

The Norwegian language in Argentina

A first view of heritage Norwegian in a new contact situation

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Introduction

- Norwegian in North America (NorAmNo) has been investigated for a long time; Norwegian in Latin America has attracted less attention
- More than 20,000 Norwegians emigrated to LatAm 1820–1950s (compared to 800,000 to NorAm)
- Thus far: virtually no studies of Norwegian as a HL in this situation, where Spanish is the main contact language
- **Goals** of this study:
 - To present a **first, tentative description** of **some** of the **properties** of Norwegian in Argentina (ArgNo), with NorAmNo as a comparative backdrop
 - To point out directions for future research on Norwegian in Latin America as an **understudied HL**, and as a case of heritage Norwegian in a **non-English context**

On NorAmNo: e.g. Flom 1903, Haugen (1953), Johannessen (2018).
On migration to LatAm: Sæther (2015), Furuseth (2013).

Norwegian speech communities in Argentina

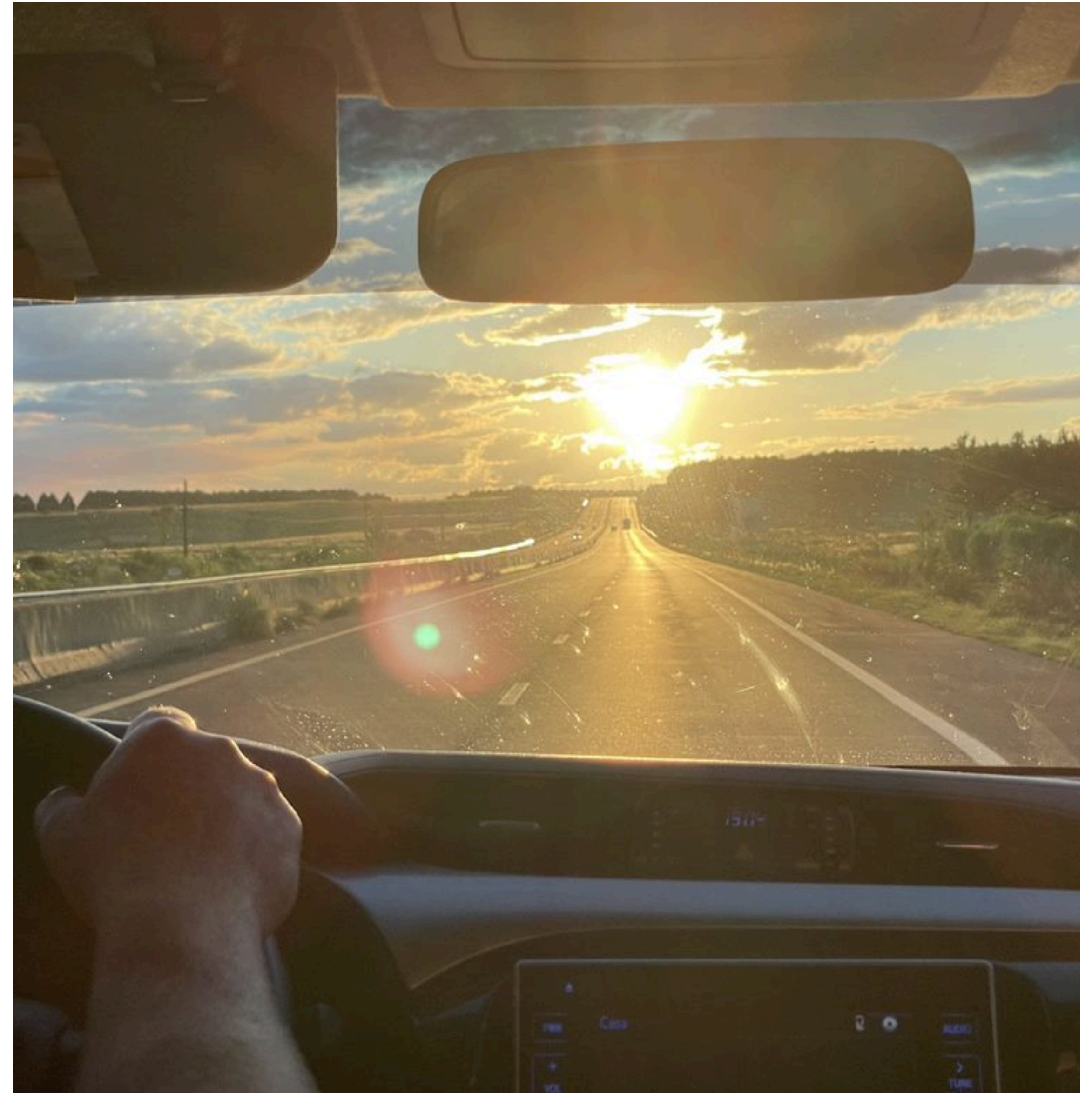
Compared to North America

| North America 🇺🇸🇨🇦 | Argentina 🇦🇷 |
|--|---|
| Large communities (chain migration) | Small communities (individual migration) |
| First generation of emigrants from Norway: typically late 1800s/early 1900s | First generation of emigrants from Norway: typically 1920s or later |
| Mostly 3rd–4th generation heritage speakers; mostly in their 70s/80s at the time of recording (2010s) | Mostly 2nd generation heritage speakers; mostly in their 70s/80s at the time of recording (2021) |
| Rural profile: emigration from rural areas in Norway; settlements mostly in the rural Midwest | Urban profile: emigration from Norwegian cities, mostly to Buenos Aires |
| Bilingualism: only Norwegian and English | Multilingualism: Norwegian, Spanish + L3/L4 |

NB: Descriptions based on data collected for this study + CANS (Johannessen 2015). See also Johannessen (2018) on NorAmNo.

