Language and Immigration

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America's profusion of tongues has made her the true Babel of a modern age. In city and countryside she has teemed with all the accents of Europe, yet she has never swerved from the Anglo-Saxon course set by her founding fathers. In the course of a century she has absorbed her millions and taught them her language more perfectly than Rome taught the Gauls and the Iberians in centuries of absolute dominion. Chinaman and Negro, Spaniard and Frenchman, Jew and Gentile have all been domesticated without leaving any serious impression on American English. [1]

Except for a brief hysteria during the late war all this has been done without political compulsion, through the social pressure of a culturally and economically dominant language. It has gone on in the face of a tenacious conservatism of language among the immigrants, a strong reluctance to give up speech habits ingrained from childhood. The immigrant could not be expected to reshape his speech overnight, for habits of speech are rooted more deeply in man's emotional and intellectual life than is generally realized. One's language cannot be tossed aside like last year's bonnet. From his first day in the new land a tug of war between his old and his new self was going on in the immigrant, and nowhere was the struggle more vividly reflected than in his successive linguistic adaptations. It is by slow, incessant attrition that each foreigner has been turned into an American, idea by idea, and word by word. Every language spoken by the American immigrant bears the marks of this conflict and only by recording and analyzing this evidence can we fully understand the processes of immigration. Only through this highly sensitive index can we reach some of the subtlest and most significant aspects of the immigrant's psychological and cultural development. The immigrant straddles two cultures, and if he is homeless in both, it is due in no small measure to his linguistic difficulties.

This approach to the immigrant is one that has received little attention from historians of immigration. The fact is not surprising when we see that even linguists have often regarded the dialects of the immigrant as beneath their dignity. Nevertheless, some studies have been made, and anyone interested in finding them can turn to the appendix of H. L. Mencken's American Language, [2] where the material has been ably surveyed. Mr. Mencken's material reveals that there is a striking parallel between the changes that foreign languages have undergone in America. Each language has parted from the strict purity of its native form, and has taken over elements from American English. Each language has been forced to adapt itself to new conditions, and thereby gives us a vivid picture of the immigrant's struggle for a position within the new nation and his gradual accommodation to its demands.

The usual attitude to this phenomenon, among both lay and learned, has been one of scorn or amusement. The educated foreigner has regarded the lingo of his American compatriots as debased and vulgar, and has struggled against the "demoralizing" influence of his American environment as best he could. He has felt much as did the Norwegian pastor who wrote home from the early settlements in Wisconsin, "Our Norwegian language is so mixed with American words that I was quite disgusted at what I heard when I first came here."[3] If the emigrant later returns to his native land, he is ridiculed because he is no longer a complete master of the old idiom. Among the

Norwegians, as among other groups, the cry against language mixture has sounded from the start, with only the faintest of results. The forces that made the immigrant "mix" were too deep-seated to be brushed aside lightly.

In spite of the interesting materials that have been gathered, no immigrant group has had anything like a full or adequate treatment of its linguistic experiences. No general perspective has been reached, and few general conclusions drawn. The collection of linguistic phenomena demands special techniques, and their classification is a slow, difficult task. Without pretending to exhaust the subject, the writer wishes to present some tentative conclusions that grow out of observations he has made on the speech of Norwegians in a variety of American settlements. He has spoken American Norwegian from childhood, and he has long observed and made notes on the speech of Norwegian immigrants. During 1936 and 1937 he collected material in the Norwegian settlements of Dane County, Wisconsin, and from occasional informants born in other settlements, but now living in Madison. [4] It is his hope that students of immigration may find here some intimations of what can be derived from continued researches into the problems touched upon.

That such researches are timely will be clear to all who consider the rapidly diminishing number of foreign speakers in our country. The living sources are drying up, and must be tapped before it is too late. Some little material is available in print; in books, newspapers, and magazines may be found many indirect contributions to the study of the Norwegian language in America. A host of more or less talented authors have depicted life among their countrymen with great vigor, and many of these have included specimens of spoken Norwegian dialects. Writers like Waldemar Ager, Simon Johnson, and O. E. Rølvaag have shown their sensitiveness to language by allowing their characters to speak the Norwegian-American idiom. In print are also a few studies by men with linguistic training, from the pioneer article by Peter Groth in 1897, through a study by Professor Nils Flaten in 1900, to the several contributions by Professor George T. Flom between 1902 and 1931.

But anyone who wants to gain fresh and firsthand material on the spoken language must part from the seclusion of the library. His material is stored in the minds of thousands of immigrants and their descendants who are still capable of forming the linguistic signals taught them by their Norwegian ancestors. But the investigator cannot speak to everyone, and he cannot ask about everything. He must prepare a list of words which will bring out the chief features of the Norwegian dialect of the speaker, so that it may be possible to determine the extent of its change in America, and its relationship to other dialects. He must include words which will give the most valuable information concerning the English influence on the dialect, the words borrowed, the forms they are given, and the meanings they acquire. He must include questions which will bring out the background and linguistic experience of the speaker and the social and historical development of the community. All this must be compressed into a questionnaire which is not so long that it exhausts the patience of the informant or the energy of the questioner. Each answer must be taken down exactly as it is spoken, in as accurate a phonetic spelling as the investigator can muster.

This has been the writer's procedure in gathering the material for future study in this field. During two summers he has sought persons in the most easily available settlements of Wisconsin who could and would answer his questions. He has had many pleasant and interesting experiences in this work. He has uncovered delightful storytellers, historical-minded preservers of tradition, patient men and women with an intense interest in his work. They have sometimes wondered just what his purpose

was, but they have always been willing to co-operate. From their thoughtful comments he has gained many an insight into the problems of the immigrant. If any of them read this article, they will perhaps understand what "the professor" was looking for, and they will recognize bits of material drawn now from one and now from another of their accounts.

Lest the value of this material be too dependent on the writer's accuracy of ear and hand, he has also supplemented the written record of his informants' speech with phonograph records. In this way it may be possible for the voices of Norwegian dialect speakers to sound for the benefit of science long after the living tradition of Norwegian speech has vanished in the United States. The writer trusts that the present analysis may be only a first step toward full utilization of the materials thus gathered for the conclusions they will yield in the study of immigration as well as of language and society in general.

II

When emigration from Norway to the United States began a little over a century ago, Norway was overwhelmingly a rural nation.[5] Almost nine-tenths of her 1,200,000 population lived in the country districts, and from this part of the nation came the early emigrants. They came at a time of general agricultural unrest, and they were lured by reports of greater opportunities across the sea.[6] The movement was popular and unorganized, and was met by a general distrust among the cultured classes, who regarded it as a species of insanity and usually sought to discourage it. This was a period of social stress and strain; for the first time the rural population of Norway was beginning to demand a voice in the cultural and political life of the country. Later, as emigration swelled to a peak in the early eighties, other classes of society were affected. The growing current brought with it artisans and professional men, and the goal of Norwegian emigration was no longer so exclusively the farm. But these developments were secondary, and we shall here keep our attention focused on the main stream. The social and institutional life of the Norwegian emigrant, and accordingly his linguistic development, bear overwhelmingly the stamp of his rural origin.

