V2 and non-V2 in Norwegian varieties spoken in the American Midwest.

Eide (2009ab, 2010, 2011abc) suggests that in Germanic languages there is a relationship between the verb second requirement (on display e.g. in declarative main clauses) and whether the finiteness distinction is expressed in the productive paradigm for verbal inflection. In Norwegian there is such a distinction expressed in the paradigm, and correspondingly, Norwegian employs the verb second rule for main clause declaratives. Specifically, only overtly finite verbs can fulfill the V2 requirement in Germanic languages. English is different from its Germanic siblings in that it has no productive finiteness distinction in the verbal paradigm and correspondingly, the verb second machinery broke down in English, on its way from Middle English to Modern English.

On this background, we investigate the relation between verb paradigms and V2 in speakers of Norwegian dialects in the American Midwest, employing a “real time” approach by using recordings collected in the 1940s (Haugen), 1990s (Hjelde) and 2010s (NorAmDiaSyn & Hjelde). The material from the 1940 represents bilingual speakers living in a bilingual community where they would use both Norwegian and English on a regular basis, and it is fair to assume that at least for some of the speakers, Norwegian was the dominant language. The majority of informants in the material from the 1990s also grew up in a bilingual community, but at the time of their recordings, English was their main language; they still spoke Norwegian, but most of them only occasionally. In the material from the 2010s we focus on speakers born around 1940 or later. These informants grew up in bilingual families, but English has been the dominant language most of their life, and only few of them speak Norwegian at any rate today.

By using these three sets of recordings, we aim to detect and describe changes in V2 and its relation to verb paradigms over time. Essential questions are:

1) Do we find changes in the verb paradigm, and if so, when does this take place?
2) Do we find changes in the sentence structure related to V2, and when does this take place?

On question 1: To scrutinize whether the morphological rules we detect are in fact the productive rules, we will include a study of loan verbs from English into the American-Norwegian dialects. As these words have entered the language quite recently, their paradigmatic behavior should also indicate whether or not the tense and finiteness distinction in American Norwegian still is intact and productive.

On question 2: We know that we can expect to find violations of the V2 rule in the material from the 1990s and later, as shown by examples (1) and (2) from Hjelde (2000).
But as pointed out by Ureland (:report:43), who studied Texas Swedish, we do have to discuss if examples like this reflects a change in grammatical rules, or if it is just isolated acts of performance. We assume that frequency can be used as the primary indicator here.

1. *Før i tida dei brukte å drikke seg fulle*
   Before in time they used to drink themselves drunk
   ‘I the olden days they used to get drunk.’

2. *No ungane krabbar på bordet*
   Now kids-DEF crawl on talbe-DEF
   ‘Nowadays the kids are crawling on the table.’

Literature:


