Medieval Narratives as Meta-constructions Used in Creating Socio-cultural Identity

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MEDIEVAL NARRATIVES AS META-CONSTRUCTIONS USED IN CREATING SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY

by

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study of the distribution and function of Historical Present (HP) in Old French, Old English, and Old Norse narratives combines the methods of cognitive linguistics and corpus-based discourse analysis with insights from work in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and medieval studies (e.g., Jaffe, 2009; Clift, 2006; Englebretson, 2007; Sherzer, 1987; Silverstein and Urban, 1996; Davis-Secord, 2016). I examine the use of HP in conjunction with other features such as genre, character, pragmatic function, and use of direct speech. The analysis shows that HP, in combination with those other features, is a strategy to establish stance, a strategy that both constructs and reinforces a cultural persona.

Although previous research on HP in narratives focused on the use of HP to foreground events and contrast marked vs unmarked events in narratives (Thoma, 2011; Fludernik, 1992; Fleischman, 1990; Wolfson, 1982; Johnstone, 1987; Schifflin, 1981), my analysis shows that HP has an additional range of expressive purposes that are
associated with situating the narrator and establishing a stance towards the audience and the events and characters portrayed.

The stance associated with HP varies according to its combination with other features. This combination can be thought of as a meta-construction, and I argue that the definition of ‘construction’ (e.g., Goldberg 1995, 2009) may be expanded and applied to include narrative structure as a whole. The narrative as a meta-construction then evokes an entire speech community frame or culture, suggesting that the speech community as a whole constructs a meta-persona through its familiar, institutionalized narratives, in much the same way that Eckert (2008) and 3rd wave variationists show that language use centers on speakers constructing personas.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 What is HP? .................................................................................................................. 3
   1.2 Background to the Argument of this Study ................................................................. 6

2. Theoretical Approach ...................................................................................................... 9
   2.1 Cognitive and Functional Grammar ............................................................................ 10
      2.1.1 Constructions .......................................................................................................... 13
      2.1.2 Narratives as constructions ...................................................................................... 14
   2.2 Sociolinguistics and Anthropological Linguistics ........................................................ 15
      2.2.1 Sociolinguistic research on identity and stance ...................................................... 15
      2.2.2 Anthropological linguistic research on culture, identity, and stance .................... 18
      2.2.3 Medieval Studies .................................................................................................... 21
      2.2.3 Summary .................................................................................................................. 23

3. Data and Methods .......................................................................................................... 25
   3.1 Sources and Coding ..................................................................................................... 25
      3.1.1 Old Norse ................................................................................................................ 26
      3.1.2 Old French ............................................................................................................... 29
      3.1.3 Old English ............................................................................................................ 31
   3.2 Coding ........................................................................................................................ 31
      3.2.1 Straightforward Coding ............................................................................................ 32
         3.2.1.1 ON ....................................................................................................................... 32
         3.2.1.2 OF ....................................................................................................................... 33
         3.2.1.3 OE ....................................................................................................................... 34
      3.2.2 Coding Procedure Challenges .............................................................................. 34
         3.2.2.1 ON ....................................................................................................................... 34
         3.2.2.2 OF ....................................................................................................................... 37
         3.2.2.3 OE ....................................................................................................................... 38
      3.2.3 Other Coding Categories: Auxiliaries ................................................................. 39
         3.2.3.2 Direct and Indirect Speech: Coding the Gylfaginning Saga ............................... 39
   3.3 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 40
3.4 Local HP Semantics Tables ................................................................. 40

4. Analysis ................................................................................................. 52
  4.1 Examples from ON ............................................................................... 52
  4.2 Examples from OF ............................................................................... 55
  4.3 Examples for OE ................................................................................ 57
  4.4 Summary: HP Patterns, stance, and cultural message ....................... 59

5. Discussion ................................................................................................ 61
  5.1 HP and Cultural Stance ....................................................................... 61
  5.2 Narratives as Meta-Constructions ....................................................... 65

6. Conclusions ............................................................................................. 69

References .................................................................................................. 71
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Bibliographic Sources ............................................................................................................. 25
Table 2: Old Norse ..................................................................................................................................... 28
Table 3: Old French .................................................................................................................................... 30
Table 4: Old English ................................................................................................................................... 31
Table 5: Comparison of the Three Languages ......................................................................................... 69
Table 6: Clustering of Narrative Features ............................................................................................... 60
Medieval Narratives as Meta-constructions
Used in Creating Socio-cultural Identity

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1. Introduction
The examination here of the distribution and function of Historical Present (HP) in Old French, Old English, and Old Norse narratives suggests that extending the notion of construction to include a range or suite of strategies (including historical present, genre, characters, and setting) is useful in understanding how narrative structure is used to convey, construct, reinforce, and re-define socio-cultural identity.

Although previous research on HP in narratives focused on the use of HP to foreground events and contrast marked vs unmarked events in narratives (Thoma, 2011; Fludernik, 1992; Fleischman, 1990; Wolfson, 1982; Johnstone, 1987; Schiffrin, 1981), my analysis shows that HP has an additional range of expressive purposes that are associated with situating the narrator and establishing a stance towards the audience and the events and characters portrayed. I find that the stance associated with HP varies when HP is clustered with other features in a meta-construction used in creating socio-cultural identity. Furthermore, I find that the stance associated with HP varies according to its combination with other features. This combination can be thought of as a meta-construction, used in creating socio-cultural identity.
The approach followed here combines the methods of cognitive/functional linguistics and corpus-based discourse analysis with insights from work in sociolinguistics (e.g., Jaffe, 2009; Clift, 2006; Englebretson, 2007, Bucholtz and Hall 2005, Eckert 2008), linguistic anthropology (e.g., Sherzer, 1987; Silverstein and Urban, 1996), and medieval studies (e.g., Davis-Secord, 2016; Byock 1990). I apply these methods and insights to my analysis of the use of HP in conjunction with other features such as genre, narrative context, and use of direct speech. The results show that HP is employed as a strategy to establish stance and its range of semantic and pragmatic meanings emerge from its use in combination with other features and strategies.

In line with Croft (2001), who speaks of how “The elements of a syntactic structure in fact evoke an entire semantic frame which contains components and relations not encoded by the syntactic structure…”, I argue that the narrative itself as a meta-construction evokes an entire speech community frame or culture. My examination of the use of HP in Old French (OF), Old English (OE), and Old Norse (ON) suggests that the definition of ‘construction’ given by Goldberg (1995), “C is a construction iff C is a form-function pair such that some aspect of the form or some aspect of the function is not strictly predictable from C’s component parts,” may be expanded and applied to include narrative structure as a whole. I propose that the narrative itself, in which HP is embedded as a smaller component construction, is stored as a meta-construction.

I argue that the narrative meta-construction serves a similar function to that proposed by functional and usage-based linguistic theorists: As Thompson and Hopper (2001: 52) explain, we use language to talk about “how things are” in order to “display
our identities, express our feelings and attitudes, check our views of the world with our
community-mates.” Work in sociolinguistics by scholars such as Eckert (2008) and other
3rd wave variationists also suggests that language use centers on speakers constructing
personas. Here I consider the possibility that the speech community as a whole also
constructs a meta-persona through its familiar, institutionalized narratives.

1.2 What is HP?
The use of HP in discourse has been much discussed in the literature as a stylistic
and organizational device. Fleischman (1990: 313), for example, lists four main uses of
tense/aspect morphology in narrative: it can function 1) referentially (signaling time and
aspect), 2) textually (grounding relations), 3) expressively (marking evaluations and point
of view), and 4) metalinguistically (signaling a different nature of discourse). All four of
these uses come into play in discussion of HP.

Schiffrin defines the HP as “the use of present tense to refer to past events.” My
definition of HP will be slightly more inclusive: any use of present tense forms in a
narrative set in the past for the speaker constitutes a token of HP.

Schiffrin (1981) says that traditional analyses of HP, (e.g. Curme 1931, Diver
1963, Jespersen 1931, Joos 1964, Leech 1971, Palmer 1965) suggest that it is a stylistic
device used in narrative to report past events as vivid and exciting. Wolfson (1979:169)
too, mentions that much of the literature on HP says it has the function of “making a
narrative dramatic or vivid.” Shiffrin (1981: 216) says that these analyses, “suggest that
the HP is used to increase the dramatic impact of the story by making the audience feel as
if they had been present at the time of the actual experience, seeing events as they actually happened. Others suggest that the speaker becomes so involved in the telling of the story that he narrates events as if they were being relived, and as if they were occurring simultaneously with their retelling.” According to Schiffrin (1981: 216), Wolfson (1979) “argues instead that the HP works jointly with the past as a discourse feature, with the two tenses alternating in narrative to structure the experience from the point of view of the speaker and to dramatize it.” The conversational HP, says Wolfson, is “not uniquely” a verb tense, but rather part of an alternation set “which must be examined at the level of the whole rather than at that of the sentence alone…[so] that we can understand its function: organization of the narrative.” (1979: 180-81)

Fleischman (1991) argues a more traditional view, seeing HP as a way of bringing the listener into the storyworld. In cultures with a strong oral storytelling tradition, the narrators often make a virtue of their necessary presence by using “signs of the speaker” such as tense shifts or deictic devices such as “like this” or by showing awareness of the listener and addressing the listener directly (119). Narration is naturally retrospective,
but a skilled story-teller uses narrative devices that reduce the distance created by this default retrospective state (Fleischman, 1990: 131).