Since Norway had achieved an independent form of government in 1814, her destinies had been guided by a relatively small but able class, her well-trained bureaucracy. One of the criteria of membership in this class was the ability to speak its language. In its written form this language was practically identical with Danish, a form it had acquired during the four century-long union with Denmark (1397-1814). In speech, however, it had retained far more of the characteristics that had long distinguished Norwegian from Danish; its precise form varied from city to city, with more or less intermixture of Norwegian elements drawn from neighboring country dialects. But in every case this language had the status of an upper-class dialect, carefully guarded in its purity within the social group whose medium it was. This spoken language, which was different from, but tended to seek its norm in the written Dano-Norwegian, was practically a foreign language to the country folk. It varied in a multitude of ways from the dialects which served them in their daily lives. It was the language of schoolmasters, of ministers, and of government officials.

From city to countryside there was a gradual shading off of dialects, with the lower classes in the cities speaking a language that approximated more nearly that of the surrounding countryside. Wherever the influence of city culture had penetrated, there was a tendency to regard language as an index of social station, and to ridicule the use of forms that smacked of the country. But outside of this sphere a man's dialect testified to his place of birth rather than to his social position. The poorest

cotter in the farming community shared his dialect with the rich squire, though the squire would not for a moment have considered him a fit suitor for his daughter's hand. Marked differences of dialect existed, however, between the various communities. As everywhere else in Europe, the common man had lived on his land through immemorial generations. He had rarely had much opportunity for travel, and it is not strange that his speech should take a different course from that of other districts. Within the community group, where contact was frequent, a local dialect grew up, which became characteristic of people from that district. Neighboring dialects remained more similar in form than those which were farther removed, for the more people talked to each other, the more alike were their dialects. As the country people were largely isolated from the cultural currents that affected the city people, their language was also less saturated by Danish and other foreign elements.

The result of this development was a series of markedly different dialects in the various sections of Norway. Although speakers of any Norwegian dialect can understand speakers of all others -- with a little good will -- the differences are quite considerable. They extend to every aspect of language -- intonation, pronunciation, grammar, phraseology, and word order. A single word like "swallow" varies from *svala* and *svola* in western Norway to *svolu* and *svolo* in the Midland valleys, while it becomes almost unrecognizable in the north as *sulu* and even *solo*, with *l's*'s that sound like American *r*. The word for "pillow" is *kodde* in one part of the country, and *dyna* in another, both of which baffle users of the more general *puta*. It is clear also that the varying natural resources and occupations in a country so diverse would be reflected in vocabulary differences. The technical terms of lumbering were not current among the farmers, and the fisherman needed a vocabulary different from that of the hunter. The ever-changing scenery of the country, from smiling farmlands to desolate mountain plateaus, also made for a marked variety of expression.

We must not imagine that the relatively secluded culture of the Norwegian country emigrant meant a poverty of words in his dialects. The number of words at his command was probably not less than that of the average American citizen in our modern civilization.[7] The difference consisted in the nature and distribution of the vocabulary, in the cultural items which the speaker was required to manipulate. Vocabulary is everywhere responsive to human needs; it accompanies man from birth to death, and the more important and interesting an activity is, the more words he is likely to find for it. In vocabulary man crystallizes the essential elements of his life -- his joys and sorrows, his fears and aspirations, his pleasures and drudgeries.

The application of this to the emigrant becomes clear if we consider the nature of his culture. With all its variation from seashore to plateau, it had this in common: it was based on a self-contained and hand-labor economy. Each freeholder lived with his family on a small estate that frequently had been in the possession of his ancestors for centuries. Each member of the household had his duties, at which long practice had made him adept. Thus the women were past masters in spinning and weaving, in caring for the cattle and preparation of food; the men expressed their talents in tilling the soil, in fishing and hunting. For each of these processes a great variety of words were useful. The average American may have a large vocabulary for describing the parts of his automobile, but he is unusual if he can name many parts of a loom. Nor was a Norwegian of that day at a loss in describing his own feelings in expressive and picturesque terms that would win a ready response among his listeners. To some extent he even had a literary vocabulary, cultivated over centuries in the ballads and folk tales which constituted his heritage from the past.

In school and church, however, the country folk met a vocabulary that was not derived from the experiences of their daily lives. In the persons of schoolmaster and pastor they made their chief contact with the official written language. As the schools were chiefly conducted for the inculcation of Christian doctrine, church and school were intimately allied. The chief textbooks were Bible stories, the Catechism, the "Explanation" of the Catechism, and the hymnbook. All of these were in Danish spelling and composed in a style strongly influenced by German. Teaching was conducted chiefly by rote, with advancement measured by the extent to which the pupil could memorize the parts of doctrine. Although the school system was poor by modern standards, it had succeeded, by the middle of the century, in teaching most Norwegians to read; but many had not yet learned to write. And few had discovered the possibilities of reading matter that lay beyond religious literature; their libraries consisted chiefly of books of religious instruction and supplementary books of sermons and devotion. Even this was a long step forward from the eighteenth century; the powerful lay pietistic movement of Hans Nilsen Hauge had spread the desire to read, so that his followers had been nicknamed "readers."

The step from dialect to written language was a long one, and one that was not successfully negotiated by most country people. Even if they did learn to read the Dano-Norwegian, and came to regard it as the sacred language of religion and learning, it did not easily become their language. Their pronunciation of it was modeled on the spelling, and therefore sounded stiff and unwieldy to those whose natural language it was. They had been taught by their betters that their dialects were vulgar and inferior, yet in their daily lives these served them best. The same situation prevailed in many other European countries during these years, for everywhere the nineteenth century was one of spreading popular education. Country populations were being brought under the influence of official written languages which previously had been spoken chiefly in the cities or at court. A Norwegian child from Telemark or Sogn was under no worse handicap than a Danish child in Jutland, a Scottish child learning English, or even a child in Hamburg trying to master High German. Everywhere it was held to be essential that the children be pressed into the jacket of the official language.

Other ideals have since prevailed in Norway, and the dialects have had their day. But little of this has been reflected among the emigrants, who have not moved far from the situation of 1850. Those who can still speak Norwegian speak a more or less modified country dialect; those who can write it write the official Dano-Norwegian of the nineteenth century. There is a spoken language and an institutional language, and this linguistic dualism is one of the outstanding facts about the Norwegians in America.

III

When the earliest Norwegian settlers came to Illinois and Wisconsin between 1836 and 1840, there were no railroads or market outlets within easy reach. The first settlements in northern Illinois and in southern Wisconsin were founded at a time when the prairie was still wild, and chiefly inhabited by the timber wolf, the rattlesnake, and the Indian. These settlements were foci of the entire immigration from Norway in the forties and fifties, and for this reason their dialect was not homogeneous, but included a whole group of districts from which emigration began almost simultaneously: in western Norway the districts of Sogn, Voss, Hardanger, and Rogaland, and in the Midlands the mountain valleys of Telemark and Numedal. These districts are all grouped around the

southern half of the great mountain range which divides Norway into east and west, and they reflect the relatively limited economic opportunities offered by beautiful but unprofitable mountain slopes. They also represented some of the most antique and characteristically Norwegian dialects in the country. Though they were far from identical, they had a great deal in common, especially when compared with the lowland East Norwegian, or with the more northerly dialects.

