

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE STUDIES
Exploring language from different perspectives

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Directive and Locative Meanings in Norwegian

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Introduction

In modern Scandinavian, e.g. Norwegian, the old cases have by and large been lost. Therefore, the old distinction between prepositions + accusative, meaning directive ('to some place') and prepositions + dative, meaning locative ('at some place') has been lost, too. In spite of that Norwegian - and the other Scandinavian languages - can still express the distinction between directive and locative meaning, by the use of adverbs. And these adverbs may in turn give additional spatial meaning to the sentence. Thus the result is that in many sentences there is a lot of information about spatial relations, maybe more than in languages like English and French.

Directive and locative

The first question is: how is the distinction between a directive and a locative meaning expressed? With prepositions that can have both a directive and a locative meaning (like *i* (= 'in') and *på* (= 'on')) a preposed adverb will often tell what meaning is intended. Without an adverb the default meaning is locative (if the context is ambiguous), therefore, a directive adverb is more often used than a locative one. The most common of these preposed adverbs are pairs, one having a directive meaning, and one having locative meaning: *inn* (dir.) - *inne* (loc.), *ut* -

ute, opp - oppe, ned - nede etc. (roughly corresponding to 'in/into/inside', 'out', 'up', 'down' etc.)

- (1) *Han løper (inne) i skogen*
'He is running in the wood'
- (2) *Han løper inn i skogen*
'He is running into the wood'
- (3) *Hun går (ute) i gata*
'She is walking in the street'
- (4) *Hun går ut i gata*
'She is walking into the street'

The directive adverbs are in many cases obligatory when a directive meaning is intended, because the default meaning of *i* ('in') is locative.

In the examples above we see that the adverb is different in (2) and (4). That means that these adverbs do not only have a general directive meaning, but they have other meanings as well. And these meanings are not always expressed in translations into other languages (cfr. examples 2 and 4). Both *inn i* and *ut i* are translated as *into*, but the choice of adverb tells us something about the places. The adverb *inn* tells you that the direction of movement is from a more open place to a more secluded place, while *ut* ('out') has the opposite meaning. The street is considered to be a more open place than a pavement or a house, while a wood is considered to be a more secluded place. This distinction is lost in English.

Sometimes we may choose between different adverbs in the same sentence: A sentence like

- (5) *Hun gikk ut i hagen*
'She went (out) into the garden'

tells us that she went from a secluded place like a house (into the garden), but

- (6) *Hun gikk inn i hagen*

tells us that she went into the garden from a more open place, like a park or a meadow. More examples:

- (7) *Jeg gikk ned i kjelleren*
'I went into the cellar'
- (8) *Jeg gikk ned til elva*
'I went (down) to the river'
- (9) *Jeg kastet papiret ned i søppelkorga*
'I threw the paper into the wastebasket'
- (10) *Jeg gikk opp på loftet*
'I went (up) to the attic'

If the movement is neither upwards nor downwards, and if *inn* or *ut* are not appropriate, we may use the adverb *bort* (lit. 'away'):

- (11) *Hun gikk bort til de andre*
'She went over to the others'

Locative adverbs have other properties than the directive ones. The locative *inne* tells us that something, usually the subject, is situated inside something, i.e. in a secluded place, while *ute* tells us that something is in an open place.

- (12) *Hun er inne i huset*
'She is in the house/ ... inside the house'

- (13) *De er ute i hagen*
'They are (out) in the garden'

From these examples we might say that the choice of the adverbs *inne* and *ute* to a great extent is dependent on what kind of place we are talking about, i.e. what is the meaning of the noun in the following prepositional phrase.

This is not the case with *oppe* ('up', loc.) and *nede* ('down', loc.), as we can see from

- (14) *Hun er oppe på veien*
'She is (up) on the road'
(15) *Hun er nede på veien*
'She is (down) on the road'

The choice of adverb here is not dependent on the meaning of the noun (i.e. the road) itself, but on its spatial relation to the speaker (deictic meaning). If the road is higher up than the speaker, we use *oppe*, if it is lower than the speaker, we use *nede*. Thus we get:

- (16) *Han er nede i kjelleren*
'He is (down) in the basement'
(17) *Hun er oppe på loftet*
'She is (up) in the attic'

The point of view may be different from the speaker:

- (18) *Her oppe på loftet er det fint*
'Here up in the attic it is fine'

Here *oppe* is used since the place mentioned is seen from the others' view or the "normal" view. In the same way I may write to the organizers of the conference in Ljubljana:

- (19) *Her oppe i Norge er sommeren kjølig*
'Here in Norway the summer is cool'

since I adopt a Slovenian point of view when I talk about Norway.

Translations

I have claimed that Scandinavians tell you more about places. And I think this claim holds if we look at possible translations of some sentences into other languages. Then we will see that in many cases parts of the meaning disappear in the translations.

If we take sentences with *inn i* and translate into English, quite often these will be translated with *into*, which corresponds well both formally and semantically.

- (20) *Hun gikk inn i huset*
'She went into the house'

But *inn i* may be replaced by *ut i*, and then one still has to use *into* in English, since *into* has a more general directive meaning in English. In such cases one has to either add *out*, which may not always be idiomatic or lose some nuance in the Norwegian sentence.

- (21) *Hun gikk ut i hagen*
'She went (out) into the garden'

The preposition *into* is also used in other cases, with other semantic nuances:

- (22) *Hun gikk opp i badekaret*
'She went into the tub'

Inn can only be used about horizontal movements, and can, therefore, not be used here. English *into*, however, does not have the same limitations. In Norwegian the initial movement upwards has to be expressed, but this nuance is lost in English. The adverbs *up* and *down* may be used in many cases, but are not so natural as *opp* and *ned* in Norwegian in these sentences.

- (23) *Jeg gikk ned i kjelleren*
'I went (down) into the cellar'
(24) *Jeg kastet papiret ned i søppelkorga*
'I threw the paper (down?) into the wastebasket'
(25) *Jeg gikk opp på loftet*
'I went (up) to the attic'

Adverbs denoting location may also be missing in translations into English. Cfr.

- (26) *De er ute i hagen*
'They are (out) in the garden'
(27) *Han er ute på plassen*
'He is in the square'

In the last example *ute* tells us that 'he' is not very close to the houses surrounding the square. This part of the meaning is lost in the English translation.

The same holds for sentences with *oppe* and *nede*, where these words tell us where actions are taking part seen from the speaker's location. This kind of information may be expressed in English, but seems to be less frequent than in Norwegian. Cfr.

- (28) *Hun er oppe på veien*
'She is (up) on the road'
(29) *Hun er nede på veien*
'She is (down) on the road'
(30) *Hun er oppe på loftet*
'She is (up) in the attic'
(31) *Han er nede i kjelleren*
'He is (down) in the basement'

Another part of the story is that when we compare texts in this way we see that in Norwegian we often use a phrase (verb + adverb), while languages like English and French use a simple verb: *gå inn i* = *enter*, *stå opp* = *rise*, *gå ned* = *déscendre*, *gå ut* = *sortir* etc. In cases like this the meaning may be the same in both languages, but the direction is more clearly expressed in Norwegian.

What I have claimed so far is also supported by authentic translations. I have looked at some authentic translations of some texts from Norwegian into different languages. (See Appendix.) And we can see from the translations that the Norwegian locative or directive expressions in many cases are lost.

In some cases this kind of information is only superficially lost, because a pragmatic interpretation of the sentence will give the information that lies in the Norwegian original expression, as in the examples 35 (*ta op af* > *take out of*), 44, 49 etc. In other cases one may find a verb in the translation that has some directive or locative meaning in itself, as in 41/52 (*stige op* > *rise/s'élever*), 56 (*reise seg opp* > *sich erheben*), 59 (*flytte ut* > *verziehen*), 76 (*komme ned* > *scendere*). In Slavic languages the meaning of the Norwegian adverb may often be found in verbal prefixes, as in 82.

But in many cases there is some information in the Norwegian original that is to be found nowhere in the translation. In example 31 *ind* shows that there is some movement from a room to another. In ex. 32 and 33 the word *nede* indicates that Relling and Molvik are at some place lower than where the speaker is situated. In ex. 34 *op* shows that the speaker has somehow been walking upwards (from another floor or from some house lower down). In ex. 59/68 *ut* shows that Aker is a place that is considered to be outside the city or outside the centre of the city. In ex. 65 *ned* tells us that the street where the people are walking (Pilestrødet), slopes down. In all these - and other - cases there are some nuances that are lost in the translations. The same picture holds more or less true for all the languages represented in the appendix. There are cases where the adverb is translated, e.g. in 38, 72 and 75, but very often the adverb, directive or locative, is not translated at all. That is frequently the case when the adverbs are (the Norwegian equivalents to) *up* and *down*.

Conclusion

Words with meanings like 'in', 'out', 'up', 'down' and others seem to be more used in Norwegian - and the other Scandinavian languages - than in several other European languages. These adverbs often have the function of making a distinction between a directive and a locative meaning, but they may also give additional meaning to the sentence, the result being that the listener will get a broader picture of the locations mentioned in the sentence. But the nuances these adverb give to the meaning of the sentence are often lost in translations into other languages.

