker of ethnic identity, despite its infrequent use in the community. Indeed it was considered "an indexical sign of ethnic membership" (King 2001: 190). According to the other community, which was rural agro-pastoral, the Quichua language did not have this same value. The defining characteristic of indigenous persons for this community was "that they worked in the countryside with animals; did not mind getting dirty; and regularly traveled long distances by foot" (King 2001: 190). Hence it was their rural lifestyle that was the primary marker of ethnicity, and not the language.

Our analysis focuses on identity construction in the narratives of four speakers in Coon Valley, where we examine the interplay among language, culture and identity through various interactional examples. We investigate the specific interactions these speakers were engaged in – conversations between them and the Norwegian researchers. In other contexts the same speakers may construct other and perhaps different identities. Among these Coon Valley Norwegians, we experienced a situation that appeared to be in a mid-position in comparison with the Quichua communities in Ecuador. Language was highly esteemed as a marker of ethnic identity; indeed there was pride in the fact that the elderly still maintained the language. For those, however, whose fluency in the language was faltering, more emphasis was placed on cultural artifacts and cultural traditions for accentuating ethnic Norwegian identity in the US. In other words, these objects and traditions are allocated socio-cultural meanings by the Coon Valley Norwegians in their identity construction.

Lane (2009) observed a similar phenomenon in her investigation of language shift and identity construction in two Finnish-speaking communities: one in Canada and the other in northern Norway. Although both communities are undergoing language shift and displayed similar objects in their homes, these objects carried overt symbolic value only in the Canadian community, which is geographically much further away from Finland. More ethnographic work in Norwegian-speaking communities in the U.S. will be needed to investigate the relationship between language shift and identity construction.

Other factors are also involved in identity construction among the last users of a heritage language in the community, and these may be individual. De Bot and Schrauf (2009) relate language shift to the so-called MOM framework (Means, Opportunity and Motivation) in referring to individual speakers. As they note (de Bot and Schrauf 2009: 11):

> Elderly bilinguals may show language decline, but again it needs to be established whether such shifts are caused by a decline in linguistic and cognitive *means*, a decline in *opportunities* to use languages in a meaningful way, or a decline in the *motivation* to communicate and use the language.

Regarding the four elderly people from Coon Valley, it seems like the opportunity to use the language is the most important explanation for them; their means are varying but their motivation is still strong. This was clearly demonstrated when Eric took the initiative to ask the researchers what they had learned from their data collection experience, implying that the Norwegians from Norway 'you' (in plural, *dere*) do have things to learn from the Coon Norwegian 'us' (*oss*). Displaying a high degree of agency, he asked the researchers for an evaluation of the Coon Valley Norwegians' participation in the project:

(22)

1	Eric:	*Har dere lært noe enda*	
		'Have you learned anything yet'	
2	Inga:	Hm?	
3	Eric:	*Har dere lært noe enda*?	
		'Have you learned anything yet?'	
4	Inga:	*Ja*, [*vi har lært*] *mye*, *ja*.	
		'Yes, [we have learned] a lot, yes.'	
5	Anne:	[*Vi har lært mye*, *vi*.]	
		'[We have learned a lot.]'	
6	Eric:	*Er dere fornøyde med # oss*?	
		'Are you satisfied with # us?'	(FG 1:20:07)

The answer is truly that through the interactions with the Coon Valley Norwegians, the Norwegians from Norway did indeed learn a lot about heritage language situations and there is still much more to be discovered. Moreover, they were very satisfied. Coon Valley is a captivating community for investigating issues concerning language, culture and identity among heritage language speakers. And narratives of personal experience provide a privileged site for investigating these issues.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

-	self-interruption
@	laughter
@@@	marked laughter
#	short pause
##	longer pause
<XXX>	unclear
[]	overlapping speech
__	stress
(.)	smaller segments left out
=	latching
Bold	English word/utterance
Norwegian	Norwegian utterances
'English'	English translation of Norwegian utterances are given in single quotation marks

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