The HP may also be used to signal a difference or change in the narrator’s empathy with the character (Fleischman, 1990, p. 255-7). Combat scenes, which are an important/stock element in Medieval narratives (including epic poems), are often narrated as eyewitness accounts or sports events, and thus easily employ HP. Other aspectual distinctions can be tied to other meanings (Fleischman 1990: 248-9): the imperfective aspect can often be used to signal the “‘out of focus’ perspective of a speaker who is either too close to or too far from an experience to have it clearly in focus.” Thus, the narration of dream sequences frequently employ imperfective since they occur deep in the subconscious of the character and are thus often treated as less accessible to the narrator. In contrast, the preterite is the default tense for “in focus” events. Shifting between tense/aspects can also encourage a change of focus for the reader. The unmarked tense for description is the imperfect, but by using the present tense instead, the reader is invited to linger on the details of the scene, as the present tense semantically expresses states (Fleischman 1990: 200). In this way, the changing point of view of the narrator is indicated by use of, and shifts between, different tense/aspect configurations.

However, Fleischman disagrees with Wolfson’s assertion that tense switching between past and present is primarily used to mark event boundaries, and finds instead that switches may be used within event descriptions. Further, in discussing the role of HP in foregrounding, Fleischman points out that foregrounding and backgrounding are not in a binary relation. Text elements may be foregrounded by different means, depending on
the context; a piece of important information may be placed in imperfective or put in a
sub-clause, for example. The set of devices used to foreground can also vary by culture
and epoch, so that a modern reader might not recognize a grammatical element as being a
discourse marker, but may reinterpret it in a more literal sense, as Fleischman claims
happens with the medieval use of ‘si’ in French (Fleischman, 1990, p. 190). The context
must be examined to determine what is being foregrounded and what grammatical device
is getting used.

In what follows, I contribute to the discussion of the function of HP in narrative
by talking about its relationship to culture and identity. The data presented here
encourages a view of HP as one of a suite of features that constructs a meta-persona for
the culture.

1.2 Background to the Argument of this Study

My argument that narratives can be viewed as meta-constructions arose through
my research into the meaning and function of Historical Present (HP) in Old Norse (ON).
In this research, the meaning of HP proved elusive. The literature on HP in narrative, as
described above, discussed patterns in tense switching that were associated with
foregrounding and highlighting of important events and activities. This matched with the
uses in my sample with only partial success, as the proposed trends were not as clear in
my own dataset of epic poetry and myth in ON. I found that previous theories accounted
for some instances in my data, but that there were many tokens that didn’t fit the patterns
proposed in the literature. Indeed, I had a fairly large set of tokens that seemed irregular, without a clear function.

My observation of the absence of consistent discourse-structuring patterns was also noted by Einar Haugen, who, in his description of tense and aspect in Scandinavian languages, says that “In Olc [Old Icelandic, or Old Norse (ON)] sagas the tense shifts too readily for the change to count as a deliberate device” (Haugen, 1982). However, based on my own ON saga reading and translating, this didn’t seem true. Rather, it seemed that the HP was necessary and meaningful—its meaning could not be described in terms of foregrounding and highlighting alone, though.

The meaning and function of HP was thus incomplete until I considered HP as a strategy for expressing stance, in addition to its use in highlighting important events. This view of HP led to a broader notion of stance: an understanding of stance as both individual and an element of culture/persona on a meta-level as well.

The function of HP in expressing cultural stance became clear when I happened to be translating a scene from *Beowulf* in Old English (OE) on the same week when I was translating an analogous scene from Hrolf’s saga and compared/contrasted the scenes, their treatment of characters, their linguistic characteristics, and narrative form. I noticed that the HP was not used at all in *Beowulf* and, in fact, its use would have created an effect that would not be congruent with the culture portrayed in *Beowulf*. In OE, unlike ON, there is an emphasis on the warrior’s allegiance, and formal expression of subservience, to the king. In this context, the use of HP would be jarring – HP draws
attention to the present and to the speaker, rather than focusing on past events and thus would seem less elevated and majestic than the events being described would warrant.

The narrative stance created in each case, ON and OE, was fitting, with preterite expressing distance and obedience to rank in *Beowulf*, and the HP functioning as a factor in creating the more informal, oral, one on one, intimate narrative stance in use in the ON Hrolf’s saga scene. In each case, the narrative stance was congruent with the culture producing the narrative. It became clear that a broader view was required, one that emphasized the cultural perspectives of discourse analysis, the research on stance, and insights gained from linguistic anthropology.
2. Theoretical Approach

In this section, I present the theoretical frameworks that inform the methods and analysis to follow. I begin with an overview of functional and cognitive approaches to grammar, and then address the insights of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics that bear on the examination of grammatical strategies for expressing identity and stance. This is followed by a summary of work in medieval studies that I consider in the discussion of the ON, OE, and OF narratives.

I take the view that all grammatical patterns constitute expressive tools and that speakers don’t use grammatical constructions randomly, but rather with expressive purpose. A cognitive functionalist view is not just my preferred way of looking at language, but also the only approach that allows us to describe what is going on as speakers use language for their expressive and socio-cultural purposes.

A functionalist approach is essential to describe what I find true of speakers and their use of language: if and only if grammar is emergent (Hopper 1987), and language is formed from the emergence of patterns that become entrenched or conventionalized due to frequency of use, (e.g., Bybee 2006), can we understand how grammatical patterns can be enlisted to serve expressive social purposes. If grammar is emergent and shaped by the interactive needs of speakers, then it is really on a spectrum with, and no different in quality from, other aspects of language (such as lexicon, pronunciation, and prosody) which speakers use according to their purposes in communication, including expression, social positioning, extravagance (as described by Haspelmath 1999), and the reinforcing and reconstructing of sociocultural position.
Language consists of meaning all the way down to the grammar, and this approach is well supported by the literature from Cognitive and Functional Linguistics. The functional/cognitive theoretical perspective invites an interdisciplinary approach: when meaning is central, then the insights of research on social structure and culture become central as well.

2.1 Cognitive and Functional Grammar

The theoretical framework here integrates functional and cognitive linguistic theory with sociolinguistic research on identity, subjectivity, and communities of practice and also with the linguistic anthropological research on discourse, stance, and culture. Every time we speak, we are creating and expressing a stance and doing it within a cultural context, constructing, negating, and reinforcing the background culture. Some of this stance creation and expression occurs consciously, other parts seem to derive from a sort of creative intuition in which we are perhaps aware of the effect we are aiming for, but we are not aware of all the strategies we are using to achieve that effect and stance.

In cognitive and functional approaches to grammar, form and conceptual relevance are linked. Structure is non-arbitrary, motivated, and iconic, and syntax is not autonomous, so that there is no strict boundary between grammar and other linguistic phenomena, and language is an integral facet of cognition. Meaning is equated with conceptualization and is context-dependent (e.g., Langacker) “All language structures are symbolic instruments that serve to convey meaning” (Tomasello 1997: xi). Functional grammarians stress that structure (i.e., regularity) emerges from use – it comes out of
discourse and is shaped by discourse. Structure is dynamic. Grammar is a social phenomenon, and structure serves cognitive or communicative functions. Discourse, it is said, is as much following rules as it is remembering procedures (Wilcox 1999, Hopper and Thompson 2001). Grammar is not prior to speaking, it is what emerges from language use (Hopper 1987). As Hopper and Thompson (2001:48) put it, “What we think of as grammar is a complex of memories we have of how our speech community has resolved communicative problems. ‘Grammar’ is a name for the adaptive, complex, highly interrelated and multiply categorized sets of recurrent regularities that arise from doing the communicative work humans do. In other words, the sense of a verb or predicate is related to the lexico-grammatical schemas that it can occur in and argument structure can be seen as essentially a subset of these schemas.”

Haspelmath’s work on language change (1999) is consistent with the functional view of language as shaped by the needs of speakers. He says that “in order to understand language change, we have to reduce it to the linguistic acts of individuals” (1054).

Influenced by Keller (1994), Haspelmath provides a list of “maxims of action” that underlie the path of grammaticalization. The four maxims are as follows

II.

1. Hypermaksim: talk in such a way that you are socially successful, at the lowest possible cost.

2. Clarity: talk in such a way that you are understood.

3. Economy: talk in such a way that you do not expend superfluous energy.

4. Conformity: talk like the others talk.

5. Extravagance: talk in such a way that you are noticed
It is the last of these maxims, extravagance, that Haspelmath claims is key to understanding why grammaticalization is not reversible. He defines extravagance as “speakers’ use of unusually explicit formulations in order to attract attention” (1999: 1043). He points out (1999: 1062) that meeting the maxim of extravagance is a persisting motivation for language change, since “the loss of pragmatic salience is a natural consequence of habituation through frequency of use. It is thus another side-effect of routinization”. I will be arguing that the differing patterns of use of HP on ON, OE, and OF represents a form of extravagance, a method of drawing attention to sociocultural stance. I follow Bybee (1998) in viewing the nature of grammar and linguistic representation as emergent, functional, and usage-based:

“The ‘knowledge’ underlying the fluent use of language is not grammar in the sense of abstract structure but is rather a large store of categorized and sorted previous utterances which for the basis for the production and comprehension of new utterances.”

This perspective informs my approach to the grammar used in narratives, since if grammar does not consist of rigid, abstract rules but rather of emergent patterns based on speakers’ communicative needs and purposes, grammar is then tied to the socio-cultural needs and purposes of speakers as well. The very patterns of grammar are emergent and are shaped by speakers’ repeated production for expressive and even culture construction uses.
2.1.1 Constructions

The idea of constructions is a central part of both cognitive and functional theory. “Basic sentences of English,” says Goldberg (1995:1), “are instances of constructions -- form-meaning correspondences that exist independently of particular verbs. . . constructions themselves carry meaning, independently of the words in the sentence.”

