Paulina Horbowicz: *How to be Norwegian in talk? Polish-Norwegian interethnic conversation analysis* (= Studia Nordica 6). Oslo: Novus forlag 2010, 386 pp.

In the monograph under review, the author's aim is to discover what it means to be 'Norwegian in talk'. This book represents an ambitious attempt to understand and describe the underlying presuppositions and manifestations of Norwegian communication patterns. What does it mean to speak Norwegian in a Norwegian way? A foreign learner of Norwegian may very well use the correct grammar and pronunciation but nevertheless not always sound Norwegian when speaking the language. The author, Paulina Horbowicz, is currently employed as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. She states that this book, which is a revised version of her Ph.D. dissertation from 2009 at the Adam Mickiewicz University, is written with the hope of contributing to the methodology of teaching Norwegian as a foreign or second language. One important aim of her project is to shed light on which phenomena second language teaching needs to focus on in order for the language learner to develop and reach better communicative competence in Norwegian.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that even though Norwegian is the specific language investigated, the results of this research point to a much more general model for studying ethnic communication patterns (ECPs), which Norwegian is then used to exemplify. With this aim, the book suggests a framework for analysing ethnic communication patterns, and constitutes a necessary and most welcome addition to Grice's famous (1975) conversational maxims. The book consists of 9 chapters with 4 appendices, 7 tables and 4 figures, for a total of 386 pages.

Chapter 1: "Introduction" (pp. 13-27) describes the main objectives of the project and gives us an introduction to the kind of analysis we will meet in the next chapters – discourse analysis in the form of conversation analysis, and here, between native and non-native speakers of Norwegian. All the non-native speakers have Polish as their first language; they have acquired Norwegian in various ways and have reached different levels of competence in Norwegian. The main corpus consists of audio- and video-taped conversations involving one native and one non-native speaker. This design is suitable because ethnic communication patterns are obviously more visible in interethnic interactions. One purpose of this study is to try to discover

those aspects of communication which deserve special attention in language learning. The analyses are mainly qualitative, not quantitative, which is to be expected. However, the author also sometimes employs quantitative measures in order to count and compare the different uses of various elements of the data. Thus, the study can be said to be constructed according to the rule that qualitative analysis is the antecedent of quantitative study. The author cites (p. 25) this very apt statement from Mie Femø Nielsen and Søren Beck Nielsen (2005: 213): a "phenomenon cannot be counted before it is identified, and it cannot be identified before being investigated".

One very important point is touched upon but not developed in this first chapter: the fact that the ethnic communication pattern represents an idealisation of 'being Norwegian in talk', and that, especially in Norway, you have to allow for many different local and social varieties. It is a well-known fact in sociolinguistics that Norway stands out as being special when it comes to local dialects being used in all walks of life and everywhere in society, from factories and farms to schools, universities, church, the Parliament and government. It would therefore have been most helpful to have a more thorough discussion of the special Norwegian tradition of dialect use. This point is made even more strongly by the author herself when, in the next chapter, she lists knowledge of dialect variation as a cultural frame which is important for oral interaction. (There will be more on this topic later, cf. below.)

Chapter 2: "Cultural frames" (pp. 29-70) discusses the notion of 'frame', 1) as a tool in interethnic conversation analysis, and 2) to identify aspects of Norwegian culture which influence the process of oral communication. The author defines 'frame' as a "complex communicative pattern of elements that is grounded in values predominant in the given society and mediated through practices of everyday interaction" (p. 68). She concludes that the following frames define 'being Norwegian in oral communication' (p. 69):

1. Equality. This frame is connected to the small power distance we can observe in Norway. It manifests itself in very limited use of honorifics and in relatively symmetrical conversations where all parties can show initiative regardless of their social status.

2. Harmony. Norwegians do not favour competitive conversations, and therefore focus predominantly on harmony and conflict avoidance. This is achieved through giving more attention to similarities than to differences, controlling emotional manifestations, moderated usage of involvement to-

kens and the great value attached to silence. The stress on harmonious interactions may possibly be linked to what the author claims is the high degree of femininity of Norwegian culture.

3. Distance. Keeping distance from one's interlocutor is another means of sustaining harmony, but is also the result of 'bureaucratisation' of society.

4. Seriousness. Norwegians engage in conversations in order to achieve certain goals, rather than talking for its own sake. Hence, small talk is considered unnecessary when one is pursuing concrete aims. On the other hand, in casual conversations small talk is often used as means of keeping distance (cf. 3) and sustaining harmony (cf. 2).

