

## How language-shift influences language change: A comparative study of two moribund heritage varieties

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Despite important work in recent decades on language shift due to verticalization processes (Frey 2013, 2022; Johnson 2019, 2022; Salmons 1983, 2005) and variation and change in the grammars of heritage speakers (Polinsky 2018), there have been few attempts to correlate morphosyntactic developments in different heritage communities with language shift. In this paper, we compare diachronic developments in American Norwegian (AmNo) and Iowa Low German (LG), two moribund multi-generational heritage varieties, in order to understand the language change we see in present-day speakers.

Although different in place of origin, the two varieties under study show a high degree of similarity in sociolinguistic developments. Migrating to the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the immigrants established their own communities with institutions that functioned in the heritage language (i.e. church, school, press), and were able to maintain their heritage languages for more than three generations. However, due to verticalization processes affecting the communities between 1920 and 1940, they began to shift to the majority language (English), leading to a decrease in active heritage speakers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Natvig 2022, Rocker to appear).

For AmNo, diachronic data have recently been made available in the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (CANS, Johannessen 2015). In this paper we combine findings from diachronic studies of AmNo (Riksem, 2017; Eide, 2019; Larsson & Kinn, 2022; Lykke 2022; van Baal, 2022), with longitudinal data on Iowa LG (see Rocker 2022). Below we provide examples of innovations in tense morphology (Lykke 2020) and verb placement (Rocker 2022; for AmNo see Eide 2019) found in the present-generation of speakers of both AmNo and LG. (1) and (2) exemplify the use of present tense morphology in past tense contexts and (2) is additionally an example of structures with verb-third instead of verb-second word order:

### (1) innovative tense morphology in AmNo

*dær e .. vår e livv-i till .. till e hadde ee .. till e .. jekk*  
there be.PRES .. where I **live-PRES** til .. til I have.PRET uh .. til I .. go.PRET  
'That's where I lived until I left.' (coon\_valley\_WI\_12gm, CANS)

### (2) innovative tense morphology and word order in LG

*un denn .. dat rohm kumm-t daarut*  
and then .. the cream **come-PRES** there-out  
'And then the cream came out' (Rocker 2022)

These innovations are either not at all or sparsely attested in the earlier period of AmNo and LG. We argue that accelerated language change in the last speaker generation can be correlated to communal language shift in the relevant heritage varieties. Since language shift leads to a decrease of domains in which the heritage language is spoken, the last generation of speakers has fewer opportunities to use the language. Due to the reduced exposure to the heritage language during language acquisition and across the lifespan, more speakers may become unbalanced bilinguals, i.e., heritage speakers in the narrow sense (Polinsky 2018, p. 4) who have been found to show an increased rate of grammatical innovation. In addition, innovations may spread more

rapidly through a small community of heritage speakers, in the manner proposed for historical change by Beekma et al. (2017). The implication is that heritage speakers in small communities may amplify trends of change incipient to the baseline (see Kupisch & Polinsky 2022), also with regards to the sociolinguistic spread of innovations.

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