Bybee (2010: 76) defines constructions in a similar way: “Constructions are direct pairings of form with meaning . . often having schematic positions that range over a number of lexical items . . [and] often contain explicit lexical material.” The notion of constructions, “captures significant regularities about the distribution of meaning between verbs and arguments, as well as regularities in patterning that are independent of particular verbs” (Thompson and Hopper, 2001:51).

Construction formation is described using a domain general explanation, and occurs through “the process of chunking, by which bits of experience that are repeatedly associated are repackaged into a single unit” (Bybee, 2010, p. 78), which is a domain general cognitive ability.

The view of the narrative as constructional, as a conventionalized means of expressing a particular cultural stance, that I will be arguing for in this paper is consistent with our view of constructions in general. Narratives, like phrasal constructions, are frequent strings with schematic character, having aspects of form that are not strictly predictable from their component parts. As Goldberg (2006) says of constructions, “Any linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions
recognized to exist. In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency.”

2.1.2 Narratives as constructions

Narratives employ clusters of features that are congruent for that culture, and that also act as culture constructing strategies. The narratives are, in this way, functioning as constructions, with HP and patterns of HP use being an important feature of each construction. That is, the features taken as a cluster were adding new meaning that one couldn’t strictly predict from merely listing the features, thus this could be considered a construction.

My consideration of narratives as meta-constructions is new and yet also a direct extension of earlier research. As Nikiforidou (2010) pointed out,

“Constructions pertain to all levels of grammatical analysis, from morphemes to phrasal patterns, the claim being that ‘the network of constructions captures our grammatical knowledge of language in toto, i.e. it’s constructions all the way down’ (Goldberg, 2006: 18). Although most construction-based analyses have focused on sentence-level phenomena …, the need to extend construction grammar to larger pieces of discourse (‘all the way up’, we might say) has been noted in the literature. Östman (2005: 125), for instance, suggests that certain discourse patterns represent conventionalizations of specific linguistic properties, which places them on an equal footing with the conventionalized patterns known as ‘grammar’. It stands to reason that ‘Construction grammar methodology can be fruitfully extended to account for discourse phenomena’. In Östman’s terms, a discourse construction specifically represents a conventionalized association of a particular text type (such as argumentative, descriptive, narrative and so on) with a particular genre (for example recipes, obituaries, fairy tales).”

In this paper I will extend Östman’s concept of a construction ‘all the way up’ even further by considering narrative constructions, in which I look at the
conventionalized association of a particular narrative type with a particular speech community or culture.

### 2.2 Sociolinguistics and Anthropological Linguistics

Both anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics focus on the use of language in expressing individual and sociocultural identity. This approach is consistent with cognitive/functional linguistics emphasis on the use of grammatical structures to fulfill expressive functions. As Thompson and Hopper (2001) say about the interrelationship between grammar and communicative function, “grammar is a complex of memories we have of how our speech community has resolved communicative problems. ‘Grammar’ is a name for the adaptive, complex, highly interrelated and multiply categorized sets of recurrent regularities that arise from doing the communicative work humans do.”

I begin here with a brief discussion of the principles of sociolinguistics that I draw on in my discussion and then discuss complementary approaches within the anthropological literature.

#### 2.2.1 Sociolinguistic research on identity and stance

Goffman (1959) was perhaps the first to argue that the self is a social construction and, more particularly, a construction that is shaped by language use in interaction. Mey (1993:146) points to the importance of language in constructing social institutions as well as individual identity: “Language in symbolizing human life, standardizes and codifies it. Thus, we are able to speak of language as defining, indeed 'constructing' social institutions and to maintain, on the other hand, that the social reality, in a deeper sense, is
the basis of the phenomenon of language. . . We can, in fact, speak not only of the ‘social construction of reality’ but of a ‘linguistic construction of social facts’.”

Lexical and grammatical choice, along with language style, all carry meaning that allow speakers to negotiate identity. Recurring patterns of language use are also tied to community practices and ideologies. I follow here the Communities of Practice approach within sociolinguistics. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 186), “A Community of Practice is an aggregate of people who, united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values – in short, practices. . . . Individuals make sense of themselves and others through their forms of participation in and contributions to the community. The community as a whole constructs a joint sense of itself through the relation between its practices and those of other communities. Thus a Community of Practice is not isolated and inward-looking, but shapes its participants’ relations both among themselves and with the rest of the world.”

Bucholtz and Hall (2005: 585) describe the importance of linguistic structure in expressing stance and sociocultural identity: “identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon”. For Bucholtz and Hall (2005), these identities include “cultural positions” and may be indexed through stances, styles, or linguistic structures; identity may be “in part intentional, in part habitual, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation” and in part “an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures”.
In his work on stance, Du Bois (2007) also reiterates the relationship between linguistic structure and sociocultural positioning: “One of the most important things we do with words is take a stance. Stance has the power to assign value to objects of interest, to position social actors with respect to those objects, to calibrate alignment between stance takers, and to invoke presupposed systems of sociocultural value.” He adds elsewhere (139) that “Stance can be approached as a linguistically articulated form of social action whose meaning is to be construed within the broader scope of language, interaction, and sociocultural value” and that “Stance is a collaborative, dialogic, act that involves “simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field.” (163)

In theories of narrative within sociolinguistics, Benwell and Stokoe (2006:138) say that the “emphasis is on identity as performed rather than as prior to language, as dynamic rather than fixed, as culturally and historically located, as constructed in interaction with other people and institutional structures, as continuously remade, and as contradictory and situational.” Daiute and Lightfoot (2004: xi) have said, too, that “Narrative discourse organizes life – social relations, interpretations of the past, and plans for the future” (Daiute and Lightfoot 2004: xi). Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 49) discuss the idea that discourses “circulate in a culture . . . which open up different subject positions for speakers to take up or resist.”
2.2.2 Anthropological linguistic research on culture, identity, and stance

The literature in anthropological linguistics echoes but also extends the sociolinguistic literature on stance. As Bucholtz (2009:147) says, “the relationship between stance, style, and identity is formed both from the bottom up, as it unfolds in local interaction, and from the top down, through the workings of broader cultural ideologies.”

Anthropological linguists consider discourse to be “the concrete expression of language-culture relationships. It is discourse that creates, recreates, focuses, modifies, and transmits both culture and language and their intersection, and it is especially in verbally artistic and playful discourse, such as poetry, magic, verbal dueling, and political rhetoric, that the resources provided by grammar, as well as cultural meanings and symbols, are activated to their fullest potential and the essence of language-culture relationships becomes salient” (Sherzer 1987:145). Urban (2000:1) adds that, “The discourse-centered approach to culture is founded on a single proposition: that culture is localized in concrete, publicly accessible signs, the most important of which are actually occurring instances of discourse.”

Briggs (1998: 231) reminds us that it is important not to think of culture “in essentialist terms, positing a single linguistic ideology that would seem to be distributed homogeneously throughout the community” and that it is also misleading to treat “linguistic ideologies as unconscious.” In sociolinguistics as well, Mendoza-Denton (2002: 477) has warned against essentialism: “Essentialism in sociolinguistics includes
the analytic practice of using categories to divide up subjects and sort their linguistic behavior, and then linking the quantitative differences in linguistic production to explanations based on those very same categories provided by the analyst.” Instead, she stresses that “identities and their linguistic reflexes are the product of continuous axes of difference (race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, status, profession, momentary stance), none of which is solely determinate. At any given moment, symbolic actors may self- and other-mark in specific ways, only to shift footing in the midst of an interaction” (492). She cites the functional/cognitive emphasis on automaticity in discouraging us from considering “particular linguistic acts as strategic and intentional” rather than simply automatic and reflexive (492). The linguistic acts I am considering here, the uses of HP, seem more a combination of the intentional and the reflexive: They have strategic purpose but may become relatively automatic through repeated expressive use. The patterns of use of HP in narrative may be conventionalized, but they still function as a means of drawing attention to stance and thus function according to Haspelmath’s maxim of extravagance. The relationship between intention and routinization may well deserve further consideration.

Urban (2000:10) offers the position that, rather than assume that culture is shared, we focus instead on the way that culture “unfolds” in discourse, saying that “shared meaning is a product of public accessibility rather than (or in addition to being) a necessary precondition for it” (10). Discourse, he continues (2000: 17), “is in fact the means by which the past is kept alive in the present, by means of which culture is maintained.”
In the study here, I adopt Sherzer's theoretical approach to the analysis of narratives shared within a society, as in his (1979) study of the Kuna storytelling genre, which he affirms involves understanding the society’s “linguistic, social, and cultural presuppositions” because the story must be “placed in the context of the language, society, and culture of which it forms a part” (Sherzer 1984:192).

I also take as central Silverstein’s (1998) notion that identity (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, class) is indexed (pointed at or marked) through language (129). Like language and culture, ideology is both a product of society and also a possession of individuals. Silverstein stresses the “sharedness” and the “social-situatedness” of ideology (125):
“there is no such thing as a social fact without its ideological aspect or component” (126).
“Ideology construes indexicality by constituting its metapragmatics,” giving coherence to discourse by providing a shared context for interpretation (128); ideologies are schemas or frames for explaining and interpreting the flow of indexicals in discourse, and these schemas are “naturalizing,” serving to explain the indexical value of signs in a way that is emblematic of the index” (129).

In this regard, Silverstein (1998:131-35) points to similar work by Irvine (1992) on honorific speech within Wolof linguistic ideology and by Hill (1998) on the “discourse of nostalgia” among Mexicano/Nahuatl speakers, vs. the “power ‘code’” of mixed-language users” as claims on the present vs. claims on the future. He also points to Kulick’s (1992) discussion of the use of Tok Pisin (the language of modernity and Christianity and males) vs. Taiap (the language of females and displays of affect) in New
Guinea, and Kroskrity’s (1993) exploration of Arizona Tewa kiva speech as an emblem of tradition, religious belief, and rule by a hereditary ceremonial elite.