Within these early communities the immigrant was under no serious linguistic or social handicap. He could associate almost exclusively with his own countrymen, exchange advice and repartee with friends and relatives, and he could arrange his work along familiar lines. Before long a social structure was growing up, with groupings of friends and enemies, with drinking groups and praying groups, with a superstructure of school and church showing its first beginnings. In this way the emigrant reduced the shock of his new existence, and was enabled to continue his speech habits from Norway, and make them useful in the new land. Eventually he established newspapers, church synods, and other institutions which knit him more closely to his fellow countrymen in other settlements.

If this growth had continued undisturbed, there would have arisen a New Norway just as there had once arisen a New England. But from the very beginning the influence of American culture insinuated itself upon the Norwegian. Even the most solidly Norwegian community had its neighbors, and was to some degree affected by the attitudes and opinions of those neighbors. Much of the land acquired by the Norwegians in Wisconsin was bought from American speculators, or had been occupied by English or Yankee farmers. There were few merchants among the Norwegians and trade was generally carried on by American storekeepers. Within a few years railroads were extended, markets became available, and a complete change in the farm economy was effected. Each farmer's dependence on the outside world was increased, and accordingly his need for communicating with members of that world. The American public school, which at first was poorly organized, grew more efficient as attendance was made compulsory and the length of the school year and the number of grades extended. In the early years American teachers had to make rules demanding that the children speak English in school and on the school grounds. Many people now of middle age can recall when these rules were openly flouted by the children, who would rather speak Norwegian. American newspapers and magazines, mail-order catalogues, and a flood of other reading matter gradually entered homes which previously had been devoted to papers and magazines in the Norwegian language. Norwegians and their children went to work for Americans, and mixed marriages furthered the process.

These influences, which all tended in the direction of eventually supplanting the Norwegian with the English language, were at work from the day of immigration. They were universal and pervasive, easy enough to point out in general, often very difficult to specify for each individual case. In the aggregate they amounted to a psychic compulsion on the individual, more or less great according to the amount of his contact with English speech. This psychic compulsion operated on the speech of the individual and of the community even while Norwegian was still being spoken. From the day of immigration a subtle shift began taking place, with or without consciousness on the part of the individual. Words which he had no occasion to use were gradually forgotten, only to make way for some of the many new words and expressions that assailed him from the new language. The immigrant's vocabulary was thus being constantly atrophied at one end and renewed at the other.

Such a shift was an inevitable accompaniment of his changing personality. In learning the new language he was doing more than just acquiring new phrases. He was absorbing a new social and linguistic outlook, and this outlook also influenced his native tongue. The bilingual second generation, especially, could not afford to maintain a Norwegian personality distinct from their American one. It was too great a strain to keep in mind two complete sets of designations for everything. And as time went on, the American system naturally dominated the thinking of the immigrant. In all his linguistic floundering we perceive his struggle to achieve again a unified cultural personality. His Norwegian approaches his English, because both are required to function within the same environment and the same minds. Norwegian becomes a Norwegian-American language, thoroughly characteristic of an intermediate period in the group life of the immigrant. It serves its purpose and passes on. And when that point is reached, the immigrant is no longer an immigrant, and his history becomes that of the general population.

It is possible to trace this parallel development of language and social circumstance in practically every phase of life, and the writer plans to do so in more detailed studies. For instance, the terms of family relationship were more complicated in Norway than in America and reflected the greater significance of the family clan. There were distinct terms, such as *farfar* and *morfar, farbror* and *morbror*, to distinguish maternal and paternal kinsmen. Among the immigrants these usually gave way to the neutral terms *bestefar* (grandfather) and *onkel* (uncle), which were standard Norwegian, but not usual in most country districts.[8] In the early days children were named with great reverence for family tradition; grandparents got their proper dues by seeing their names repeated in the second generation. But when the second generation grew up, they gave their children American names with only the initial letters recalling the grandparents' names (as Hazel for Halvor, Tilla for Tore, or Alvin for Anund). In the following generation even this reminiscence of Norwegian custom vanished. In early years the cows had their proper names, rich and melodious descriptions such as Lauvlin, Snøgås, Dagros, Flekkrei, Storigo, Gullsi; but time passed, and names were forgotten as the herds grew larger and the urge to distinguish each cow as a personality was lost.

A common custom in the early years was the popular practice known in New England as "bundling," in Norway as *nattefrieri*; in many Norwegian communities these nocturnal visits were the only respectable means of "dating." Kristofer Janson mentioned this practice in his *Amerikanske forholde*[9] as one which gave the Norwegians a bad reputation among the Americans. One of the contributory reasons for its disappearance was no doubt the moral indignation of American neighbors, another form of psychic pressure on the immigrant.[10] Weddings were at first celebrated in Norwegian fashion, as great festive occasions, with drinking and dancing to help seal the marriage. As one informant declared, "It wasn't then as it is now, when they run off and get married without anyone's knowing it, maybe not even they themselves" (Dei springe sta å gifte se' so ingen veit det, kanskje ikkje eigong dei sjøle). Even funerals were not the mere solemn formalities they are today; invitations were issued, there was food and drink after the burial, and a general loosening of spirit before the evening was over.

These are elements of American life which rarely get any consideration in American history. The presence of the "foreigner" is recognized, and to some extent his influence on the body politic. But rarely do we get a study in which his problems are seen from the inside, and in which his efforts to create a group life of his own are regarded with sympathy. Language is one of his most serious problems. In his approach to language, in his employment of this great instrument for the

establishment of human contact, we can see the profile of his social progress to the time when his national group gradually diffuses into American society. Many heartaches and bewilderments have assailed the immigrant, and no one can wonder that he has often resisted the melting pot. The social life of his native group has given him a home and a standing in the new nation, and has been a solid protection to his mental health.[10a]

IV

Each immigrant brought with him to America more or less of the roots from which his language had grown. Some emigrated alone, while others brought with them a family. Still others shared in a group emigration from the native district, with common goals and purposes. The lone immigrant sometimes settled among speakers of English or other foreigners, but more frequently he found a place among fellow Norwegians, preferably of his own dialect. All of these possibilities offer points of interest for the student. But as language is a group phenomenon, it is the fate of the largest group that interests us the most: the immigrants, with or without families, who settled in a farming community largely peopled by members of their own nationality.

The communities from which they came were relatively homogeneous, with a uniform standard of speech. Their dialect was their language, which they took for granted in all relationships to their fellows. If they heard someone speaking a dialect different from their own, they sensed him at once as an outsider. They would be amused or annoyed by his language, and they would find it harder to concentrate on what he was saying. In this way the dialect became more than an instrument of practical utility. It constituted an inner bond between its users. It marked them as members of a group and helped to establish their position within it. The native dialect, because of its utter familiarity and its associations from the past, was the perfect and inconspicuous means of comprehension between the members of a group.