Data and methods

- Field trip in Nov/Dec 2021
- Buenos Aires + Oberá (Misiones)
- 12 heritage speakers
- Semi-structured interviews; ca. 45–80 min per speaker
- Recordings not yet transcribed/tagged
- Findings are preliminary and based on qualitative analysis



Data have also been collected in other LatAm countries and with more structured elicitation techniques, but in the present study, we focus on spontaneous speech data from Argentina.

Preliminary findings

Vocabulary/lexical innovations

- ArgNo has **few lexical innovations/loan words that are shared widely across speakers**
 - **Different** from NorAmNo
 - NorAmNo: *råd* ‘road’, *grubbe* ‘grub’ (e.g. Haugen 1953, Hjelde 1992) – no clear equivalents in ArgNo
- However, **Spanish discourse markers** are common: *sí, no, bueno*
 - **Similar** to NorAmNo (Eng. discourse markers, Søfteland & Hjelde 2021)
 - (1) *Vi har fått besøk hit # **bueno** det er lenge siden men før ...* (ArgNo)
we have had visits here BUENO it is long since but before
‘We’ve had visitors. Well, it’s been a long time, but before...’
- Otherwise, ArgNo loans are mostly sporadic (nonce borrowings)
- NB: **The source is not limited to the majority language** (Spanish). Loans from English, German and other Scandinavian languages are also found – **different** from NorAmNo

Preliminary findings

Morphosyntax

Overall: **stability**. However – some innovative patterns, which have also been observed in NorAmNo

- Regularised **verbal inflections**: ArgNo *bindet*, EurNo *bandt* ‘bound’ (past tense)
- **Grammatical gender**: cases of divergent agreement/assignment (2) (further Lund Stokka in prep.)
- Verb placement in **main clauses**: Occasional V3 where EurNo requires V2 (3).
- Verb placement in **embedded clauses**: Cases of verb movement past sentence adverbials where EurNo requires V-in-situ (4).

- | | |
|---|--|
| (2) a. <i>et stort museum</i> | (EurNo, noun with neuter agreement) |
| a.NEUT big.NEUT museum | |
| ‘a big museum’ | |
| b. <i>en stor museum</i> | (ArgNo, noun with masculine agreement) |
| a.MASC big.MASC museum | |
| (3) a. <i>Nå er hun pensjonist også</i> | (EurNo, V2) |
| now is she pensioner too | |
| ‘Now she is retired too’ | |
| b. ...nå hun er pensjonist også | (ArgNo, V3) |
| (4) a. <i>de forskjellige båtene som alltid kom hit til Argentina</i> | (EurNo, V-in-situ) |
| the different boats that always came here to Argentina | |
| ‘The different boats that always came here to Argentina’ | |
| b. <i>de forskjellige båtene som kom alltid her til Argentina</i> | (ArgNo, V-to-T) |

Discussion/preliminary proposals

Comparison between NorAmNo and ArgNo

Overall impression: **differences** in **vocabulary/lexical innovations** – but **morphosyntactic similarities**

Vocabulary – more systematic use of loan words in NorAmNo

- Systematic use of English loans in NorAmNo has developed over generations
- Substantial communities where Norwegian had a strong position > consolidation of the vocabulary
- ArgNo has a shorter and more scattered history > no consolidation

Morphosyntax – similar innovations:

- Although the communities are different, reduced input and use in both NorAmNo and ArgNo
- Divergent attainment and attrition are expected to happen in both HL contexts (Polinsky 2018)

Next steps

- New field trip in 2022!
- More systematic studies of the morphosyntactic phenomena discussed in this paper
- Focus on phenomena that are **different in the two majority languages** Spanish and English, to enhance our understanding of cross-linguistic influence



Selected references: Flom, G.T. 1903. The gender of English loan-nouns in Norse dialects in Wisconsin. *Journal of German Philology*. Haugen, E. 1953. *The Norwegian Language in America*. University of Pennsylvania Press Johannessen, J.B. 2018. Factors of variation, maintenance and change in Scandinavian heritage languages. *International Journal of Bilingualism*.

Larsson, I. & Johannessen, J.B. 2015. Incomplete acquisition and verb placement in heritage Scandinavian. In *Moribund Germanic Heritage Languages in North America*. Brill. Polinsky, M. 2018. *Heritage Languages and their Speakers*. Cambridge University Press. Westergaard et al. 2021. Variable V2 in Norwegian heritage language: an effect of cross-linguistic influence? *Linguistic approaches to Bilingualism*.