

# Kinship nouns in American and European Norwegian

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DiGS 20, York, 21 June 2018

# Introduction

European Norwegian has a relatively rich system of **split possession** (Lødrup 2014, Johannessen et al. 2014)

- ▶ Different groups of nouns are treated differently in poss. constructions
- ▶ **Some kinship nouns** exhibit special properties<sup>1</sup>

**Scope:** two poss. constructions with postnominal possessors

- ▶ Some kinship nouns can be **bare**
- ▶ Other nouns must appear with a def. suffix

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<sup>1</sup>Some other relational nouns do too; they will not be discussed here.

## Construction 1: N + poss. pronoun

(1) *far min*

father my

‘my father’

(2) *sykkel-\*(en) min*

bike-DEF my

‘my bike’

## Construction 2: N + possessive PP

(3) *far til Mari*  
father to Mari

‘Mari’s father’

(4) *sykkel-\*(en) til Mari*  
bike-DEF to Mari

‘Mari’s bike’

**Prepositions:** *til/åt* ‘to’

**Restriction on P complement:** full DP, not pronoun (Johannessen et al. 2014)

## Aims/research questions:

- ▶ To which extent is split possession retained in **American Norwegian**, and how can we analyse differences/changes in the two varieties?

## American Norwegian:

- ▶ A heritage variety spoken in USA/Canada
- ▶ Mainly 3rd or 4th generation immigrants
- ▶ Bilingual speakers
  - ▶ Norwegian acquired at home as young children (L1)
  - ▶ English when starting school, dominant language as adults
- ▶ Very limited contact with the speech community in Norway – isolation
- ▶ Old speakers

## Contribution:

- ▶ Syntactic change in situations of language contact/reduced input
- ▶ Diachronic stability/change of lexically restricted phenomena

Still work in progress, but...

**Finding:** split poss. is even more pervasive in AmNo than EurNo

# Outline

- ▶ Bare kinship nouns in EurNo
- ▶ Bare kinship nouns in AmNo
- ▶ Discussion and analysis
- ▶ Conclusion

# Bare kinship nouns in EurNo

**Which kinship nouns occur in their bare form in constr. 1 & 2?**

Methodology...

- ▶ Recent studies: Lødrup (2014), Johannessen et al. (2014)
- ▶ More general literature: Faarlund et al. (1997), Julien (2005)
- ▶ Dialect literature: Venås (1977), Dagsgard (2006)
  - ▶ Relevant dialect areas (Hallingdal, Lom, Skjåk)
- ▶ Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al. 2009)<sup>2</sup>
  - ▶ Speakers in age group B (> 50 years old)
  - ▶ 355 speakers, 1,408,879 words

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<sup>2</sup>Search for kinship nouns, item by item; phon. trans. Excluded: Coordinations with two bare nouns (Heycock and Zamparelli 2003), classifying predicate nouns.

## Construction 1      Construction 2

mor 'mother'	mor 'mother'
far 'father'	far 'father'
søster 'sister'	søster 'sister'
bror 'brother'	bror 'brother'
datter 'daughter'	datter 'daughter'
sønn 'son'	sønn 'son'
moster 'aunt'	
faster 'aunt'	
tante 'aunt'	
onkel 'uncle'	
mann 'husbond'	
familie 'family'	
foreldre 'parents'	

+ **compounds** ending in these nouns

**Table 1:** Kinship nouns occurring in their bare form, EurNo.

- Common kinship nouns/close family relations
- **Inter-speaker variation**
- Rural areas, older speakers (Julien 2005 on con. 1)

## Some EurNo examples: construction 1

(5) *bestefar din sydde konfirmasjonsdressen min*  
grandfather your sewed confirmation.suit.DEF my  
'Your grandfather sewed my confirmation suit' (brandbu\_ma\_01)

(6) *bror min eide garden...*  
brother my owned farm.def  
'My brother owned the farm' (alvdal\_04gk)

## Some EurNo examples: construction 2

(7) *datter åt presten var lærerinne*  
...daughter to priest.def was teacher  
'The priest's daughter was a teacher' (aal\_ma\_01)