5. Simplicity. This feature is closely linked with equality (one should not 'stick out' from the collective, including by means of using elaborated language) and harmony (being a good listener).

6. Locality. Having knowledge about the dialectal variation in Norway and the stereotypes linked to different dialects is part of being Norwegian. This feature is also connected to the fact that in Norway, geographical ancestry is important for social relations. When talking to a stranger, a Norwegian always tries to establish where that person comes from. Therefore, the constant use of dialect is also vital for interactions.

I find the listed cultural frames very interesting. Of course, each one of them can easily be questioned. Are they really important in Norwegian oral interaction or is this just a list of foreigners' stereotypes about Norwegian(s)? The way they should be interpreted here, I guess, is that they are important parts of the framework within which the analysis of the communication and interactions later on will be conducted. If we can find these different frames operating in the performance of the native speakers in these interactions, that will then be an indication that these frames are not mere stereotypes but rather important features to consider and adapt to if, as a foreign learner of Norwegian, one wants to speak Norwegian in a Norwegian way.

Chapter 3: "Communicative practices" (pp. 71-94) presents studies of 'speaking practices' in Norwegian, and suggests a comprehensive definition of the Norwegian ethnic communication pattern, consisting of frames and their manifestations.

It is a well-known fact that when learning a foreign language one of the most difficult tasks is figuring out how and when to use different styles. A word's collocation, for example, is often something one learns at a rather

advanced stage. The author employs the concept of 'practise', which is borrowed from sociological and cultural studies. Practices can be seen as patterns of actual behaviour that serve a specific communicative function, and they are often linked to particular cultural or social groups. The author defines them as interactional phenomena that serve a specific conversational function and originate from frames for interaction.

Over the course of an interaction, various functions can be realised by practices, and we can classify these functions as strategic (conversational goals), rhetorical (interpersonal goals), lexico-semantic and topical. Only the first two are considered important in the course of conversation, but all of them are nevertheless influenced by cultural values and are thus vital to the suggested ethnic communication patterns.

This chapter ends with a list of frames and practices of Norwegian ethnic communication patterns. The list gives the following answers to the question (p. 93): "How to be Norwegian in talk?"

1. Be equal, which means a) do not use honorifics, and address your conversation partner with *du*; b) do not adopt excessive politeness strategies, in particular not positive politeness; c) quickly establish the common ground in the dialogue, using for example the other person's geographical background as a starting point (and here we understand why knowledge of dialect variation is considered very important); d) maintain the common ground by frequent use of involvement tokens (*ikke sant*) and backchannel signals.

2. Be harmonious, which means a) avoid topics that might provoke conflict (personal topics, expressing opinions); b) use frequent hedges while expressing your opinions; c) do not impose on your conversational partner: do not interrupt him/her (not even for collaborative completion), and leave questions open by using *or*-inquiry.

3. Be predictable, which means a) prepare your conversational partner for what is going to come by use of projection devices, among which are 'curled' *ja/nei* answers to information inquiries, and *yes/no* anwers to *wh*-questions; b) prepare your conversational partner for an upcoming question about personal matters (connected to maintaining harmony in the interaction).

4. Be distanced and uninvolved, which means a) do not interrupt; b) stick to the topic, and make sure it is properly closed before you open a new one.

5. Be Norwegian, which means a) do not explain culture-specific lexemes (names of dishes, geographical places, famous people, institutions) to your conversational partner; b) use your dialect.

Of course, as can be expected, many objections could be raised to all of these suggested maxims, and I am sure that Norwegians would differ considerably in their judgments of them. However, in my view, they seem to cover intuitively many important features native speakers of Norwegian would recognise as vital to observe in a conversation. I also think that the author argues convincingly for them.

The author has now established the framework within which her analysis is conducted.

Chapter 4: ”Data collection” (pp. 95-124) describes the design of the study, the participants in the interactions and the collected data. Six and a half hours of conversation were taped and subsequently transcribed. The corpus contains a wide range of interethnic conversations and includes both participants whose language command is quite restricted and limited, and participants who are perceived almost as native speakers.