In more prosaic terms the linguist might say (to quote Michael West): "The small group is the natural protection of the individual soul, and the small language or dialect is the natural and important distinguishing feature of the small group. Anything which, while common to the group, tends to differentiate it from other groups tends to intensify the sense of solidarity and of distinctness. Of all instruments for the intensification of group individuality, language is undoubtedly the most powerful." [12]

With emigration this whole pleasant state of things was broken; the equilibrium which had permitted language to go unnoticed was upset, and the emigrant was faced with linguistic problems on every hand. He was thrown into contact with a babel of tongues from the other emigrants of his own homeland, assailed on every hand by strange locutions and sounds; worse yet, he was forced to cope with persons of whose language he could make neither head nor tail, some of them emigrants from other countries, and some natives of the land to which he came.

He had been drawn out of a normal into an abnormal situation, and it was natural that he should try his best to re-establish a normal situation, in which he might be a complete master of the linguistic medium. Learning a new language is at best a slow and difficult process. It was simpler and more economical of time and energy to salvage as much as possible of the old language, by creating a community where it might still function in some degree. It has been noticed that most immigrants show a strong tendency to settle in groups from the same districts of the homeland, whenever

possible. This has its obvious cause in the desire of friends and relatives to live together, but it is also a linguistic phenomenon, because of the greater ease of communication and sympathy of understanding that can exist between speakers of the same dialect. As one of my informants declared of the early immigrants, "They always preferred to associate with their own kind" (Dei vilde helst ha å gjera med sine eigne). In the presence of a large group speaking one dialect, the lone speaker of another dialect is often made to feel unpleasantly conspicuous.

Yet the circumstances of settlement clearly made such sectional isolation impracticable for the group as a whole. Though Norwegians through their *bygdelag* organizations have cultivated local patriotism more ardently than any other immigrant group, even they could not everywhere maintain the old dialect groupings. Sogning settled next to Telemarking and Vossing became a neighbor to the Trønder. There followed a clashing of dialect forms on a scale never known in Norway. In these settlements ancient dialect boundaries were shattered overnight, and neighbors made to communicate in dialects separated by the developments of a thousand years.

In the course of such contact, the peculiarities of the respective dialects were keenly observed, and often associated with the personalities of the speakers. Any dislike or admiration of the speakers might be transferred to conspicuous forms in their speech. This was true especially of forms which were limited to small areas in Norway, or which were markedly different from the forms of other dialects, like the *mjokk* (milk) of the upper Telemarking or the ending -*ao* of Sogning in words like *jentao* (the girl). The difference of the latter from the *jento* of the Vossing is small, but it was sufficient to confirm the judgment of one Vossing informant that Sogning was a more "vulgar" dialect than her own. Such a term is of course socially determined and has its roots not in the sounds and forms themselves, but in the situations which have called them forth.

As intermarriages between Norwegians of different breed began to take place, this dialectal opposition might develop even within the family. Here constant usage would soon accord each dialect its place, and only in rare cases would one partner give up his dialect for that of the other. The smaller these differences, the more likely they were to continue their independent existence. Several informants have given me detailed information about the respective dialects of their parents. O. B. S., born in Koshkonong in 1850, used his mother's dialect (Morgedal), but could enumerate a great many forms used by his father from Vinje. A. K. J., born in Perry in 1865, followed her mother in speaking the dialect of Treongen, but remembered that her father (from Bø) said *øia* instead of *øugo* (eyes) and *vinnøi* instead of*glas* (window). D. A. D., born in Perry in 1857, spoke the Gjevedal dialect of his mother, but remembered forms from his father's Sannikedal dialect, which "was more like the city language" (Dei snakka meir ette byens mål) . *His* children, in turn, did not speak the dialect of Gjevedal, but an East Norwegian dialect from Nannestad, the birthplace of their mother. One couple born in Springdale spoke neighboring dialects from Valdres, each without hesitation as to his own form where differences might occur, but frequently uncertain about the form of the other. Another Wisconsin-born couple spoke Sogning and Vossing respectively, without obvious mixture. These examples show that neighboring dialects might live together harmoniously without seriously affecting each other in the more unconscious parts of the language.

There is evidence, however, that when the dialects persisted in close contact, there was present also a strong tendency toward mutual modification of the most obvious peculiarities. This is what happened within both the family and the mixed dialectal community, when a Telemarking adopted

oss (us) instead of *okkon, far* (father) instead of *fai, golv* (floor) instead of *tili*, or a Sogning modified his *ekkja* (widow) to the more common *enka*, and *vetter* (winter) to *vinter*. If this did not take place within the first generation, it was likely to do so in the second. With a sufficiently long and undisturbed development, we would have here the basis for a profound modification of the dialects into a common lingua franca, based on a variety of Norwegian dialects. That such a common lingo is not more in evidence among the Norwegians is due to the relatively short period of development, but even more to the overwhelming importance of the individual family among the immigrants. The usual unit, both before and after emigration, was the family. The settling on individual farms continued this tendency, so that the linguistic contacts within the family were far more significant than the contacts with outsiders. Hence it was possible for neighboring families to maintain their own dialect, with only minor modifications due to other dialects. Many informants have commented on linguistic peculiarities heard from members of neighboring families, and associated in their minds with those families.

Among the younger generation, however, increasing contact in school, at play, and at work frequently led to greater modification of the original dialect. Occasional informants from the Koshkonong settlement near Rockdale, Wisconsin, and from Coon Valley in western Wisconsin have spoken forms of Norwegian which corresponded to no single dialect, and which they themselves recognized as more or less mixed. The informant from Coon Valley, born in the present century, stated that her dialect was that of her contemporaries, and different from that of her parents. T. S., near Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, assured me that "just about everybody around here got to talking Valdres" (Dæ vart te dæ at mest alle runt her så snakka dei valders). O. B. S., from Liberty Prairie, said that Telemarking became the prevailing speech among the children, even in families that were not from that district. A prevailing dialect would tend to become universal, and in mixed communities there would tend to be a leveling of conspicuous forms. The forms adopted would not be book forms, but such popular dialect forms as would have the greatest prestige on account of their wide currency. There was a general aversion to persons who tried to put on airs and talk the "book language." One informant assured me that only when the preacher was listening would they say *kona* for "wife" instead of the less refined *kjering*. Another declared that the use of book forms would make people say, "What a big fellow he thinks he is" (Kor store han e vorten pao da).

All these tendencies toward leveling have of course been present in Norway also, since the improvement of communications and the change in farming conditions in late years. As a result many elements in the old dialects have been lost, and these have not always been the same as those lost in the speech of the emigrants. Both have altered their make-up to meet new conditions. But one alternative was open to the emigrant and not to his fellows in Norway: the recourse to English. Whenever the terminology of the Norwegian dialects was mutually unsatisfactory, the emigrant could draw upon the vocabulary of English.

In American English he met a language practically without dialectal differences within the area of Norwegian settlement. More than that, it had the prestige of a governmental, commercial, and plurality language. Its terminology was already shaped to meet conditions in the new land, and by using it he would not lay himself open to misunderstanding or ridicule. But he did not need to adopt the entire language at once. Thanks to his settling among Norwegian-speaking people he had the opportunity of adopting English piecemeal. He could take what he needed, as he needed it, and thereby continue his efficient functioning within the social group. If he needed to designate a

blanket, for instance, he might at first refer to it as a *kvitidl*, if he happened to come from Voss; but his neighboring Telemarkings would not understand the word, for many of them called it *tjeld*. After a few experiences of this kind, he might well turn to "blanket" and provide for it a place within his own language.

In the second generation this process went even further, and in many cases led to all-English speech. A Sogning from Norway Grove was quoted to me as having said: "When I talk with a stranger, I don't like to talk raw Sogning" (Naor e ska snakka me ein mann so lika eg kje te snakka rått sogning), and so he turned to English. A woman born in Iowa informed me that she could speak excellent Gudbrandsdøl. But she was married to a speaker of Sogning, a dialect very different from hers, and she declared that she and her husband spoke little Norwegian to each other. When I asked her the reason, she replied (in English), "Well, when my husband talks Sogning, and I answer in Gudbrandsdøl, *it don't hitch so good!*" Fear of ridicule arising either from dialect difference, or from an assumed "vulgarity" of the Norwegian dialect, has been a significant factor in turning many a conversation to English. The same tendency is apparent in the relationship of the three Scandinavian peoples in America; though Norwegian and Swede, or Norwegian and Dane can understand each other without much difficulty, they often find it simpler to turn to English.

V

While the immigrant was thus rubbing off his sharp corners through contact with fellow Norwegians, he was also being slowly drawn into the current of American life. The psychic pressure of his environment frequently made an American out of him without his own complete awareness of the process. Even while he was learning English, he was unconsciously adapting his Norwegian to be more useful in the new land. There are three separate aspects of this process: the Norwegian words which he retained with little or no change, the Norwegian words which he shifted in meaning, and the English words he introduced. It has been stated by one early student of the subject that any English word could get into the Norwegian language that could "stand the treatment it was apt to get." This is far from true, for there are many English words that were never adopted as long as the language was still Norwegian; these include such familiar terms as "light," "wall," "chair," "elbow," "head," and many others. Yet many English words were borrowed for concepts which (it seems) could be adequately expressed in Norwegian. But we must not make the mistake of condemning speakers for adopting an English term, just because it seems to us to "mean the same" as a Norwegian word. The average person's mind is not arranged like a dictionary. The words he knows are not lined up in alphabetical rows, ready to be fitted together like the parts of a jigsaw puzzle. The speaker uses words as they come to mind, and he uses them only if they seem appropriate to the total situation. Even if the speaker knows that in Norwegian literature the term for grapes is *druer*, he is not likely to use the word if it has been of very rare and infrequent occurrence in his previous Norwegian speech, if it is a term associated with situations and people of a different class from his own, and if (which amounts to the same thing) he knows it may fail to evoke a response from his listeners.

Furthermore, two words may be defined in identical terms and yet not be interchangeable. As suggested above, past associations of a word may be so strong as to make it inappropriate in a new situation. It may have a different extent of meaning, or it may not fit in compound expressions which the speaker has to use. An example is the loss of the Norwegian words for certain bodies of water,

bekk "brook," *å* "stream," and *elv* "river." A translator rendering a literary passage from Norwegian into English might equate these terms as I have done here. But to the immigrants the situation was quite different; in America they found neither brooks nor streams. The Middle West offered them only two choices, "creek" and "river." Both of these were (relatively) sluggish streams flowing between dirt banks, and the distinction was between smaller and larger. The first settlers were frequently compelled to refer to these in the full form of, say, Fox River or Koshkonong Creek. A literary purist would have proceeded to do violence to these compounds as well as to the associations of the Norwegian words by translating the names into "Foxelven" and "Koshkonongbekken." But a sense of the incongruity of using *bekk* and *elv*, both associated with the rushing waters and stony brooks of Norway, helped to prevent the pioneers from following this course. Instead they adopted the terms "creek" and "river," which were already associated with the proper names in question, which expressed exactly and not approximately the distinction that was useful in this country, and which had the right overtones in the new situation.

It also happened that an English word entered the language without displacing its presumed Norwegian equivalent. In this case it will generally be seen that the English word displaced a part of the meaning of the Norwegian word, which then continued in its other meaning. There are so many more things and activities that can be referred to than there can possibly be words. Hence every word has to cover concepts which with more exact analysis can be broken down into smaller units. In Norway *lære* meant to learn and to teach; in America it continued its meaning of learning, but formal teaching was referred to by the English word "teach." The Norwegian *hage* might refer to any kind of enclosed garden or orchard; among the immigrants it was frequently restricted to an orchard, while the flower and vegetable garden was called a "garden." The Norwegian *kjeller*, like English "cellar," referred to a dark, damp place and was obviously inappropriate when referring to a church basement; so English "basement" was adopted, but not "cellar." The Norwegian *veg* (cognate to English "way") was a very inclusive word, as it could refer to any kind of a road or path, and also be used in abstract phrases like the English "away," "in the way of," "on his way." In American Norwegian it kept its abstract meanings, its use in phrases, and frequently its reference to cowpaths and minor roads; but important roads and highways were invariably referred to as "roads." These were associated with traveling to market, perhaps to American neighbors; in many cases, too, they were different in quality and appearance from the corresponding roads in Norway.

That quality and appearance, as well as the less tangible associations of situation, must have played a role in these shifts becomes clear when we observe the fate of the word for "beer." Norwegian *øl* and American "beer" seem as identical as two words can be, because both refer to the familiar beverage. For some time after their coming, the immigrants continued to use the term *øl*, at least as long as they knew no other drink than the home-brew which they made themselves. But after a time they ceased their brewing, and bought whatever beer they wanted from the American dealers. Along with the American beverage came the American word, and "beer" (*bir*) has since remained the standard term in most country districts. Similarly Vossings have told me that they used the word *kvitidl* for homemade blankets, "blanket" for factory made or "boughten."

It will be seen that through such changes as these, the vocabulary was being realigned in the direction of English. Where English possessed a given number of words within a certain field, Norwegian tended to develop the same number, so that the languages might correspond point by point.

For this purpose it was convenient that the two languages already had a large number of words of similar form and meaning. These words might seem especially liable to be confused; but we meet here the striking fact that only the meaning and not the form was confused. Such terms as *korn, hamar, kjøken* (kitchen), *hus* (house), *mann, tobakk, potet* were never Americanized in form, and appeared in the pronunciation and with the endings customary in each dialect. But their meanings gradually approached those of the corresponding English words which they resembled. *Korn* acquired all the meanings of English "corn," even in such compounds as "corn meal." The regular form for this was *kornmjøl*, which in Norway would have meant "grain flour." *Mjøl* could be adapted to the meaning of "meal" in this word, because it was no longer used to mean "flour." The finely ground wheat flour of the new land had brought the word "flour" into American Norwegian. Similarly, the word "stove" invariably entered for the object known in Norway as *omn*, while the latter word did duty for its English cognate "oven." The Norwegian *land* is not an exact equivalent of the English "land"; yet in its American usage it acquired the same extent as the latter. It lost some of its meanings through the common use of "country," and took over the sense of "farmland" for which *jord* "earth" had often been used in Norway.

Abstract ideas that are not closely tied to specific social conditions always tend to remain Norwegian. A vocabulary from western Wisconsin prepared by a student native to the community [14] shows that words for shape (*e.g.*, tall, broad, straight), quantity (big, heavy, numbers), and time (yesterday, week, Easter) are predominantly Norwegian. Such words combine a variety of phenomena into one comprehensive and useful class which tends to persist and frequently agrees with a similar generalization in English. Other groups of the same type are place and direction (behind, above, east), character (lazy, kind-hearted, stubborn), quality (pretty, strange, sweet), noise (howl, crow, rumble), color (blue, yellow, red), relationships between man and his environment (use, need, make), relationships between objects (almost, equally, follow).

There was another group of words which remained generally Norwegian, even though they were not of this abstract and timeless character. These were the terms for those activities and institutions which the immigrant brought with him, and in which there was not or could not be any essential alteration. His words for the parts of his body and its functions, and for the mind, with its sensations, emotions, and thoughts, remained largely Norwegian. His vocabulary for home and family life, for church and worship, was also wrought from Norwegian materials. His entire family life from courtship to offspring was a private concern, into which American influence was slow to penetrate. His church was an institution modeled on the mother church in Norway, and in spite of its stilted Dano-Norwegian language it had succeeded in its task of teaching him the Lutheran way to salvation. The one religious word of English origin with any wide distribution was the term "meeting" for a church service. But on investigation the users of this word turn out to be the "Haugianere," who belong to the more puritanical and pietistic wing of the Lutheran church. Their activities were modeled in part on the reformed and dissenting sects of England and America. Their use of this word marks their differentiation from the Lutheran high church with its *messe* and its clerical dignity, and reveals their relationship to American practices. Home and church were the social institutions which the immigrant brought with him, just as surely as the parts of his body and the stirrings of his mind, and his language reflects the extent to which he maintained them intact against the inroads of American influence.

VI

But in other spheres of activity American influence was dominant. It is a matter of course that words for all types of machinery that had come into general use since the beginning of immigration were overwhelmingly English, from the reaper and the binder to railroad, automobile, and radio.

Within the terms for city life all but the word for city itself were English. Terms for new sports and games learned in this country (baseball, football) were taken over bodily. Using the list from western Wisconsin alluded to above, we find that two-thirds of all the words for communication and travel, including terms associated with horse-drawn vehicles, and for social affairs and activities (carnival, charivari, convention, fair, merry-go-round, movies, surprise party) were English. The Norwegian American went to a "drug store" to buy his medicines, to a "grocery store" for his food, and to a "saloon" for his drinks.

The predominance of English in these fields is not difficult to understand. The immigrant was unfamiliar with most, if not all, of these activities before coming to this country; along with the activity he learned the words to describe it. He might be quite unconscious of the fact that in his native land, especially in the cities, a parallel development was taking place and words were being found to keep up with it. The relatively few who knew the words for these things were submerged in the mass and compelled to use the words that were generally understood. In Norway a country store was called *bu* or *krambu*, and in the cities the general word for store was *butikk*, a word of French origin. The country word hardly seemed to fit the American store, and the other would have seemed affected. Neither word allowed the kind of compounding that became necessary to describe a variety of store types: hardware, grocery, department, drug. The system of government and politics was of course different, and demanded such words as "sheriff" and "senator" and "governor," "caucus" and "party," and "running for office." In 1880 the Norwegian writer Kristofer Janson was amused to hear a Chicago Norwegian remark, "Jamen vart han nomineta og electa, endaa han inkje var eduketa." [15] Had the speaker chosen to reason out the parallel between the Norwegian and American systems, he could easily have found Norwegian terms. But the natural linguistic tendency is to draw upon the entire vocabulary of a new activity, because the one word fits with the other, and not to analyze each term separately. It seems that in describing any activity that was modeled in part or whole on the activities of Americans, and for which there was no exact parallel in his native experience, the immigrant preferred to make use of the American terms. More than that, if it was an activity in which he frequently came in contact with Americans, such as trade, traveling, or politics, his terminology was likely to draw its significant guideposts from English, regardless of whether his native language might be able to supply occasional needs.

In those fields where the contact was less marked, the vocabulary became strongly mixed. Old and new lived side by side, and admirably reflected the social situation. It seems as if some Norwegian words were thoroughly anchored to the objects they represented, and did not need to be exchanged. Their equivalence with the corresponding English terms was already sufficiently exact to cause no confusion. *Golv* and *vegg* were close enough to "floor" and "wall" to keep their places; but *tak*, with its double sense of "ceiling" and "roof," was occasionally abandoned for the American words. Also, ceilings were of more recent acquisition in the peasant houses of Norway than roofs. In the trinity of knife, fork, and spoon, the fork holds the most uncertain position, due in part to its more recent acquisition and in part to its sound, which assimilated it to the other type of fork - the pitchfork. The vocabulary in these fields can be analyzed into new and old on every hand. New methods of heating and lighting, which required English words (battery, flashlight, wire), did not

drive out the old, which remained Norwegian (spark, light, smoke). New tools and implements (monkey wrench, cradle, hatchet) existed beside the old (plane, scythe, auger, saw), new types of food and drink (cake, pie, crackers) beside the familiar (pork, cream, meat, butter). New diagnoses of illness brought such terms as "bronchitis," "gargle," and "chicken pox," but did not make superfluous the Norwegian words for "bleed," "heart failure," "whooping cough," and "tuberculosis." At dances the accordion and the square dance came in to supplement the fiddle and the waltz.

The social-linguistic shift of the immigrant may best be observed by taking a single activity and watching its transformation through the years. Let us see what happened to the grain harvest, which in Norway had been known as *skur* (or *skuronn, vinna*). [16] The chief grains raised, in order of importance, had been oats (*havre*), barley (*bygg*), and rye (*rug*), with a small amount of wheat (*kveite*). [17] The general term which included all of these was *korn*, though many communities limited this to barley, the chief food grain. Barley and oats were frequently sown together; the resulting mixture was known as *blandkorn* (or *hummelkorn, halvbygg*). A sickle (*sigd*, or *skjera*) was used to cut (*skjera*) the grain, in contrast to the hay (*høi*), which was cut (*slå*) with a scythe (*ljå*).