## Bare nouns are not consistently used in constructions 1 & 2

The relevant kinship nouns also occur with a def. suffix (i.e. the general pattern for other nouns in postnominal possessor constructions)

(8) *far min* vs. *far-en min*  
 father my vs. father-DEF my

(9) *far til Mari* vs. *far-en til Mari*  
 father to Mari vs. father-DEF to Mari

	Construction 1	Construction 2
mor	73% (94/128)	67% (2/3)
far	75% (137/183)	71% (10/14)
bror	80% (81/101)	80% (7/9)
søster	50% (31/62)	36% (4/11)

Table 2: Use of bare nouns vs. nouns with a def. suffix, NDC, age group B

# Bare kinship nouns in AmNo

Which kinship nouns occur in their bare form in constr. 1 & 2?

Methodology...

- ▶ Previous work on construction 1: Andersen and Westergaard (2012), Westergaard and Andersen (2015), see also Riksem (2017)
- ▶ The **CANS** corpus (Johannessen 2015)
  - ▶ 50 speakers, 197,889 words
  - ▶ 2.–5. generation immigrants
- ▶ More recent speech data collected on a field trip in 2016

## Construction 1      Construction 2

mor 'mother'	mor 'mother'
far 'father'	far 'father'
søster 'sister'	søster 'sister'
bror 'brother'	bror 'brother'
datter 'daughter'	datter 'daughter'
sønn 'son'	tremenning 'second cousin'
onkel 'uncle'	kusine 'cousin'
mann 'husbond'	
familie 'family'	
foreldre 'parents'	
kusine 'cousin'	
skyldfolk 'kin'	
kone 'wife'	
jente 'girlfriend'	
nephew	
auntie	

- Bare forms attested with **more kinship nouns** than in EurNo
- More distant relations/less common nouns
- **Loan words**

No data: *sønn* (in con. 2), *moster*, *faster*, *tante*.

Table 3: Kinship nouns occurring in their bare form, AmNo (incl. compounds)

**Question:** Could the wider use of bare kinship nouns follow from **general loss of the def. suffix?** (In postnom. poss. constructions or more widely)

→ bare nouns not really related to split possession, more general change?

**Test:** Extraction of construction 1 with all types of possessees in CANS<sup>3</sup>

If the def. suffix is generally unstable, we would expect non-kinship nouns too to regularly appear without the def. suffix

	Bare noun	Def. suffix	Total
Kinship noun	409 (78.8%)	117 (22.2%)	526 (100%)
Non-kinship noun	9 (6.9%)	121 (93.1%)	130 (100%)

Table 4: Postnominal possessor constructions in CANS

<sup>3</sup>Query: noun + directly following det. (only hits with poss. pronoun included). Results based on phonological transcription.

- ▶ 9 (apparently) bare non-kinship nouns. **But:**
- ▶ 6 out of 9 have plausible independent explanations (phonological)
  - ▶ E.g. masculines ending in *-n*; suffix *-en* may be assimilated  
*venn-en* *min* /ven mi:n/
- ▶ → very few clear counterexamples
- ▶ The use of bare kinship nouns seems to be **systematic** and different from EurNo.

## Some AmNo examples: construction 1

(10) ... **skyldfolk** **mitt** var der  
... kin my was there

'my kin was there' (billings\_MT\_01gm)

(11) han .... prater med **jente** **hans**  
he ... talks to girl his

'he talks to his girl' (fargo\_ND\_10gm)

(12) **nephew** **min** hadde... mye # trouble  
nephew my had much # trouble

'my nephew had much trouble (portland\_ND\_02gk)

(13) ...var gift med **auntie** **mi**  
...was married to auntie my

'...was married to my auntie' (westby\_WI\_01gm)

## Some AmNo examples: construction 2

(14) *tremenning til kona var i sykehjem*  
second.cousin to wife.def was in nursing.home  
'my wife's second cousin was in a nursing home' (fargo\_ND\_10gm)

(15) *det var hos eh... # kusine til han harmony\_MN\_03gm*  
it was at eh... cousin to he harmony\_MN\_03gm  
'it was at harmony\_MN\_03gm's cousin's house'  
(harmony\_MN\_02gk)