The Polish participants, 13 in all, are presented along with biographical data. Surprisingly, only one of these informants is male. Of the native Norwegian speakers, on the other hand, a majority are males (7 out of 13). This will undoubtedly influence the results. However, everybody who has carried out sociolinguistic fieldwork knows how extremely difficult it can be to find informants who fulfil all the desired requirements; therefore, we have to accept the group of informants used in this project. However, I would have wished to know a little more about the Norwegian participants. We are only given their age, gender and, for some of them, their occupation and relationship with their conversational partner. I refer to what I stated above concerning the importance of dialect use, which is also emphasised a great deal by the author herself, and would have liked to know which dialects were used by the Norwegian participants.

Chapter 5: ”Asymmetry in interethnic talk” (pp. 125-163) discusses the special conversational context that arises when one interlocutor is a native speaker and the other is not. It seems plausible, the author suggests, to assume that when a given interaction is perceived as interethnic, the native speaker might adjust his/her language use to what is seen as appropriate for the interlocutor. A result of this, if correct, could be that the conversation might to some extent lack balance. This study is designed in such a way that it reinforces the perception of the interactions as interethnic, and there-

fore asymmetrical as regards the speakers' command of Norwegian. The presupposition underlying the analyses in this book is that certain practices are available only to native speakers, whereas others are also adopted by non-native speakers. The author identifies 3 practices as belonging to the domain of the native speakers: 1) complimenting the interlocutor's command of the language (4 instances), 2) defining the world (15 instances), and 3) other-repair (5 instances) (p. 127). Of these three, the most obvious practice belonging exclusively to the native speaker is, of course, the first: complimenting the other speaker's command of Norwegian. Polish speakers of Norwegian, by the way, seem to show a tendency to object to or openly reject compliments given to them by native speakers (cf. p. 132). The second point concerns talking about things Norwegian, explaining culture-specific knowledge, and it is quite obvious that such a practice belongs to the native speakers more than the non-native speakers.

The amount of other-repair, i.e. corrections made by the native speaker of the non-native speaker's Norwegian, is interesting here: in the conversations analysed there are very few examples of it, only 5 in total. The author compares this to a study by Kurhila (2003), who found 50 mostly overt corrections in 16 hours of material, whereas in her data there were only 5 in 6.5 hours. Her claim is that in Norwegian conversations there is a strong dispreference to other-corrections or repairs. I think her claim here is well founded, because this is certainly what we would expect to find. But I regard this to be an important finding, as it supports the commonly held view that Norwegians are extremely tolerant of all kinds of variation in Norwegian, even when it comes to non-native use of the language. It also turns out that occurrences of self-repair are rather infrequent in these texts (p. 156). I think these two phenomena are linked together. When a native speaker does not correct a non-native speaker's language, the non-native speaker can relax more and does not feel the constant need for self-repair. Searching for words and commenting on one's own language use are, as should be expected, more frequently found in non-native use.

Chapter 6: "Accompanying the interlocutor" (pp. 165-231) reports on backsignals and understanding checks, i.e. how the interlocutors confirm that they are understanding each other's talk. This is a rather extensive, and interesting, chapter. The author discusses and provides an analysis of the following means of maintaining mutuality in Norwegian: a) paraphrases (of one's own turn as well as the interlocutor's turn) (pp. 168-211); b) pro-repeats (pp. 211-216); and c) echo-turns (pp. 216-228). The first type, para-

phrasing, has the function of checking understanding. It seems that this form of backsignal is characteristic of Norwegian discourse in general, but is even more frequent in interethnic conversations, where one would expect that the possibility of misunderstanding is greater. The function of pro-repeats, i.e. minimal paraphrases, is to signal participation in the conversation without taking the floor to such an extent as paraphrasing requires. This is therefore similar to the third means, echo-turns; both represent weak tokens of participation in the conversation, but are still important enough. According to the author (p. 230), both types are often found in stretches of talk characterised by a slow pace, frequent pauses and little topical development. They seem to constitute a harmonious method of allowing for the change of topic in a Norwegian conversation. Echo-turns and pro-repeats signal the speaker's weakening involvement in the talk and thus allow for a topic change, but still only when the other party is also willing to change the topic. Pro-repeats pose some difficulties for the non-native users in this study, perhaps because, according to the author, this construction does not exist in Polish.

Chapter 6 is a highly interesting chapter. I find the author's analyses and discussions to be creative, accurate and convincing.