### 2.2.3 Medieval Studies

Medieval Studies is an interdisciplinary field, with research in philosophy, history, art, architecture, literature, and linguistics. As Helen Damico puts it, “Medieval Studies is international, multidisciplinary, and chronologically vast” (Damico et al, 1995: vii).

Work on medieval narratives includes that by Byock (2013) and Steblin-Kamenskiĭ (1973) on Old Norse, Davis-Secord (e.g., 2008, 2016) and Greenfield and Calder (1996) on Old English, and Kinoshia (2006) and Owen (1962) on Old French.

My study of Old Norse was much influenced by the work of Byock. Byock (2013) notes that both the Bodvar character in ON and Beowulf in OE had evolved from some same source story and thus were similar to each other without being borrowed one from the other, so that these narratives presented how each culture had evolved essentially the same story into different versions.

Byock also describes Iceland’s political structure. He suggests that the best term to describe the political and social organization of Viking Age Iceland is ‘Free State’, since there were some elements of state structure in the Althing and chieftains, but it also was a headless or stateless society in some ways (2013: 64). The early Icelanders took conscious steps to devolve the societal structure eliminating any self-perpetuating executive branch, thus they had no need for extra taxes to support a real State structure or any standing military (2013: 65, 75). The Icelanders “repeatedly opted for legally based
governmental solutions that for centuries hindered the development of executive
authority” (p. 65).

Davis-Secord’s (2016) work on the use of compounds in OE discusses how
structure embodies meaning. “It is this subtle but fundamental joining of grammar, style,
and culture that concerns this book.” (2016: 4). He goes on to say of compound structures
that, “the presence of the compounds registers not just at the level of individual sentences
but also at the larger discourse levels of the paragraph and even the entire homily,
differentiating the set pieces from the rest of the text.” (141) Davis-Secord’s work on
Wulfstan (2008) also points out the use of these particular constructions, compounds, to
signal attitude: to “call attention to and promote Wulfstan's concern for social stability”.

Kinoshita (2006), like Byock and Davis-Secord, discusses the central position of
the Chanson de Roland as a means both of expressing and constructing culture and
national stance. Kinoshita (2006:9) refers to the Roland as “a precocious expression of
French national sentiment.” She argues further that “the Roland does not so much reflect
a pre-existing ideology of crusade as actively working to construct it.”

Fleischman’s study of HP in medieval narratives was also an important source for
this study. Especially in medieval narratives, according to Fleischman (1990: 195), tense
and aspect alternation may be used instead of grammatical strategies like conjunctions in
order to unify the text. Fleischman states that the HP may also be used to signal a
difference or change in the narrator’s empathy with the character (Fleischman, 1990, p.
255). Combat scenes, which are an important/stock element in Medieval narratives
(including epic poems) are often narrated as eyewitness accounts or sports events, and thus easily employ HP (Fleischman, 1990, p. 257)

2.2.3 Summary
The literature in sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics encourages us to consider the function and distribution of HP in medieval narrative as a means of expressing identity and stance. In this case, we think of the speech community in which the narrative resides as a meta-speaker. This approach allows me to find an analog to the processes of persona construction through clusters of features speakers used to manipulate speaker specific linguistic style. In this approach, I follow Podesva (2007) who noted that “third wave variationists…view style as ‘a socially meaningful clustering of features, within and across linguistic levels and modalities’” (Campbell-Kibler et al., 2006, in Podesva, 2007). Podesva found that the meaning of a given feature might be difficult to define, but that, taken in context and clustered with other features, a new meaning could emerge. Podesva reports that for one of the speakers in his study, “Although the individual meanings’ features are vague in isolation, at the intersection of their meanings, a caring doctor persona emerges.” (Podesva, 2007) This “caring doctor persona” meaning for this combination of features is specific to this particular speaker.

This insight is analogous to our understanding of the use of HP in ON sagas. In the case of HP on ON, the picture is also vague and incomplete until we consider HP in stance creating and further to stance as an element in a meta-level construction expressing a culture/persona. Although the HP can directly affect the narrative stance and
approach, it is in concert with other features that its meaning is the clearest. The meaning of HP can be changed depending on the composite effect created by the construction it is used in. Since this composite meaning is not strictly predictable from the combination of the separate elements, the narrative can best be seen as a construction. Considering and looking at these narratives as constructions is necessary in order to understand their overall meaning once the features were combined.

Instead of comparing different individual speakers, as Podesva has done, I look at three contrasting cultures – 1) the Old English warrior, his local Lord, and tribal loyalties, 2) the Old Norse Viking-age Free State, individualism, and clan loyalties, and 3) the Old French knight, his emperor, Charlemagne, and his pride in the French empire. Each of these had narratives with sets of features that are congruent with the culture. This is analogous to the situation Podesva (2007, 2011) describes in which speakers use clusters of features for persona construction. In my study, I find that certain traits of the narratives function as clusters of features constructing a persona, but, in this case, the persona is the entire speech community. In addition, the construction examined here is the entire narrative itself. Thus, the argument I make in what follows is that the narrative is a meta-construction which acts to shape and identify the culture and speech community as a meta-persona.
3. Data and Methods
3.1 Sources and Coding
In my HP study, I looked at epic poetry and tales from OE, ON, and OF, coding each for genre, tense, tense switch, and narrative context (not shown here: direct speech line count for both Roland and Beowulf. Non-HP present tense for Beowulf). In each language I chose texts which are considered canonical by specialists in medieval literature. For Old Norse, there is not a single text that stands out so much as there is a group of sagas, but for Old English and Old French, however, the choice is clear—in each case, a single epic narrative thought to be canonical for that speech community/culture. Using a term from Simpson (2002), I am using texts that represent a “common ground” for that people. Table 1 provides a list of the sources examined for this study.

TABLE 1 – BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliographic Source</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brault, 1978</td>
<td>OF</td>
<td>Song of Roland</td>
<td>Epic Poem</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack, 1994</td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>Epic Poem</td>
<td>1,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>Aelfric's Life of St. Eugenia</td>
<td>Homily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>The Dream of the Rood</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>The Wanderer</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>The Battle of Maldon</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, P.S.</td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>Cynewulf and Cyneheard, AS 755</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Egil's Saga</td>
<td>Saga</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>The Burning of Njal</td>
<td>Saga</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The coding for each text included the following: the number of lines examined, the total number of verbs in the section, the number of verbs in past tense, the number of verbs in HP, the number of other verb tense forms, and the number of switches between HP and past or other forms. More details on the coding will be presented in section 3.2.

### 3.1.1 Old Norse

In ON I have coded for a variety of ON sagas, including Eddas (myths), historic (Leif’s Voyage), and family sagas (such as The Burning of Njal) for a total of 1,137 lines, with 180 HP tokens out of 1,291 verbs. The data from Gordon consists of 414 lines of a variety of types of ON literature including sagas, history and prose eddas (mythology). I have given the common modern labels for the different genre of ON saga, however, using...
these common labels can be misleading. Although the patterns of HP vary according to type of saga, we should just be careful not to label these different types with terms loaded with modern/contemporary meanings such as novel, myth, or history. We should note also, that there is more of a continuum of patterns of usage between the different ON types of saga that would not be conveyed by separating the texts into modern genres/categories.

All of the ON saga texts are passages I have translated myself, so that I had a literal translation that had not been smoothed out into modern English and I was familiar with the text and the grammar being used. I underlined every instance of finite verbs, then tabulated this data in terms of frequency of instances of HP as compared to preterite tense verbs. I then recorded every instance of a switch from past to HP, as a pattern of relatively frequent alternation between the past and HP is characteristic of ON literature. Table 2 shows the text and number of lines examined in ON. For each selection, the table shows the total verb count and the number of past tense, HP, and other tense markings on those verbs. In addition, the table shows the number of switches between verb tenses and the percent of HP verbs.
I have listed the three Gylfaginning Saga texts as separate entries in Table 2, because they are different genres of narrative. The first line shown is one type of narrative, origin myths, stories and verse, whereas the other two lines represent the counts from narratives about gods that are presented in a more informal storytelling manner and relate the adventures and misadventures of the gods. These were written mostly around the 13th century by a variety of mostly anonymous Icelandic authors, although many are attributed to Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241). (Byock, 1998.)
3.1.2 Old French

In OF I coded the early 12th century Old French epic poem, *Song of Roland*, by Turoldus based on the Battle of Roncevaux in 778. The edition I use is that published in 1978 for the anniversary of the Battle of Roncevaux and uses the original verb tenses instead of smoothing out the tense forms for “modern ears” (Brault, 1978). Table 3 shows the number of lines examined in OF. For each selection, the table shows the total verb count and the number of past tense, HP, and other tense markings on those verbs. In addition, the table shows the number of switches between verb tenses and the percent of HP verbs.
Table 3: Old French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song of Roland</th>
<th>No. of Lines</th>
<th>Verb Count</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Other verb forms</th>
<th>Switche</th>
<th>% HP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>27</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>75</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>91%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>92%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL S</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1.3 Old English

In OE, I coded the Anglo Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* (Jack, 1994), which most scholars believe was produced between 975 and 1025. Table 4 shows that I examined a total of 1,588 from Beowulf, finding zero instances of HP out of 811 verbs.

**Table 4: Old English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beowulf</th>
<th>No. of Lines</th>
<th>Verb Count</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Other verb forms</th>
<th>Switche s</th>
<th>% HP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>144</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>407</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>335</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>143</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>1588</strong></td>
<td><strong>811</strong></td>
<td><strong>588</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>223</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Coding

In this section I talk about how the I coded the verb tokens for each language, including how I approached the typical/straightforward tokens and tokens which presented challenges. I have included how these verbs would be recorded in the results table by demonstrating how this coding would proceed using snippets from the results table.
I coded each verb for tense, including HP, past, and non-HP, and also for modality, direct and indirect speech for each language. After this explanation I will give examples of how these approaches and procedures played out in coding straightforward vs. challenging texts for each language. These examples will serve to illustrate both how the procedures were applied in typical examples along with what consistent procedures I developed to apply to more atypical examples. I will also show how I harmonized the categories and approaches developed for each language into categories that could be usefully compared cross-linguistically in summary tables.

3.2.1 Straightforward Coding
3.2.1.1 ON
Following is an example from Hrolf’s saga that shows coding the alternation between past and HP. This represents one of the more straightforward text selections, as one can see from the blue highlighted past tense verbs are shown in and the red highlighted HP verbs:

Example 1:
1a. Síðan fór Böðvarr leið sína til Hleiðargarðs.
   Afterwards Bodvar travelled on his way to Hleidargard.

b. Hann kemr til konungs atsetu.
   He comes to the king’s royal residence.

c. Böðvarr leiðir síðan hest sinn á stall hjá konungs hestum inum beztu ok spyrð engan at,
   Then Bodvar leads his horse to the stable by the king’s best horses but he asks no one about it;

d. gekk síðan inn í höllina, ok var þar fátt manna
   then he went in the hall, and there were only a few men.

These verbs would be recorded in the results table as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Norse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings from the Family and Kings’ Sagas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.1.2 OF

The following example from The Song of Roland represents a typical variation of verb tense forms for this narrative in which the present tense alternates frequently and somewhat irregularly with the simple past. However, although the coding was straightforward, the analysis was more difficult: how to account for the flexible, irregular pattern that could evoke oral patterns while explaining how the sense of formality and order was nonetheless culturally important? This question will be taken up in later sections.

Example 2:

*Chanson de Roland:*

a. Ço sent Rollant que s’espee li tolt,
   Roland feels the Saracen stealing his sword from him.

b. uvrit les oiz, si li ad dit un mot:
   He opened his eyes and said these words to him:

c. “men escientre, tu n’iesz mie des noz!”
   “I don’t believe you’re one of our men!”

d. Tient l’olifan, que unkes perdre ne volt,
   He holds on to the oliphant, he does not want to part with it for a single moment,

e. Sil fiert en l’elme, ki gemmet fut a or.
   And he strikes him on the helmet, whose gold is wrought with gems.

f. Fruisset l’acer e la teste e les os,
   He smashes the steel, the head, the bones,

g. Amsdous les oiz del chef li ad mi fors,
   He knocked both his eyes out of his head,

h. Jus a ses piez si l’ad tresturnet mort.
   He tumbled him over dead at his feet.
(The Song of Roland, stanza 170, lines 2284-2291)

Old French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No. of Lines</th>
<th>Verb Count</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Other verb forms</th>
<th>Switches</th>
<th>% HP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Song of Roland</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.1.3 OE

Following is an example of the quintessential and typical Beowulf verb form: the simple past:

Example 3:

*Auras pa se rica, ymb hine rinc manig.*

Then the hero *arose*, many warriors around him, (Beowulf, line 399)

3.2.2 Coding Procedure Challenges

In this section we’ll look at coding verbs that fell into the ‘Other’ category of verb tokens that are neither past nor HP and some of the challenges this presented for each language.

3.2.2.1 ON

The Gylfaginning Saga had a number of non-HP present tense verbs which I coded as “prophetic present (PP)”, “timeless truth present (TT)”. In the following text the
“timeless truth present (TT)” is highlighted in green, the “Non-PP, TT, HP Present” highlighted in purple, and “Other verb forms” highlighted in light orange.

Example 4a:

Þá svarar Gangleri, Hvät hōfðusk at synir þá, ef þu trúir at þeir sé guð?
Then Gangleri answers, ‘What did the sons do then, if you believe that they be gods?’

Hár segir, ‘Af þar er eigi lítt at segja. Þeir toku Ými, ok fluttu
Hár says, ‘In this there is not little to say. They took Ými, and carried [him]

i mitt Ginnugagapok gerðu jördina af honum af hans blöði sveinn
to the middle of the primeval void, and made the earth out of him,
out of his blood the seas

ok vötinn jörðin var gør af holðinu, en björgin af beinunu,
and the water and the earth was made out of his flesh, and the cliffs out of his bones,

grjót ok urðir þeir gerðu af tönnum ok jöxlum ok af þeim beinum er várú brotin.’
stones and gravel they made out of his teeth and grinders out of those bones which were broken.’

(Gylfaginning Saga, Byock, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No. of Lines</th>
<th>Verb Count</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Other verb forms</th>
<th>prophetic present (PP)</th>
<th>timeless truth present (TT)</th>
<th>Non-PP, TT, HP Present</th>
<th>Non-HP Present</th>
<th>Other Verb Forms</th>
<th>Swatches</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since these categories were only present in this ON saga, this level of detail was not necessary or used in the table used for comparing HP across the languages. Thus the “prophetic present (PP)”, “timeless truth present (TT), “Non-PP, TT, HP Present” (pink shaded rows) columns became conflated into the “Non-HP Present” column, and the
“Non-HP Present” and the “Number of other non-present verb forms” (green shaded rows) then form the “Other verb forms” category as shown in the following table:

Initially, it appeared that the framing text was in HP while the direct speech with the narrative text was mostly related using simple past or the other non-HP present forms, but the following text shows that this pattern was broken:

**Example 4b:**

Þá mælti Gangleri, Hvat at segja fra þeim stað? Þá segir Jafnhár, Askrinn
Then Gangleri spake, ‘What is there to say about that place?’ Then Jafnhár says,
‘The ash

*er mestr ok beztr allra trea;*
*is the greatest and best of all trees;…*
3.2.2.2 OF

The Song of Roland’s use of present participle forms (or at least what is called present participle today) presents a gray area. For instance:

_Morz est Rollant, Deus en ad l’anme es cels._
Roland is dead, his soul is with God in Heaven.

_Li emperere en Rencesvals parvient._
The Emperor reaches Roncevaux.
(The Song of Roland, line 2397-2398)

If it was coded as present tense in the translation I’m using then I followed the translation’s tense. Here _parvient_ is not in present tense form, however, the context calls for a present tense, and the translator, who uses the literal tense, also translates this form as present. Similar examples came up frequently in _The Song of Roland._

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Song of Roland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is another example with what initially looks like some kind of gerund form, but I consistently counted this form as HP. Here the auxiliary is in present tense form and the meaning is in line with a kind of emphatic HP, or an emphatic present happening:

**Example 2a:**

a. _Rollant ad mis l’olifan a sa buche,_
   Roland has the olifant _placed_ at his lips,

b. _empeint le ben, par grant vertut le sunet..._
He sets it well, sounds it with all strength…

c. …Par grant dulor suntet sun olifan.
…With great travail is sounding his olifant.

d. Parmi la buche en salt fors li cler sancs,
From his mouth the bright blood comes leaping out.

e. De sun cervel le temple en est rumpant...
The temple in his forehead is bursting…

### Old French

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No. of Lines</th>
<th>Verb Count</th>
<th>Past</th>
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<th>Other verb forms</th>
<th>Switches</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

3.2.2.3 OE

*Beowulf* included examples of present tense that didn’t qualify as HP, such as gnomic utterances and instances in which the narrator directly addresses the listener or reader. I counted these as non-HP present and HP categories but included the non-HP present in the “Other verb forms” category in the table for comparing across languages. This level of detail in the working table allowed me to refer to and closely examine each non-HP present to ensure there really were absolutely zero instances of HP in *Beowulf*, as initial reading had suggested. Following is an example of the narrator directly addressing the listener or reader:

**Example 5:**

a. *Wæs sio hond to strong,*
   his hand was too strong,

b. *se ðe meca gehwane,*
   so that every sword,
c. *mine gefræge,*  
(as I have heard)

d. *swenge ofersohte,*  
[his] swing overtaxed  (line 2685)

**Old English**

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</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.3 Other Coding Categories: Auxiliaries

I coded all auxiliaries, including modals, as HP. I did not differentiate between, for example, ‘may’ and ‘might’ since all of these had a present sense.

### 3.2.3.2 Direct and Indirect Speech: Coding the Gylfaginning Saga

Although in general I avoid coding direct speech, I included direct speech from the Gylfaginning Saga, since the narrative action takes place in the direct speech itself. In this saga the characters are not just responding to their interlocutor but also tell a narrative at that moment, even if it’s only one sentence or phrase long.

Text 3, with selections from the Gylfaginning Saga, recounts myths about the gods and shows the lowest frequency of HP. It contains long sections consisting of poetic or prophetic descriptive passages and employing uses of present tense that did not function as the HP present tense uses found in the other narratives. However, texts 4 and 5 of the Gylfaginning Saga contain narratives that tell tales and episodes involving Loki or Thor that are more informal and similar to narratives found in the family sagas, so they are left as separate entries on the ON HP count table.
The sections of timeless truth or prophetic present tend to occur together in larger chunks. There is not frequent switching between timeless truths, prophetic present and past, for instance, as there is with HP itself. This pattern of using larger chunks of timeless truth or prophetic present instead of HP is not found in texts 4 and 5 on my table of the Gylfaginning Saga, which also makes them different, so that it makes sense to consider them as separate entities in my analysis.

3.3 Summary

Table 5 provides a comparison of the use of HP in each of the languages. It shows that the use of HP is greatest in OF, while it doesn’t appear at all in OE. The analysis that follows in the next section will argue that the difference in use of HP in the three languages correlates with the different stance with which each culture presents itself.

**Table 5: Comparison of the Three Languages**

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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
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<th>Total Verb Count</th>
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</table>

3.4 Local HP Semantics Tables

The following tables address the local meaning of HP in each instance for a narrative scene. The ‘Discourse Context’ column addresses whether this represents the Onset, Peak (of action) or the topic (details of action). In the ‘Quotative verb vs
Action verb’ column, the Action verbs are additionally labelled with respect to whether the action is transitive or intransitive. The auxiliary to a compound verb form is coded for tense, in which case the remainder of the verb form is in black boldface.

The term ‘local’ is borrowed from Algebraic Geometry, and refers to how the characteristics of a set of features or conditions will change according to whether one views the situation locally or globally. For instance, the earth can be viewed as locally flat but globally spherical.

If the local meaning/function/purpose of a verb/tense token in terms of marking highlighting immediacy turn taking narrative climax, etc. is not immediately apparent, or if there exists a plethora of possible functions that one could argue for, then I will take the token's function to be locally flexible/irregular and thus having the purpose of creating a sense of informality by not following any of the marking or highlighting type functions.

For both ON and OF, first the English gloss for the scene is given, followed by a section in which several lines at a time are listed followed by a portion of the table with analysis for the verbs in those lines.

From ON: Scene from The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki: chapter 23

Genre: Saga

Characters: Bodvar and Hött
Plot context: In this scene, Bodvar, the ON warrior/hero analog to the OE warrior/hero character Beowulf, sneaks out in the night against the king's orders in order to slay the flying beast/troll which is an analog to Grendal in Beowulf. Bodvar takes along with Hott, the depressed retainer, who also provides a bit of humor and a contrast to Bodvar's courage and bravery. After this episode Hott goes on to become one of the king's best warriors.

English gloss for ON scene:

1. Bodvar **stole** away in the night. He **lets** Hott **go** with him, and **makes** him [go] reluctantly, and [Hott] **claimed** [he was being] steered to his death.
2. Bodvar **says** [that things] **would** go better.
3. They **leave** the hall behind them, and Bodvar **has to carry** him, such **is** his fright.
4. Now they **saw** the creature.
5. And immediately Hott **screams** as loud as he **can**
6. and **said** the beast **would swallow** him.
7. Bodvar **told** the bitch to **shut up** and
8. **throws** him down on the moor;
9. and there he **lies**, not a little scared.
10. Rather, he **dares** not **go** home.
11. Now Bodvar **goes** against the beast ...
12. ...the sword **comes** out and immediately
13. he **stabs** under the beast's shoulder so hard
14. that the blade **reached** into the heart,
15. and then the beast fell down on the ground dead.

1. Bodvar stole away in the night. He lets Hott go with him, and makes him [go] reluctantly, and [Hott] claimed [he was being] steered to his death.

2. Bodvar says [that things] would go better.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>HP or P</th>
<th>Discourse Context:</th>
<th>Quotative verb vs Action verb</th>
<th>Preceding verb (past or HP)</th>
<th>Following verb (past or HP)</th>
<th>Switch</th>
<th>Why switch? matching or breaking pattern</th>
<th>Local semantics of HP w/in construction</th>
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</thead>
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<td>HP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>matching</td>
<td>vividness, immediacy, engagement, informality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. Rather, he *dares* not *go* home.

11. Now *Bodvar* *goes* against the beast ...

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>HP or P</th>
<th>Discourse verb vs Action verb</th>
<th>Preceding verb (past or HP)</th>
<th>Following verb (past or HP)</th>
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<th>Why switch? matching or breaking pattern</th>
<th>Local semantics of HP w/in construction</th>
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<td>... 0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From OF: Scene from Song of Roland: stanza 117, lines 1537-2549

Genre: Epic poem

Characters: Roland and an enemy combatant

Plot context: In this scene we see the early stages of the battle between the ambushed French and the Saracens. This stanza portrays a valiant Roland gloriously fighting and vanquishing one of the enemy combatants:

1. When Count Roland sees Samson dead,
2. You may be certain that he was very greatly afflicted by this.
3. He spurs his horse, it runs full speed.
4. He holds Durendal, which is worth more than pure gold.
5. The knight goes to strike the pagan as hard as he can
6. On his helmet, whose gold is wrought with gems.
7. He slides through head, byrnie, and body,
8. The good saddle, whose gold is wrought with gems,
9. And deeply into the horse’s back,
10. He kills both of them, caring not a whit for blame or for praise.
11. The pagans say: “That’s a crushing blow for us
12. Roland answers: “I cannot brook your people,
13. Your side is evil and wrong.”
1. When Count Roland sees Samson dead,

2. You may be certain that he was very greatly afflicted by this.

3. He spurs his horse, it runs full speed.

4. He holds Durendal, which is worth more than pure gold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>HP or P</th>
<th>Discourse Context: Quotative verb vs Action verb</th>
<th>Preceding verb (past or HP)</th>
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</table>
5. The knight **goes** to strike the pagan as hard as he **can**

6. On his helmet, whose gold **is** wrought with gems.

7. He **slices** through head, byrnie, and body,

8. The good saddle, whose gold **is** wrought with gems,

9. And deeply into the horse’s back,

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</table>
10. He **kills** both of them, **caring** not a whit for blame or for praise.

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<td>0</td>
<td>matching</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis:

Overall, we see that the use of HP in the ON saga mostly expresses informality and directness, whereas in the OF epic poem, immediacy and memory-enhancing highlighting HP purposes prevail. Roland has prevalent HP and uses that HP as an extravagant (Haspelmath 1999) means of engaging the audience, which serves to make the narrative more memorable and ensures that the ideology with regard to the superiority of the French empire is clearly communicated. In contrast, the use of HP in the ON saga serves to increase the informality and connection between the narrator and the audience, thus both expressing and reinforcing the more egalitarian values of the Viking Age Free State.

Note that the local semantic features encoded here add up to a broader global semantics when considered within the narrative meta-construction as a whole.
4. Analysis

In this section, I examine the samples from the texts in each language with respect to the correlation between the distribution and function of HP with cultural ideologies. The analysis demonstrates that the use of HP serves to reinforce a vision of society that is specific to each of the three speech communities.

The use of HP in OF will be shown to both highlight and create a vision of courtly values and honor gained through faithfully serving the emperor and advancing the goals of the French empire. In ON, HP usage patterns are more irregular, and the overall use of HP is lower than in OF. However, even though the overall use of HP in OF is higher than that in ON, the effect is the opposite. In both OF and the ON sagas the HP is frequent, but its meaning and purpose are altered on-line by clustering the HP with other features so that the culturally desired effect emerges in each speech community. Rather than serving to highlight honor and fidelity, HP in ON used to express informality and a sense of kinship and equality between speaker and audience.

In contrast, the total absence of HP in Beowulf helps the narrative construction assert itself as a retrospective text and creates distance from the audience. Distance from past events is minimized in Icelandic through the use of informalizing strategies including the use of the HP.

4.1 Examples from ON

In examples 1a and 1b, the HP usage patterns are irregular, and it can even seem random and quirky. In this passage from Hrolf Saga Kraki we see Bodvar, a warrior who is the analog character to Beowulf (Byock, 1998), break all the normal court etiquette
conventions by marching right in unannounced and leaving his horse in the king’s stables
without asking permission:

Example 1a:

_Hrólf's saga kraka:_ The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki (ch 23)

a. *Siðan fôr Böðvarr leið sína til Hleiðargarðs.*
   Afterwards Bodvar _travelled_ on his way to Hleidargard.

b. *Hann kemr til konungs atsetu.*
   He _comes_ to the king’s royal residence.

c. *Böðvarr leiðir siðan hest sinn á stall hjá konungs hestum inum beztu*
   Then Bodvar _leads_ his horse to the stable by the king’s best horses

d. *ok spyrr engan at, gekk siðan inn í höllina, ok var þar fátt manna.*
   but he _asks_ no one about it; then he _went_ in the hall, and there _were_ only a few men.

Example 1b: _Hrólf's saga kraka:_ The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki (ch 23)

a. *Böðvarr bad hann þegja.*
   Bodvar _told_ him to be quiet.

b. *Hann setr við holan lófann ok tekr svá við hnútunni.*
   He _reaches_ his open palm and _catches_ the knuckle bone,

c. *Þar fylgir leggrinn með.*
   which _has_ the leg attached.

d. *Böðvarr sendir aptr hnútuna ok setr á þann, sem kastaði,*
   Bodvar _throws_ back the knuckle bone to the man who _threw_ it, right in his face,

e. *ok rétt framan í hann með svá harðri svípan, at hann fekk bana.*
   with such a hard blow that he _died_.

f. *Sló þá miklum ótta yfir hirðmennina.*
   Then great fear _struck_ the king’s men.
In example 1b, I could say that the action of throwing the bone back is being highlighted, however if I try to say that HP generally is used to highlight the more important action that would not hold for the first paragraph verb switching. We see that in one paragraph the peak of the action is marked, however, the HP and frequent switching is doing more than just marking a key action, as it is freely used for actions that seem to be backgrounded, scene-setting actions, such as the alternation in the description of Bodvar’s arrival.

The character of this protagonist may be seen as one element of the narrative construction and the HP contributes to this sub-construction by echoing the stance and character of Bodvar the bold, brash rule flaunter with a bold, informalizing verb tense and also the continual tense switches at the description of his court entrance. However, the HP also contributes to the narrative construction directly by “single-handedly” constructing an informal, oral, intimate feel to the narrative taken as a whole.

As we will see, in ON, HP usage patterns are more irregular than they are in OF. The overall use of HP is lower in ON than it is in OF, and the effect is quite different. Rather than serving to foreground and add vividness, HP is here used to express informality and a sense of kinship and equality between speaker and audience. In both Roland and the ON sagas the HP is frequent, but its meaning and purpose are altered online by clustering the HP with other features so that the culturally desired effect emerges in each culture.
4.2 Examples from OF

As the tables show, in Roland, HP usage is the most frequent, thus one might expect this narrative to be more informal and direct since it employs a strategy frequent used in oral settings. However, in this narrative construction the HP strategy is altered on-line with other features such as the epic poem structure and the courtly norms expressed through the interactions of the archbishop, the knights and the emperor/king. In this case, we find the traditional function attributed to HP (by, e.g., Wolfson 1979, Schiffirin 1981, Fleischman 1991) of providing vividness and foregrounding of events. Here, HP provides what we might call a propagandistic punch to what is also, at the same time, a formal and courtly epic poem. Although the HP is flamboyant in its frequency, it is nonetheless also used in a regular and consistent manner. For nearly every HP token in Roland, we can identify a highlighting, foregrounding, or structural effect.

Combat scenes, which are an important/stock element in medieval narratives (including epic poems) are often narrated as eyewitness accounts or sports events, and thus easily employ HP (Fleischman, 1990, p. 257). For instance, example 2a shows a dramatic and key moment in the story; here the HP serves to slow down the narrative time and allows the audience to linger and focus on this highlighted action:

**Example 2a:**

_Chanson de Roland:

a. *Rollant ad mis l’olifan a sa buche,*  
   Roland _has_ the olifant _placed_ at his lips,

b. *empeint le ben, par grant vertut le sunet*...  
   He _sets_ it well, _sounds_ it with all strength…
c. ...Par grant dulor *sunet* sun olifan.
   ...With great travail is sounding his olifant.

d. *Parmi la buche en salt fors li cler sancs,*
   From his mouth the bright blood *comes leaping out,*

e. *De sun cervel le temple en est rumpant...*
   The temple in his forehead is bursting...

In Roland, the juxtaposition of informalizing HP in a formal, propagandistic didactic epic poem can also contribute directly by adding a sense of vividness and vitality that helps provide a bit of levity to a narrative that is ultimately meant to function as propaganda, thus keeping Roland from becoming too dry and off-putting. This levity is used to help create moments of humor and comic relief, as in example (5b), from the scene in which a Saracen, taking Roland for dead, goes to steal Roland’s sword and Roland revives enough to conk the Saracen over his head, killing him:

**Example 2b: Chanson de Roland:**

a. *Ço sent* Rollant que s’espee li tolt,
   Roland feels the Saracen stealing his sword from him.

b. *uvrit* les oilz, si li ad *dit* un mot:
   He opened his eyes and said these words to him:

c. “*men esciëntre, tu n’ies mie des noz!*”
   “I don’t believe you’re one of our men!”

d. *Tient l’olifan, que unkes perdre ne volt,*
   He holds on to the oliphant, he does not want to part with it for a single moment,

e. *Sil fiert en l’elme, ki gemmet fut a or.*
   And he strikes him on the helmet, whose gold is wrought with gems.

f. *Fruisset l’acer e la teste e les os,*
He **smashes** the steel, the head, the bones,

\[ g. \quad \textit{Amsdous les oitz del chef li ad mi fors,} \]
He **knocked** both his eyes out of his head,

\[ h. \quad \textit{Jus a ses piez si l’ad tresturnet mort.} \]
He **tumbled** him over dead at his feet.

\((\textit{The Song of Roland}, \text{ stanza 170, lines 2284-2291})\)

Example (2b) is reminiscent of the touch of humor Shakespeare adds in his tragedy, *Hamlet* in Act I, Scene 1, where Mercurio says “No, ’tis not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church-door, but ’tis enough, ’twill serve. Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.”

### 4.3 Examples for OE

The use of HP differs significantly in OE that in ON and OF. Where in ON it was used to express stance, highlighting the informal and intimate relationship between the character and the audience and where in OF it was used to foreground and highlight particular events, in OE the HP is absent altogether.

Example 3 from *Beowulf* can be seen as an analog to the Bodvar scene (Byock, 1998) shown in examples 1a and 1b. In example 3, the lack of HP contributes to the formal portrayal of the warrior Beowulf as an honorable character who respects the proper court etiquette:

**Example 3: Beowulf**, line 399

\[ \textit{Aras pa se rica, ymb hine rinc manig,} \]
Then the hero **arose**, many warriors around him,
The grammatical strategy also contributes to the narrative construction directly by “single-handedly” constructing a formal feel with a more distance and authority to the narrative taken as a whole.

The section in which Beowulf is old and facing the dragon (beginning at line 2538) is particularly majestic while also being extremely sad and wrenching. Beowulf is about to fail and die and he knows it. Beowulf becomes a bit less herculean and a bit more accessible in his all-too-human struggle with life's and impending death.

As shown in example 5, the narrator now relies more on directly addressing the audience, a strategy that has not been used extensively before. Although this device does not have the informality and vividness achieved in the use of the HP, the narrator is nonetheless breaking the fourth wall and thus the impact of the tragedy is brought home by different discourse/grammatical tools. However, this narrative directness is achieved with strategies that preserve the desired and culturally essential majesty and grandeur. This serves to connect the narrator to the audience in a more direct way that does not add a sense of familiarity or intimacy. The narrator is reinforcing his authority in asserting the veracity of his story. Instead of expressing some of the action as foregrounded, the narrator is creating an adjustment of stance. By directly addressing the audience, the narrator is also increasing the distance between the audience and the action of the story, since the audience is even more aware that they are not present before the actions but hearing a narrator’s version of them. Thus this achieves the opposite effect to that of the HP, in that the audience is less immersed in the actual action. In Beowulf, then narrator
takes conscious steps to go in the opposite direction of the historical present, that is, he uses strategies which achieve the opposite effect in distancing the audience from the action:

**Example 5:**

a. *Wæs sio hond to strong,*
   
   his hand was too strong,

b. *se ðe meca gehwane,*
   
   so that every sword,

c. *mine gefræge,*
   
   (as I have heard)

d. *swenge ofersohte,*
   
   [his] swing overtaxed,   (line 2685)

This sense of pathos, tragedy and emotional impact is achieved while still preserving the culturally important majesty and distance. An emotional intimacy is created when we can identify with Beowulf as a suffering, mortal human, but the strategy employed to achieve this avoids using the HP. Here the hero is fallibly human, but in a tragic, grandly majestic, honor-preserving way.

### 4.4 Summary: HP Patterns, stance, and cultural message

Table 6 illustrates how some of the differing narrative features are combined as clusters in each narrative construction to create a meta-persona on the speech community/cultural level:
There exists a set of core HP meanings and purposes, so that HP can signal an informal, conversational stance and intimacy by indexing and mimicking an oral narrative style; highlighting, foregrounding, marking, especially: marking turns in the plot, marking the authority figure or marking the person of most interest for the scene at hand. Each culture indexes and selects one of these HP purposes or a set of them by the HP patterns they use and/or the other features that are used in conjunction with HP in the narrative construction, thus choosing the best and most appropriate tools for defining who they are both to themselves and in contrast to other peoples, kingdoms, tribes or families and thereby constructing their culture.

### Table 6: Clustering of Narrative Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech community / culture</th>
<th>HP Patterns</th>
<th>Narrative Stance</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Cultural Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ON/Icelandic</td>
<td>Flexible, irregular, random, extravagant</td>
<td>Direct, informal</td>
<td>Narrative prose</td>
<td>Bold rule breakers, flamboyant</td>
<td>Evoke and maintain Viking Age Free State (Byock, 2001) values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF/French empire</td>
<td>Flexible, frequent, but regular and purposeful</td>
<td>Direct, formal</td>
<td>Epic poetry</td>
<td>Larger-than-life, zealous, dutiful</td>
<td>French empire and people are superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE/Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>No HP</td>
<td>Authoritative, formal, distant, didactic</td>
<td>Epic poetry</td>
<td>Loyal, strong, flawed but noble</td>
<td>Reinforce and model value of warrior-hero loyal to his word and Lord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Discussion

In this section, I summarize the two main results to emerge from the analysis: 1) the use of HP in constructing sociocultural stance and identity, and 2) the notion that narratives as a whole serve as schematic and semi-routinized meta-constructions.

5.1 HP and Cultural Stance

The examples in the previous section illustrate patterns of use of HP that differ among the three languages. In ON, HP patterns are flexible and irregular, in line with a direct and informal narrative stance. I’ve argued that this style is a way of evoking and maintaining Viking Free State values. In OF, the patterns of use of HP are much more regular and purposeful, as well as being more frequent. Here the narrative stance is again direct but, unlike ON, it is quite formal. HP and other strategies act to present zealous and dutiful characters in line with an ideology regarding the superiority and honor of the French empire and its people. In OE, we find no use of HP. This pattern contributes to the authoritative, formal, and distant tone of the narrative, and it reinforces the image of loyal, strong and noble warrior-hero.

This analysis is in accord with Dancygier (2012) in finding lower level grammatical features as having higher level narrative discourse or cultural level meanings. As Dancygier states: “what the analysis proposed in this book aims at is describing the consequences of lower level linguistic choices at the higher levels of narrative discourse.” and “… grammar is as meaningful as lexis and thus grammatical choices impact the meaning of texts.” (Dancygier, 2012:4, 7, 8)
Fleischman (1990) uses *OF Roland* as an example of the canonical use of HP as a device to highlight/foreground a moment in the narrative, however, further examination reveals that this characterization is only part of the picture. The approach described by Podesva (2012) in which clusters of features altered or clarified the meaning of a feature with the ultimate purpose of persona constructing comes into play in the case of *Roland* as well. The canonical highlighting or informality is harnessed to make a text that functions to create a culture-reinforcing stance more memorable and fun. If the narrative construction is thus useful and meaningful to the community, individual speakers are more likely to remember and repeat it, making it more effective at culture creation. It becomes automatized (cf. Mendoza Denton 2002 and Bucholtz and Hall 2005), though perhaps still intentional. I argue that intentionality is part of the motivation for the patterns of HP use we find. Just as a painter could choose colors purposely for their expressive qualities even if they are unaware of the physics of the colors’ perception, so also speakers choose specific grammatical strategies, even if they are unaware of the linguistic mechanics behind them.

HP in ON can be marked in a meta-narrative way—that is, although the reason for choosing HP in a given sentence may not follow any predictable/consistent rule, the use of different strategies like HP, even when the carrying out of this strategy is irregular, can be part of marking narrative as special. Narratives and narrative skills were important in ON culture, so managing HP in an artistic way could be part of these skills. The speakers could be consciously aiming for an effect without being conscious of the grammatical structures they use to create that effect. They would thus follow one of Haspelmath’s
“Maxims of action”: “5. Extravagance: talk in such a way that you are noticed,” (Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1055) by their skilled use of tense variation.

Although Haspelmath brings up this maxim in the context of language change and is not referring specifically to HP type use of extravagance I nonetheless claim that this force also operates synchronically. The literature on HP tends to say HP use is more rule driven and more unconscious on the part of the speaker, whereas I am looking at this phenomenon from a more meta-linguistic angle and examining the more conscious social effects speakers are aiming for that permeate down to low-level grammatical strategies and devices.

Podesva (2012) noted that social meaning could be fluid, allowing for flexibility, and that this implied that a “one-to-one mapping between form and meaning” was therefore NOT valid, as “intonational forms do not come prepackaged with their meanings…meaning must further be derived from the context in which the forms are uttered” (Podesva, 2012: 258-9)

The close examination of the use of HP in medieval narrative leads us to scale up the persona constructing the discourse; rather than an individual, we can consider each speech community as a kind of meta-speaker. The analysis shows that narrative strategies can be linked cultures in general. I find an analog to the processes of persona construction through clusters of features speakers used to manipulate speaker specific linguistic style that Podesva explored. He notes that “third wave variationists…view style as ‘a socially meaningful clustering of features, within and across linguistic levels and modalities’” (Campbell-Kibler et al., 2006, in Podesva, 2007). Podesva found that
the meaning of a given feature might be difficult to define, but that, taken in context and clustered with other features, a new meaning could emerge. Podesva reports that for Heath, one of the speakers in his study, “Although the individual meanings features are vague in isolation, at the intersection of their meanings, a caring doctor persona emerges.” (Podesva, 2007). This insight is analogous to our understanding of the use of HP in ON sagas. In the case of HP on ON, the picture is also vague and incomplete until we consider HP as part of a stance-creating and culture constructing strategy.

Podesva (2012) discussed how the analysis of features and clusters of features in speech can be combined with knowledge and familiarity of the speaker while avoiding circular reasoning. Similarly, the extra-linguistic knowledge of Iceland/Viking age Iceland that Byock presents combine with the description in the linguistic literature about the range of uses HP tends to have. This allows us to suggest how the characteristics of the narrative construction are implicated in constructing that particular culture. The clusters of features we find in ON are reinforcing the Icelander’s view of themselves as an individualistic, relatively egalitarian, and highly literate society. The narrative allows this reinforcement to be simultaneously automatic and intentional. Iceland was known in medieval times as the home of storytellers (Byock 2013) and also of story recorders so their literacy was viewed by others in a positive manner. They were thought to be literate and good crafters of stories by other cultures, and their saga telling and writing had its own fame.

Dancygier begins and ends her text with a quote from the Arabian Nights: 203: “a tale is a bridge that leads to the truth.” (Dancygier, 2012: 203) She continues “whatever
understanding a reader might acquire, it is not contained ‘in’ the story but can only be arrived at through the interaction with it.” In ON as well, the features of the narrative constructions listed here are part of the traits/clues/elements that are provided for the reader/listener so they can arrive at the ideology the narrator is intending to convey.

5.2 Narratives as Meta-Constructions

HP is used as part of the strategy of creating stance and can be considered an element in a meta-level construction expressing a culture/persona. Since this stance/identity meaning is not strictly predictable from the composition of the parts, it is much like a sentence-level construction. The meaning of HP can be changed depending on the composite effect created by the construction it is used in, so that considering these narratives as constructions is necessary in order to understand their overall meaning once the features were combined.

Dancygier considers larger overarching constructions by looking at the narrative viewpoint/narrative space as a construction. “There seem to be four constructional parameters involved: narrator on or off stage, person, tense, and the profiling of ego – viewpoint (or several).” (Dancygier, 2012: 75) I agree that this forms a construction, but I take the constructional composition one step further and say that the narrative as a whole can be a construction and that those elements she lists are involved, but other higher elements and lower elements are also involved.

I also follow Dancygier’s (2012) approach in treating written narratives using the same linguistic tools and assumptions one would for spoken language. She argues
“against the assumption that we need to surgically remove narratives from the scope of our ordinary assumptions about the world and language,” and later stating that “… narrative meaning, as any other linguistic meaning, is prompted by linguistic forms, but emerges in the process of interpretation, guided by general linguistic as well as specifically narrative processes… a narrative communicative act is in some ways like any other communicative act—the author, like the speaker, constructs the text, and the reader, like a hearer, interprets it…” Dancygier (2012: 200, 203)

“The first and perhaps most salient feature to consider in comparing the narratives from the three cultures is that Roland and Beowulf are written as epic poems while the sagas are written in prose. Beyond this, for the respective speech communities the French and Anglo Saxon have a single giant work while in ON we have multiple narratives, and no single narrative rises above the others in the same way. Thus Iceland with its individualistic more egalitarian socio-political system uses prose narratives whose
protagonist is usually not a king or warrior; the main character is some individual or even a family or several families. In OF or OE the protagonist is a warrior.

However, Kamenskij (1973) suggests that the sagas have more commonalities than differences, so that it might be possible to consider them as a single meta-narrative: “But if these sagas are regarded as forming, in their totality, a single literary work, then by the scope of their reality they are the greatest work in world literature…in which very many of the Icelanders…perform or find mention.” (Kamenskij, p. 81) Thus for old Norse one could say there is not a single giant work of fiction but the narratives may be taken all together as a giant work of fiction. And that this is a strategy/trait constructing the culture. No single work towers over the rest, although a handful could be more salient, just as no one individual towers over the rest as king or emperor or even top, ideal warrior. This feature clearly reinforces and expresses the Icelanders’ view of themselves as Viking Free State society members, a memory that became if anything more important to reinforce once Iceland was first under the Norwegian crown and later under the Danish. This self-identification and culture reinforcement can be seen as having historical consequences: in Norway, where there was no such literary reinforcement, the Norwegians lost their written language when they fell under the Danes, but Iceland preserved their written language.

I follow Dancygier (2012) and Davis-Secord (2016) in finding that features of grammatical structure have sociocultural import. I have aimed for a methodology “which is sensitive enough to fine-grained linguistic details, while opening itself up to questions
about cultural context…” (Dancygier, 2012). As Dancygier states: “what the analysis proposed in this book aims at is describing the consequences of lower level linguistic choices at the higher levels of narrative discourse.” and “… grammar is as meaningful as lexis and thus grammatical choices impact the meaning of texts.” (Dancygier, 2012:4, 7, 8)

Since grammatical choices can have consequences at the level of the overall narrative, when looking at the relation of sub-constructions (such as HP) to higher levels ones (such as the narrative construction itself), we find a web of relations and not a neat linear flow chart or a strict hierarchy. That is, the HP can contribute directly to the overall stance and cultural communication construction of the narrative (and does not have to first feed into a sentence and then a paragraph and then a genre etc). As Dancygier puts it: “… Grammatical choices can single-handedly construct (not just participate in) meaning configurations that they are ordinarily a part of.” (Dancygier, 2012) This supports my finding that the HP contributes directly towards stance creation.
6. Conclusions

Much more than providing immediate vividness and other uses suggested by Fleischman (1990) and others, I find that the HP strategy interacts and clusters with other strategies and features to do important culture-constructing work. This allows the narrative itself to function as a meta-construction and evoke an entire speech community frame or culture. My examination of the interplay of different levels and embeddings of the HP construction in narrative constructions in turn reveals how narratives can construct and express socio-cultural identity for an entire speech community.

The theoretical framework for this study is based in functional/cognitive linguistics. This perspective invites an interdisciplinary approach: when meaning is central, then the insights of research on social structure and culture become central as well. The study here confirms the centrality of meaning and will show that the meaning of a whole narrative is tied to the meaning of its smallest component parts: to paraphrase Silverstein, it’s meaning all the way down to the grammar.

Integrating functional and cognitive linguistic theory with sociolinguistic research on identity, subjectivity, and communities of practice and also with the linguistic anthropological research on discourse, stance, and culture has proven particularly valuable. Every time we speak, we are creating and expressing a stance and doing it within a cultural context, constructing, negating, and reinforcing the background culture. Some of this stance creation and expression occurs consciously, other parts seem to derive from a sort of creative intuition in which we are perhaps aware of the effect we are
aiming for, but we are not aware of all the strategies we are using to achieve that effect and stance.

The category of HP in narrative is consistent with the functional/cognitive view of categories in general. That is, like all categories, HP is structured via metaphorical and metonymic extension, generalization, inference, context, local analogical processes, and thus, it is polysemous. Its meaning emerges from its narrative collocates and its sociocultural context.
References