After the grain had been cut, it was tied up into sheaves (*band, bundt, bundel*) by means of a wisp of straw (*bendel*). Tall wooden poles (*staur, rå*, or *sneis*) were then set up (*staura, stappa*) in the field. The sheaves were slipped down (*sneisa, støyra, festa*, etc.) on the poles so that they might be sure to dry before the frost came. If the first sheaf was set up vertically, instead of horizontally like the rest, it got a name of its own (*fotband, kjering, staurkjering, stett*). In some places the topmost sheaf had a special name (*hette, skruv*). A stick (*stokk, sulu*) was sometimes used to prop the sheaves off the ground; a stool (*festekrakk, råkrakk, mannauke*) was used to stand on while the worker reached up to place the sheaves on the pole; and there might be a forked stick to lift the sheaves on or off (*bokskykj, staurkrok, kornskoto*).

When the cutting was over, a harvest festival (*skurgraut, skurøl*) would be held, with certain customary foods and practices. Special superstitions were often attached to the last sheaf; some thought that its size was an omen for the harvest of the following year. When the grain was dry, it was driven into a special barn (*låven*). In this condition the grain was referred to as *lo*, and the next step in its preparation was to thresh it (*treskja*). A flail (*tust, treskjestav, flygel, slegel, sloga*) was the instrument used for this purpose; the grain was laid on a specially prepared floor (*logulv*) and beaten until the straw (*halm*) was separated from the grain. The grain was then stored in bins (*kornbingar*) until it was needed for household use.

It must not be imagined that these thirty odd terms (counting only one for each object or operation) exhausted the vocabulary of the harvest; only the more significant are included above. But how many of these would function usefully in the American environment? At the very start the immigrant met a new kind of grain, the maize or Indian corn; as corn was the name it bore, he used his own equivalent *korn* to designate it. To take its place he adapted the word *grøn*, which resembled the English "grain" in sound and was used in many Norwegian dialects in a very similar sense. After the first season the immigrant was ready to plant wheat, which was the chief support of agriculture in the first years of immigration. [18] Oats, rye, and barley were also raised, but in smaller quantities. In spite of the change in proportion, there was no change in the grains themselves, and no reason for abandoning their Norwegian names.

"Wisconsin was settled precisely at the time when new inventions in harvesting machinery began to make their appearance after ages of dependence on implements little more complex than the sickle." [19] The first instrument used in Wisconsin was the "cradle," a scythe with wooden bars to guide the falling grain. This term was at once assimilated by the Norwegians (*kridl, krill*), while the ordinary scythe (*ljå*) retained its name together with its function of cutting hay. In this earliest phase, the harvest was still called *skur*, the men went out to *skjera*, and they tied their bundles with the same wisps of straw. But by 1850 the McCormick reaper was in general use, as was the name, Norwegianized to *riper, ryper, ripper*, or *rippert*. The process itself was referred to as *ripe* (also *rype, rippe, riple*). It was still necessary to tie up the bundles, but before long the successive invention of the Marsh harvester, which raked the grain together, and the self-binder, which also tied it into bundles, reduced the process to a single operation. These changes brought with them the noun *harvistar*, the verb *harviste*, and the inevitable *harvist* for the entire process. This was no longer *skur*, as they had known it in Norway, and the cutting of the grain was therefore not *skjera*, but *katta*, from English "cut." The self-binder was thoroughly assimilated as *sjølvbindar*, in which both parts were accurately translated.

As the summer season was longer than in Norway, there was small danger of frost before the grain was dry. Hence the elaborate process used in Norway to insure quick drying became superfluous. The bundles were set up in small piles known as shocks (*sjakkar*), and this work was known as *sjakka*. If it was necessary to keep these standing for some time before threshing, so that there was danger of rain, the bundles might be set up more permanently in stacks (*stakkar*), a process for which there were Norwegian words (*stekkja, stakka*), which, however, had been used primarily for hay rather than grain in Norway. A pole set up to hold this stack was sometimes known as a *sneise*, the name used for the pole with the sheaves of grain in Norway. But the necessity for a special barn to keep the unthreshed grain in, as well as a special name for unthreshed grain, vanished with the new methods of threshing. The flail was little used in Wisconsin; almost from the beginning the grain was threshed by machinery in the field, without the necessity of further transfer. The term for threshing naturally remained, as its form was practically identical with that of the English, and the machinery acquired the obvious name *treskjemaskina*. The men who worked at the threshing were *treskjarar*, and might constitute a *treskjarkru* (in which the second half, which takes feminine endings, is the English word "crew"). After threshing, the grain was deposited in a special building known as a "granary"; the Norwegian-American form for this became a derivative of *grøn: grønneri*.

If we make up the balance sheet of the linguistic shift in the grain harvest, this is what we see: of the thirty-two words connected with harvesting in Norway, seventeen were also useful in America. Two of these (*grøn, korn*) were shifted in function, due to similarity in sound to corresponding English words. Two Norwegian words (*stakk, stekkja*) were adopted from another activity without shift in meaning, and were also very similar in sound to the corresponding English words. Two of the Norwegian words retained (*høi, treskja*) were so much like the English words that any further anglicizing was unthinkable. Thirteen English words were introduced to take care of the new processes and implements. The total number of words in the new alignment was then very close to that in the old: thirty compared to thirty-two. But a better than fifty per cent shift had taken place in the constituents of this vocabulary, which seems a fair index to the change in the agricultural practices of the immigrants. Each of the terms now used in their American Norwegian corresponded exactly to a term used in their American English; they had *shortened by one half* the distance between them and the new language. Also they had practically achieved *one term for each concept*

instead of the wide dialectal variation of Norwegian exemplified above. The Norwegian words retained and the English words adopted were understood by all, no matter what Norwegian dialect they might speak.

VII

The earliest words that entered from English were taken over and reshaped into completely Norwegian words. The immigrant was unable to produce the sounds of English as natives produced them, and so he inevitably made the words fit into his own system of sounds. In the case of Norwegian this was relatively simple, as there were many sounds that resembled the English and could easily be substituted for them. American *a* in "farm," "bar," "car", "barn" "honest" was regularly rendered by the Norwegian *a*. Similarly there was no difficulty about English *i* in "brick," "attic," "pink," and "hitch"; they all became Norwegian short *i*. But for such a sound as English *u* in "cut," "bluff," "brush," "grub," and "trunk," there was no obvious equivalent. So the five words here given were (usually) rendered by five different Norwegian vowels, all of which are close to, but not identical with the English (*katte, blåff, brøsj, grubbe, tronk*).

The pronunciation which the Norwegians gave these words shows that they had picked most of them up from speech and not from books. When they took over the word "accordion" and pronounced it *kordin* (like cordeen'), or when they called a whiffletree *hyppeltre*, they were rendering as best they could the common American pronunciation of these words in their neighborhood. But once in a while it looks as if they were misled by American spelling into a pronunciation which was not that of American speech. When "bran" was adopted, it should have become *bræn* (or *brenn*), but instead it became *bran* (or *brann, brand*), with the *a* of "father." When "lot" was taken in, it should have become *latt*, but instead it became *lått*, which is the Norwegian pronunciation of *o* (not *a*) in such words. It is reasonable to assume that the immigrant first met the word "bran" on printed labels, and the word "lot" in his printed deed. In this way we can trace one of the channels through which he met the new culture, and see him eagerly grasping at whatever fragments he could assimilate.