# How consistently are bare nouns used in constructions 1 & 2?

Recall: Frequent, but not consistent in EurNo

(16) *far min* vs. *mor-en min*  
 father my vs. father-DEF my

(17) *far til Mari* vs. *far-en til Mari*  
 father to Mari vs. father-DEF to Mari

	Construction 1	Construction 2
mor	100% (80/80)	67% (2/3)
far	98% (135/138)	100% (9/9)
bror	93% (50/54)	100% (3/3)
søster	44% (7/17)	50% (1/2)

Table 5: Use of bare nouns (vs. nouns with a def. suffix), CANS

→ **Generally more consistent** use than in EurNo (exception: *søster* 'sister')

## Intermediate summary

- ▶ AmNo has retained a system of split possession in constructions 1 & 2
- ▶ Bare kinship nouns are an even more pervasive property of AmNo than EurNo:
  - ▶ More kinship nouns occur in their bare form
  - ▶ Tentatively (with some exceptions): more consistent use

# Innovation vs. archaism

**Difference:** bare kinship nouns are a more pervasive property of AmNo than EurNo

1. AmNo innovative? – or,
2. AmNo archaic; EurNo has changed, but the investigated EurNo data do not reflect the language of the first emigrants?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See e.g. Polinsky (2008), Larsson and Johannessen (2015) and Lohndal and Westergaard (2016) on the baseline in studies of heritage languages.

## Support for 2 (AmNo is archaic):

- ▶ Similarity to Icelandic (Stolz et al. 2008) → shared heritage?
- ▶ Phenomenon currently in decline in EurNo (older speakers, rural areas, Julien 2005) → a previous stage more similar to AmNo?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Future research: more data from mid/late 19th century/early 20th century Norwegian; possibly late Middle/Early Modern Norwegian (NB: methodological challenges.)

## Support for 1 (AmNo is innovative):

- ▶ The investigated dialect literature/corpus data from EurNo are skewed towards older speakers/previous generations + bigger sample
  - ▶ Speakers > 50 years (NDC)
  - ▶ People born around 1900 (Dagsgard 2006)
  - ▶ Some written sources from 1830-1840 (Venås 1977)
- If the wide use of bare kinship nouns was archaic, we might expect to see it. (But lack of negative data...)
- ▶ Some data from 1st generation emigrants are available; no patterns unattested in the other EurNo data were found
  - ▶ Samples of transcribed speech (Haugen 1953:479ff)
  - ▶ Includes 9 speakers born in Norway (one emigrated very young)
- ▶ Bare forms with **loan words** can be taken to indicate productivity

### Interpretation here: AmNo and EurNo on diverging paths

- ▶ EurNo is undergoing change; bare kinship nouns in decline
- ▶ At the same time, at least some AmNo speakers have productively extended the use of bare kinship nouns

# Analysis

## What is the syntactic structure of bare kinship nouns in constr. 1&2?

- ▶ Recall: other nouns require a def. suffix in these constructions
- ▶ We need to account for why kinship nouns can appear without def. marking

**Proposal following Julien (2005:192–193):** inherently definite/relational; encoded by a [POSS] feature on N<sup>6</sup>

(18) [DP [nP [NumP [NP [POSS] ]]]]

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<sup>6</sup>See also Lødrup (2014) and Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001) for discussion.

## Derivation of constr. 1 with non-kinship noun (following Julien 2005:162–163, simplified)

(19) *bil-en min*  
car-DEF my

(20)  $[_nP [_n [POSS] bil-en [_{NumP} [_{Num} \mathbf{bil} [_{NP} [POSS] min [_N \mathbf{bil} ]]]]]]$

- ▶ Possessive pronoun merged in Spec-NP
- ▶ Noun moves past the possessor to *n*
- ▶ Unvalued [POSS] feature in *n* Agrees with possessor
  - ▶ Spelled out by the def. article
  - ▶ ...“the POSS feature ... is in reality a definiteness feature” (Julien 2005:145)

