

Norwegian is a V3 language

Norwegian is known as one of the really hardcore V2 languages. Any textbook on Norwegian will inform you that the second constituent of Norwegian main clause declaratives and main clause Wh-questions obligatorily is the finite verb. It has long been known (e.g. Iversen 1918, Åfarli 1986, Nilsen 1996) however that northern varieties of Norwegian have non-V2 main clause Wh-questions. Moreover, in Sollid and Eide (2007a, 2007b) we investigated a quite frequent type of non-V2 main clause declaratives in the same Norwegian varieties, the *så*-construction. This construction is characterized by the function word *så* following a topicalized element, and either the finite verb or the subject immediately following *så*, giving rise to a non-V2 declarative construction. Our main hypothesis was that the emergence of these non-V2 declaratives results from language contact between Norwegian and Finno-Ugric languages (mainly Kven and North Sami), the latter languages being non-V2 languages. During the investigation reported in these papers, we compared excerpted corpora from the relevant northern Norwegian varieties with corpora from more standard-like dialects (e.g. the Oslo area). As we expected, the specific kind of non-V2 main clause declaratives, with the subject preceding the verb was not found in the standard-like varieties.

Much to our surprise however, declaratives from these standard-like dialects turned out to display a range of other exceptions to the alleged strict V2 requirement for standard Norwegian. In a more recent and broader investigation (reported on in Eide & Sollid to appear), we included a corpus from the Tromsø dialect, and our initial impression is corroborated even by these data: The amount of unambiguous V2 declaratives is not very impressive for an alleged V2-language, and we have to conclude that spoken colloquial Norwegian does not have an obligatory V2 rule for main clause declaratives, not even in standard-like varieties.

In our talk, we broaden the perspective, and in addition to the spoken corpus (containing declaratives from the northern dialects and dialects from the Oslo-area), we include a corpus of written Norwegian (containing declaratives from feature interviews in Norwegian tabloid news papers). The focus is on the non-subject-initial main clause declaratives. We have selected this specific clause type because subject-initial clauses are inadequate to separate V2-constructions from the more general SVO word order, and for our purpose we need to emphasize this distinction. Scrutinizing our selection of sentences, we investigate the variation between V2 and non-V2 on one hand, and the types of relevant non-V2 constructions on the other. Furthermore, we compare oral vs. written Norwegian. Our corpora will enable us to discuss the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors governing V2/non-V2 variation, most importantly, syntax, information structure and sociolinguistic context.

References:

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