Chapter 7: "Projecting the forthcoming turn" (pp. 233-299) deals with 3 practices which are assumed to be connected to the speakers' expectations regarding upcoming turns. The author's claim in the conclusion of this chapter, which she substantiates convincingly, is that *or*-inquiry ("det er folkedans dere driver med mest eller?" (p. 239)) is especially important, and it proves to be vital for managing problematic issues (i.e. questions about personal matters or the interlocutor's opinion). In contrast to *or*-inquiries, "*you*-oriented" inquiries can be viewed as too much of an imposition, as can the affirmative answers that, however, seem to be the preferred response to *yes/no* questions in Norwegian conversations, according to the author (p. 295f.). Therefore, the use of *or*-inquiries opens up the possibility of a negative answer, which then will not be delivered directly, but will be signalled through an objective statement of facts. I find the results of this chapter compelling and extremely interesting.

Chapter 8: "Marking disagreement" (pp. 301-348) deals with the means available for expressing disagreement in a conversation. Based on discussions earlier in this dissertation, one would not expect to find very strong tokens of rejection from the native speakers, and this is what emerges from the author's analysis. Upcoming disagreement is signalled either by means

of the special token *nja* or by weak appreciation tokens. The author concludes (p. 348) that the Polish informants are more in favour of direct judgements, often exhibit a more confrontational style, and also express personal beliefs, while Norwegian conversational style is much more negotiation-oriented and could therefore be seen as more balanced. It seems that in Norwegian conversations there is a dispreference for giving subjective judgments in favour of impartial and balanced opinions.

In reading this, one wonders if the conclusions reached by the author in this chapter are perhaps a bit overstated. It is certainly not the case that all Norwegians have especially advanced diplomatic skills, a point also made by the author in note 121 on p. 348. It is nevertheless also true that the results of this chapter do correspond with what one would expect, given the results presented in the previous chapters.

Chapter 9: ”Conclusions and implementation” (pp. 349-366) sums up the results of the entire project, and when the author compares her results for the Norwegian ECP with what Gibbs (1961) has labelled a ”supportive communication climate”, there is an almost perfect match. A ”supportive” communication climate is characterised by description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality and provisionalism (a term the author contests in note 123 on p. 357, and rightly so). This is contrasted with a defensive model, which is characterised by evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority and certainty. According to Gibbs, the supportive model secures the successful achievement of conversational goals without threatening the other speaker’s face, and as such, it is the ideal that one should strive towards.

I find that the following paragraph on pp. 358-359 sums up the outcome of Horowicz’s monograph in a very comprehensive way:

> The practices realising the Norwegian ECP studied in this dissertation represent either strategic skills of handling the discourse, or the ability to express one’s attitude to the content of one’s own and the interlocutor’s utterances (*i.e.* modality) in a socially accepted way. The strategic skills involve signalling upcoming turns, maintaining comprehensibility and eliciting further talk from the interlocutor. Expressions of modality include conveying disagreement and reacting to the presuppositions inherent in the interlocutor’s talk. As the analysis has shown, talk delivered by non-native speakers differs to a varied extent from the practices employed by the native speakers. Practices [such] as paraphrases, pro-repeats and echo-turns, studied in chapter 6, are almost exclusively used by the native speakers. Thus, the non-native speakers are bereft of an idiomatic Norwegian method of ne-

> gotiating shared understanding, expressing empathy and initiating a harmonious topic transition. This may, but need not necessarily mean that they are perceived as less supportive and less harmony-oriented than native speakers of Norwegian, a perception that again may, but need not, be true.

There is no doubt that the knowledge and new insights gained through Paulina Hobowicz's research will prove to be extremely important for second language learning in the future, and the book ends with a discussion of applying these findings in educational settings. This research has shed new light on which discourse phenomena teaching Norwegian as a second/foreign language needs to focus on if the goal is to develop communicative competence in Norwegian.

I have found this monograph to be most satisfactory in plan, design, data collection and analyses. It presents important new information, and I have personally learnt a great deal from it about the use of my own language. It will without doubt stimulate more research into discourse analysis in the context of second language learning.

References

Gibbs, Jack 1961: "Defensive communication". *Journal of Communication* 11, 141–48.

Grice, Paul 1975: "Logic and conversation". Cole, Peter & Jerry Morgan, (red.): *Syntax and semantics vol. 3: Speech acts*, New York: Academic Press, 41–58.

Kurhila, Salla 2003: *Co-constructing understanding in second language conversation*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Nielsen, Mie Femø & Søren Beck Nielsen 2005: *Samtaleanalyse*, Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Ernst Håkon Jahr
University of Agder,
Department of Nordic and Media Studies,
P.O. Box 422,
NO-4604 Kristiansand
Email: ernsthakon.jahr@uia.no

[Received 21.2. 2011.]