The adaptation of these words to Norwegian did not cease with their transformation in sound. They were admitted to that full membership which consists of receiving the same endings and standing in the same positions as words of the same class in the original. If they were verbs, they acquired the endings of past, present, and participle. If they were nouns, they were made to end in the way appropriate for nouns in each dialect. In most Norwegian speech this involved among other things a decision on whether the noun should be masculine, feminine, or neuter. This decision was generally quite unconscious and immediate, and for the more common words it agreed surprisingly well in different dialects and different settlements. The overwhelming majority of English words in American Norwegian became masculine, while the rest were fitted into the feminine (*e.g.* "field" *ei fil* "a field," *fila, fli*, or *filo* "the field") or the neuter (*e.g.* fence: *eit fens* "a fence," *fense* "the fence," *fens* "fences"). There is no need of going into the reasons for this particular choice here; it is a matter of linguistic rather than social significance.

From the time of their assimilation these words functioned as part of the immigrant's Norwegian vocabulary. He no longer thought of them as English; in most cases he learned them from other Norwegians and not from speakers of English. Some words even suggest by their form that they may have passed through more than one dialect before reaching some speakers; *e.g.* the word "pail" does not rhyme with "mail" in American Sogning, but gets a sound as if it were pronounced "pile" in

English. This seems to be due to the fact that the diphthong pronounced ei in most Norwegian dialects is pronounced *ai* (long *i*) in Sogning. So the Sognings must have taken it from another Norwegian dialect and adapted it to their own system. This complete assimilation is the reason that children could grow up in Norwegian communities and never suspect that words like "fence," "street," "pail," and "road" were not native Norwegian words.

In this development, however, there came a critical point at which English words began to be introduced without being more than partly assimilated. American *w* and *r* were among the sounds whose non-existence in Norwegian was most quickly noticed. In the third-generation speech of Wisconsin the use of these English sounds is regular in such recent words as "radio" and "weather report." These and other criteria make it possible (for some speakers) to distinguish the word for a "poker" game (with Norwegian sounds) from a stove "poker" (with English sounds), or the whip one beats a horse with (*hyppe*) from the whipping one gives an egg (*wippe*) At about the same stage English endings, like the plural -*s*, appear in some words, and whole phrases begin to bob up in unassimilated form. It is practically certain that these later words are recognized by the speakers as English, even though they may have acquired some Norwegian characteristics, and that they are deliberately introduced because the speaker is unable to recall a Norwegian equivalent. This is a true mixture of language, which can usually be distinguished from the earlier complete assimilation.

The reconstruction of this development is often as exciting as the geologist's study of layers in the earth's surface. It is possible to find informants whose language dates back to the first generation of Norwegian settlement and who are admirable fossil specimens of the language of those years. They are usually the children or grandchildren of the earliest immigrants, and speak excellent English beside an excellent Norwegian dialect. They mix into their Norwegian only those English words which were in use in their childhood, for they can maintain their Norwegian as a holiday luxury, a speech for special occasions, in all its (relatively) unsullied purity. They look down on later immigrants, whom they regularly accuse of undue "mixing." Informants from Koshkonong have described the first generation of settlers (1840-1855) and their children as speakers of "pure" Norwegian, in contrast to the wave of newcomers who overran the community in the eighties. These last came in as hired men and sharecroppers, and were therefore regarded as inferior by the children of the first emigrants. That the speech of the first generation was only relatively pure is a matter of course; as early as 1853 a poetic immigrant wrote:

Men dæ døm snakka va vont å skjønne,
de va så my' Engelst ibland. [20]

The immigrant who was not fortunate enough to be a "first settler" was faced by a bewildering situation. Although settling among compatriots, he was compelled to adapt himself to a partially new vocabulary. Many amusing sayings are recalled to illustrate this. An early settler was talking to a more recent arrival in what he thought was good Norwegian; but the "newcomer" answered in all seriousness: "You'll have to talk Norwegian to me, for I've just come from Norway" (Du lyt snakke norsk te meg for eg e nett kome frå Norge). Professor O. E. Rølvaag, himself such a late immigrant, pictured these difficulties vividly in his first book, *Amerika-breve*.[21] Rølvaag's "newcomer" was awakened on his first morning in his uncle's home with a call to "breakfast." He had no notion what this might be, but assumed that it referred to syrup, which was served when he reached the table. Again and again he was baffled by the terms he heard his uncle use, and he wrote home to Norway:

"This unfortunate practice (*uvæsen*) makes it more difficult for me than you would believe. When uncle asks me to do something, I stand there like a fool, a regular numskull, and understand nothing."

In his anxiety to conform to his new environment, it is no wonder that the immigrant should overshoot the mark and adopt more English terms than were current in the Norwegian of the older settlers. His adoption of the new terms was a mark of quick learning, and his excessive use a monument to mistaken zeal. Most significant is the fact that because of his ignorance of English, he was compelled to make his Norwegian do double service. When the second generation bilingual felt an expression coming for which he knew no Norwegian, such as "ball bearings" or "wild West show," he could avoid mixture by turning the whole sentence into English. But the "newcomer" had to fill them into his Norwegian, or remain forever silent.

How much English did the immigrants actually mix into their Norwegian before they turned to all English? This must naturally have varied widely. Persons of subnormal mentality or pidgin tendencies in language might produce specimens of the "gemixte pickles" type which generally pass as immigrant language in the humorous tradition. A second generation Norwegian told of a "newcomer" girl who said, "E va so glad når eg luk ju koming." By the average immigrant such persons are looked on with amusement or contempt. Those who commit the opposite fault of excessive purism are equally suspect. Different degrees of mixture are apparent in different circles, but mixture is nowhere absent. An early immigrant from Voss who thundered against others' use of *travla* (from "travel") to mean "walk" and who insisted on *svidl* when everyone else used the English "joist" was himself not above using such English words as "stable" and "lake" in his Norwegian.

If we take a passage of connected speech, or listen to a conversation in this language, we shall see that only a rather small proportion of the words are actually of English origin. For all the most common words are Norwegian, the "ands" and the "buts" of the language, all those words which show the relation between other words and do not themselves carry the meaning of the sentence. These make up at least four out of every five words in any ordinary passage, and leave only one word which is really exposed to English influence. [22] This fifth word is the one that may or may not be English, and if we look at the Wisconsin vocabulary spoken of above, we shall see what happens to it. This vocabulary contains about 4,200 words, and of these about 1,200 are English, or 28 per cent. In other words, one-fourth of the words that carry actual meaning may be English in the third-generation speech of that community. If we add another fourth for idioms and changes in meaning, we see that the significant parts of the language are half English. The shell is still Norwegian, but the inward pattern, the spirit of the thing, is American. This is Norwegian American, the language of the Norwegian immigrant.

http://nabo.nb.no/trip?_b=EMITEKST&urn="URN:NBN:no-nb_emidata_1226"