## Derivation of constr. 1 with (relevant) kinship noun (following Julien 2005:192–193)

(21) *far min*  
father my

(22) [<sub>nP</sub> [<sub>n</sub> [POSS] far-∅ [<sub>NumP</sub> [<sub>Num</sub> far [<sub>NP</sub> [POSS] min [<sub>N</sub> [POSS] far ]]]]]]]]

- ▶ [POSS] feature in N in addition to on the poss. pronoun and in *n*.
- ▶ "... the *n* head need not be spelled out when the possessee has a POSS feature and the possessor is pronominal" (Julien 2005:192–193)

# Parametric change

**Neo-emergentist, parametric approach** to syntactic variation and change (Biberauer and Roberts 2017, Biberauer 2017)

- ▶ The Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (Baker 2008:353):

*All parameters of variation are attributable to differences in the features of particular items (e.g., the functional heads) in the lexicon*

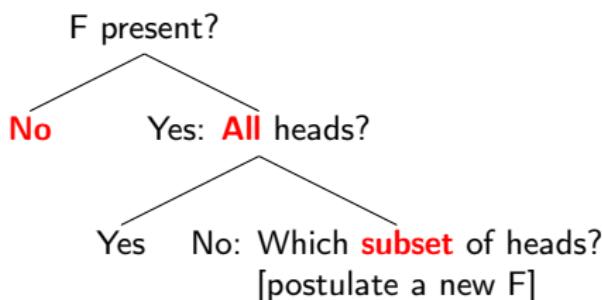
- ▶ Parameters are set/emerge through interaction of factors 1, 2 and 3 (Chomsky 2005)
- ▶ A proposed 3rd factor principle: **Maximise Minimal Means (MMM)** (Biberauer 2017)
  - ▶ A general cognitive bias which affects language acquisition
  - ▶ Two *interacting, language-specific manifestations* of MMM:

(23) **Feature Economy (FE)**: postulate as few formal features as possible to account for the input (Roberts and Roussou 2003, Biberauer 2017)

(24) **Input Generalisation (IG)**: maximise already-postulated features (Roberts 2007, Biberauer 2017)

