

**Syntactic change or cross-linguistic influence?:
som-less relative clauses in American Norwegian**
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Introduction. A persistent narrative in the ongoing research on syntactic properties of heritage languages is its overwhelming resistance to large-scale changes and attrition, at least with respect to its core properties (e.g., Polinsky, 2018; Lohndal, 2021). This state of affair is somewhat more relaxed when it comes to elements of syntax that interface with semantics and phonology; see e.g., Putnam & Søfteland (2021) and their treatment of variation in non-finite complementation in American Norwegian (AmNo) as an instance of syntax-semantic mismatches. In this presentation we take a closer look at a subclass of relative clauses in AmNo, that lack the complementizer *som* as shown in (1) (examples from CANS, the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (Johannessen, 2015):

- (1) a. så je vet ikke hårr ska hægpe te heimfarmen borrti dæg (portland_ND_01gm)
so I know not what shall happen to homestead over there
'So I don't know what will happen to the homestead over there.'
- b. du veit ikke va he henn? (chicago_IL_01gk)
you know not what has happened
'You don't know what has happened?'

It is a noticeable feature of (1) that the syntactic structure strongly resembles comparable English structures. The primary objective of this talk is to determine whether structures such as (1) in AmNo represent an incipient syntactic change in this heritage grammar or whether we are primarily dealing with a case of crosslinguistic influence (CLS, e.g., Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008, Westergaard et al. in press for AmNo).

Overview of data. We have searched the CANS corpus (v. 3.1) for subordinate *wh*-clauses with relativized subjects, with or without the relative marker *som*. In total we found 10 examples without *som* (cf. 1a-b), in addition to 19 examples with *som* in place as expected, as in (2a-b):

- (2) a. de e inngen såmm e inntesert i hå såmm hægpp'n åt åss (la_crosse_WI_02gm)
it is no.one that is interested in what REL happened to us
- b. så kannsje vet ikke va såmm kunna ha hennnt me mæg da (spokane_WA_05gm)
so maybe know not what REL could have happened with me then

Structure	Examples in CANS
wh-word/phrase + <i>som</i> + finite verb	19
wh-word/phrase + finite verb	10

Table 1. Subordinate *wh*-clauses with relativized subject

Preliminary analysis. Based on our assessment, the majority of the *som*-less AmNo examples extracted from CANS can most appropriately be classified as instances of CLS rather than instances of permanent syntax change. Calling on CLS/non-facilitative transfer in heritage language syntax has been connected with reduced usage/activation of Norwegian syntax over the course of the lifespan (see, e.g., Putnam & Sánchez, 2013, Anderssen et al. 2018, Westergaard et al., in press). Although most of our *som*-less examples appear to be the result of CLS, others do not seem to fall neatly into this category. Unlike the CLS cases, these other examples do not seem to form a coherent class, requiring a case-by-case analysis.

References

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