

## Variation and change in the tense morphology of American Heritage Norwegian

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**Background:** Inflectional morphology in heritage languages has been found to be changeable, but tense morphology is highly stable (Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky 2013). Contrarily, I provide evidence that tense morphology can be subject to change in heritage languages, and model this in a Distributed Morphology (DM) framework.

**Data:** Data are drawn from the spontaneous speech of the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (Johannessen 2015b), supplemented by new elicitation data. Comparison with the relevant baselines of the speakers show that the tense morphology of American Norwegian is predominantly stable, as expected. There are tendencies of change, however, and they have a clear correlation with speaker backgrounds, particularly age of onset of bilingualism. The sequential bilinguals in the study primarily exhibit stability. Below, I focus on two trends of change which lack strong parallels in homeland Norwegian. These changes are found only with simultaneous bilinguals, who acquired English before school age, and, interestingly, one sequential bilingual who has received input from uncommonly disparate dialects of Norwegian.

**Discussion:** I present two tendencies of change from American heritage Norwegian, Overgeneralization of a specific inflection class, the *a*-class (the *kaste*-class), and changed morphosyntactic distribution of inflectional forms. At the present state of research, I see them as grammatically unrelated. Norwegian has two regular classes of inflection: the *a*-class and the *Te*-class (the *prøvde*-class). The *a*-class is the most productive class. Although it is not overgeneralized by adult speakers, its overgeneralization is common with homeland children around age 4 (Ragnarsdóttir et al. 1999). When the *a*-class is similarly overgeneralized by heritage speakers of Norwegian, this reflects that the grammars of the heritage speakers have not reached the same end state as their baseline. The change is arguably related to decreased exposure to Norwegian, which in the case of the simultaneous bilinguals began earlier than with the sequential bilingual heritage speakers in my study. The only sequential bilingual who exhibits this change, is the speaker who received uncommonly heterogeneous input during acquisition. Especially decreased exposure to a homogeneous Norwegian system of inflection is a common denominator for this speaker and the simultaneous bilinguals.

Change in morphosyntactic distribution of forms is a trend separate from the class overgeneralization, but it is found with the same speakers in my study. The tendency is for present tense or past participle forms to be used in contexts which require preterit forms, e.g. /mo:-0/ ‘must-PRES’ for /mot-e/ ‘must-PRET’ or /læ:r-d/ ‘learn-PART’ for /læ:r-de/ ‘learn-PRET’. I analyze such non-target use of inflectional categories as innovated rules of Impoverishment, adopting the DM approach of Nevins & Parrot (2010). I propose that the innovated category distribution has arisen as production errors, caused by difficulties with linguistic access. Increased difficulty with access is a known effect of language attrition (Montrul 2016: 112). With an Impoverishment analysis, innovated, attrition-induced syncretisms are captured by a process known from monolingual grammars. The innovated Impoverishment rules apply variably, and are sensitive to markedness, which parallels the findings of Nevins & Parrot (2010) from monolingual English speakers.

**Conclusion:** Although a high degree of stability is found in the tense morphology of American Norwegian, notable tendencies of change show that tense morphology in heritage languages are indeed susceptible to change, contrary to earlier reports (Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky 2013; Montrul 2016: 54–71). Importantly, all tendencies of change can be described by familiar mechanisms of monolingual language. The overgeneralization of the *a*-class is known from Norwegian child language. The innovated category distribution has no counterpart in Norwegian homeland language, but the tendencies can be described via an Impoverishment analysis analogous to Nevins & Parrot’s (2010) analysis of monolingual English.

	<b><i>a</i>-class</b>	<b><i>Te</i>-class</b>
<b>Infinitive</b>	<i>kast-e</i>	<i>prøv-e</i>
<b>Present</b>	<i>kast-ar</i>	<i>prøv-er</i>
<b>Preterit</b>	<i>kast-a</i>	<i>prøv-de</i>
<b>Participle</b>	<i>kast-a</i>	<i>prøv-d</i>

*Table 1: The verbal inflection of Norwegian exemplified by the two regular classes (data from Nynorsk)*

**References:**

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