## FE + IG: learning path for formal features

(25) The NONE>ALL>SOME learning path

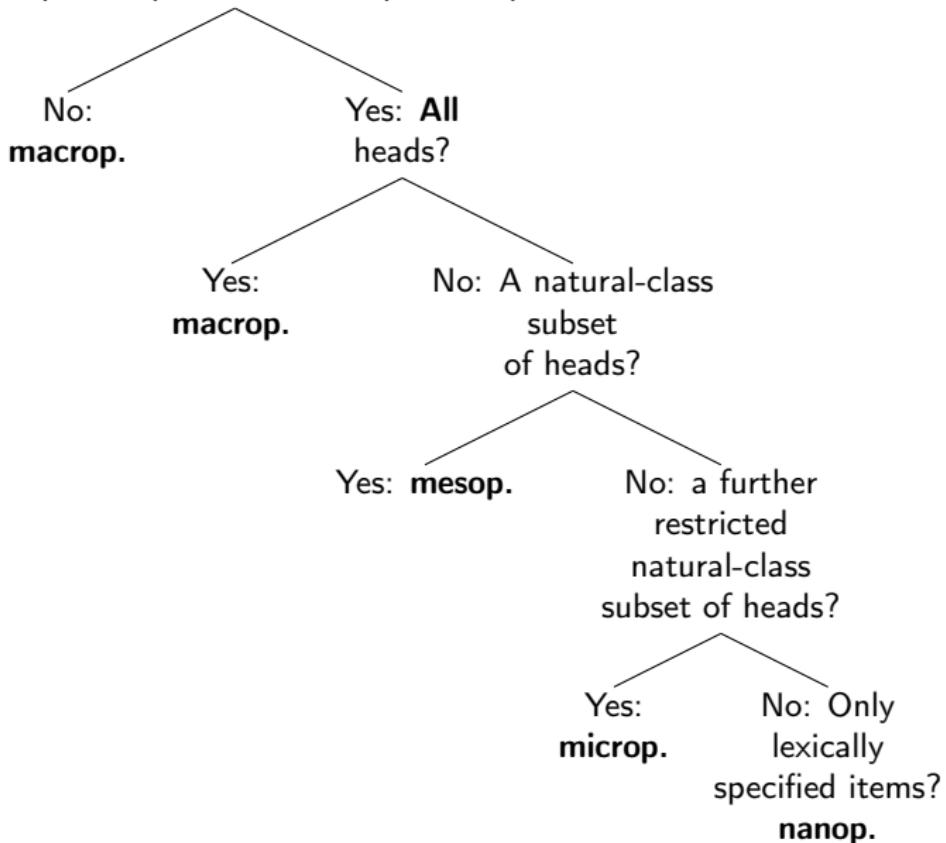


(Biberauer 2017:48)

Acquisition/distribution of formal features → parameter setting

Parameters can be classified according to *size*, depending on the class of functional heads that they apply to. A schematic overview (Biberauer 2017:51):

(26) Does P(property) characterise L(language)?



## Diachronic predictions:

- ▶ Parameters **high** in this hierarchy are likely to remain **stable** (Biberauer 2017:52)
  - ▶ Robustly attested
  - ▶ Typically rely on fewer formal features
- ▶ The lower ones (micro and nanoparameters) are more prone to change

## [POSS] on N (→ bare kinship nouns) as a parametric specification

### EurNo

- ▶ Inter-speaker variation
- ▶ *Some* kinship nouns (in some cases very few)
- ▶ Micro or nano parameter, depending on
  - ▶ The speaker
  - ▶ The definition/cut-off point (a (very) small natural class or individual items?)

### AmNo

- ▶ Variation, but overall more kinship nouns
- ▶ Proposal: some speakers treat **all** kinship nouns on a par
  - ▶ [KINSHIP] as a formal feature; determines the distribution of [POSS] on N
  - ▶ A micro parameter

# Why decline of bare nouns in EurNo?

- ▶ Loss of a feature – consistent with FE
- ▶ An exceptional pattern – must be robustly attested in the input to survive

# Why retention/extension of bare nouns in AmNo?

Different development. Extension violates FE but is consistent with IG.

Possible motivations...

## Frequencies:

- ▶ Postnominal possessor constructions are frequent in AmNo (Westergaard and Andersen 2015)
- ▶ Kinship nouns generally frequent
  - ▶ **Particularly frequent** in heritage languages? Use mostly restricted to the **home**
  - ▶ Preserving effect?

## Crosslinguistic hypercorrection (Kupisch 2014):

- ▶ Bilingual speakers sometimes overstress what is *different* between their two languages
- ▶ Split possession is characteristic feature of Norwegian, less so of English
- ▶ AmN speakers have therefore extended this feature in Norwegian, yielding a “hypercorrect” system<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. also Anderssen and Westergaard (2016) on crosslinguistic hypercorrection in possessive and double definiteness constructions.

## Lack of sociolinguistic pressure

- ▶ Bare kinship nouns in constructions 1 & 2 are (to some extent) associated with older speakers/rural areas in EurNo
- ▶ Presumably not high prestige
- ▶ This may lead to sociolinguistic pressure; speakers disprefer the option of bare nouns
- ▶ AmNo speakers are not subject to sociolinguistic pressure of this kind;
  - ▶ Separated from the speech community in Norway,
  - ▶ Not aware of attitudes and developments there

# Conclusion

- ▶ This paper has discussed split possession in EurNo and AmNo, focusing on two postnominal possessive constructions
- ▶ In EurNo some kinship nouns can occur in their bare form in these constructions
- ▶ This property is retained and for some speakers even extended in AmNo; in EurNo it is in decline
- ▶ Special treatment of kinship nouns can be seen as a small-scale (micro or in some cases possibly nano) parameter
- ▶ Retention/extension in AmNo may be attributed to circumstances that follow from its status as a heritage language

# Acknowledgements

This research was partially funded by European Research Council Advanced Grant No. 269752 “Rethinking Comparative Syntax”. I would like to thank the ReCoS group, Marit Westergaard, Jan Terje Faarlund and Janne Bondi Johannessen.

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