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

**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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1 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)
  - Relevant dialect areas (Hallingdal, Lom, Skjåk)
- Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al. 2009)²
  - Speakers in age group B (> 50 years old)
  - 355 speakers, 1,408,879 words

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²Search for kinship nouns, item by item; phon. trans. Excluded: Coordinations with two bare nouns (Heycock and Zamparelli 2003), classifying predicate nouns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>søster 'sister'</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>bror 'brother'</td>
<td>bror 'brother'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datter 'daughter'</td>
<td>datter 'daughter'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sønn 'son'</td>
<td>sønn 'son'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moster 'aunt'</td>
<td>moster 'aunt'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faster 'aunt'</td>
<td>faster 'aunt'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tante 'aunt'</td>
<td>tante 'aunt'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onkel 'uncle'</td>
<td>onkel 'uncle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mann 'husbond'</td>
<td>mann 'husbond'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familie 'family'</td>
<td>familie 'family'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foreldre 'parents'</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

+ **compounds** ending in these nouns

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

**Table 1:** Kinship nouns occurring in their bare form, EurNo.
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) \textit{far min} vs. \textit{far-\textit{en} min}
father my vs. father-DEF my

(9) \textit{far til Mari} vs. \textit{far-\textit{en} til Mari}
father to Mari vs. father-DEF to Mari

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<tr>
<td>mor</td>
<td>73% (94/128)</td>
<td>67% (2/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>75% (137/183)</td>
<td>71% (10/14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bror</td>
<td>80% (81/101)</td>
<td>80% (7/9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>søster</td>
<td>50% (31/62)</td>
<td>36% (4/11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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<tr>
<td>datter ‘daughter’</td>
<td>datter ‘daughter’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sønn ‘son’</td>
<td>tremenning ‘second cousin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onkel ‘uncle’</td>
<td>kusine ‘cousin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mann ‘husband’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familie ‘family’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>foreldre ‘parents’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kusine ‘cousin’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyldfolk ‘kin’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kone ‘wife’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jente ‘girlfriend’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nephew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auntie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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 CANS³

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bare noun</th>
<th>Def. suffix</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinship noun</td>
<td>409 (78.8%)</td>
<td>117 (22.2%)</td>
<td>526 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-kinship noun</td>
<td>9 (6.9%)</td>
<td>121 (93.1%)</td>
<td>130 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4:** Postnominal possessor constructions in CANS

³Query: 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

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<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>98% (135/138)</td>
<td>100% (9/9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bror</td>
<td>93% (50/54)</td>
<td>100% (3/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>søster</td>
<td>44% (7/17)</td>
<td>50% (1/2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. archaisms

**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?[^4]

[^4]: 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?[^5]

[^5]: 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


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

\(^6\)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) \[ \textit{bil-en} \quad \textit{min} \]
\[ \text{car-DEF my} \]

(20) \[ [n \text{ [POSS]} \text{bil-en} [\text{NumP} [\text{Num bi]} [\text{NP [POSS]} \text{min} [N bi]]]]]] \]

- 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) \[ \text{[nP} \text{[n [POSS] \text{far-Ø [NumP [Num far [NP [POSS] min [N [POSS] far ]]]]]}]}} \]

- [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

F present?

No

Yes: All heads?

Yes

No: Which subset of heads?

[postulate a new F]

(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(roperty) characterise L(anguage)?

No:  
\textit{macrop.}

Yes:  All heads?

Yes:  \textit{macrop.}

No:  A natural-class subset of heads?

Yes:  \textit{mesop.}

No:  a further restricted natural-class subset of heads?

Yes:  \textit{microp.}

No:  Only lexically specified items?

\textit{nanop.}
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 over-stress 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” system⁷

⁷Cf. also Anderssen and Westergaard (2016) on crosslinguistic hypercorrection in possesive 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

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