Appendix: Authentic examples

Ibsen into English:

Jeg vilde bare ind til dig, far > I just wanted to be beside you, Daddy.
... jeg tror næsten han er nede hos Relling? > ... he is very likely in with Relling
Nå, men nede hos Relling og Molvik, da? > Well, what about going in with R and M?
... jeg vilde se op til dig > ... I would be looking in
... tar brevet op af kåbelommen > She takes a letter out of the coat pocket
... når jeg går ned til ham > ... when I go and see him
... så lægger jeg ned skjorten og den andre > ... I will put the shirt and other things in

Undset into English:

Han og Kristin vinket ned til moren, som de kunde se ute på vollen [10] > He and Kristin waived to Ragnfrid, whom they could see down below at home, standing out in the sward by the houses [6]
Men Isrid kom bort til børnene [15] > But Isrid came to the children [12]
... og den snuste ned i hendene hennes med sin bløte mule [19] > ... while he nosed round her hands with his soft muzzle [16]
Hun ... så sitt eget mørke billede stige op fra bunnen [19] > She ... saw her own dark image rise from the bottom [16]
Lavrans skulde neste dag ind til et vann lenger inne på fjellet [21] > Lavrans was to go the next day to a lake farther in the mountains [18]

Undset into German:

... hun skulde følge med sin far op på sæteren deres [9] > (dass) sie ihren Vater auf die Alm begleiten sollte [11]
... han løftet henne op bak sig [9] > ... er hob sie hinter sich aufs Pferd [11]
Men Isrid kom bort til børnene [15] > Isrid ging zu den Kindern [17]
... og den snuste ned i hendene hennes med sin bløte mule [19] > ... und er schupperte mit seinem weichem Maul in ihren Händen [20]
Lavrans skulde næste dag ind til et vann lenger inne på fjellet [21] > Lavrans wollte am nächsten Tag zu einem See tiefer drinnen in den Bergen [18]

Undset into French:

... han løftet henne op bak sig [9] > ... il la souleva et la plaça derrière lui [10]
... hun kom løpende ned fra svalene [9] > ... celle-ci arriva de la galerie en courant [10]
Men Isrid kom bort til børnene [15] > Mais Isrid vint trouver les enfants [17]
... og den snuste ned i hendene hennes med sin bløte mule [19] > ... il renifflât dans se mains avec son fin museau [21]
Hun ... så sitt eget mørke bilde stige op fra bunnen [19] > Elle ... vit son propre image, sombre, s'élever du fond [22]
Lavrans skulde næste dag ind til et vann lenger inne på fjellet [21] > Laurent devait se rendre le lendemain à un lac plus loin dans la montagne [24]

Hamsun into German:

Jeg la meg med albuerne ned i vinduet [7] > Ich legte mich mit den Ellbogen ins Fenster [5]
Jeg tok mit manuskript op av lommen [43] > Ich zog mein Manuskript aus der Tasche [49]
Jeg reiser meg op fra benken [43] > Ich erhebe mich von der Bank [49]
Jeg ... kikket ind i min hule hånd [44] > Ich ... schaute in meine hohle Hand [50]
Nede ved Jærbaneetorvet var jeg imidlertid blitt så træt at jeg ikke følte mig istand til å fortsatte helt ned til bryggen [45] > Beim Bahnhofplatz war ich jedoch so müde geworden, dass ich mich nicht dazu imstande fühlte, bis hinunter zum Hafen zu gehen [52]
Hvorfor kunne ikke hele huset være flyttet ut i Aker ... ? [47] > Warum war denn nicht gleich das ganze Haus nach Aker verzogen ... ? [55]
Jeg ... bad ham ... lukke mig ind [47] > Ich ... bat ihn ... mir aufzuschliessen [55]
... han hadde bedt om å få sine brever sendt ned til Hermansen i Toldbodgaten [36] > ... er hatte gebeten, seine Briefe zu Hermansen in der Toldbodstrasse zu senden [65]
Jeg tar brevene op av lommen [56] > Ich hole die Briefe aus der Tasche [66]

Hamsun into French:

Jeg la meg med albuerne ned i vinduet [7] > Je m'accoudai à la fenêtre [14]
... lød det alleslags underlige hvin op gjennom gulvet [8] > ... toutes sortes de sifflements bizarres se faisaient entendre à travers de plancher et les cloisons [15]
Endelig reddet jeg mig ind i en sidegate hvorfra jeg tok veien ned i Pilestredet [15] > Enfin je cherchai refuge dans une rue laterale d'ou je fis route vers la rue des Saules [31]

Jeg tok mit manuskript op av lommen [43] > Je tirai le manuscrit de ma poche [87]
Nede ved Jærbaneetorvet var jeg imidlertid blitt så træt at jeg ikke følte mig istand til å fortsatte helt ned til bryggen [45] > Toutefois, descendu à la place du Chemin-de-Fer, j'étais si fatigué que je me sentis hors d'état de continuer jusqu'au quai [93]
Hvorfor kunne ikke hele huset være flyttet ut i Aker ... ? [47] > Au fait, pourquoi toute la maison n'aurait-elle pas déménagé dans le quartier d'Aker ... ? [96]
Vis den herre op i den reserverte avdeling [49] > Conduisez le monsieur à la section réservée [100]
... han hadde bedt om å få sine brever sendt ned til Hermansen i Toldbodgaten [36] > il avait prié qu'on fasse suivre ses lettres chez Hermansen, rue de la Douane [114]
Jeg tar brevene op av lommen [56] > je tire les lettres de ma poche [115]

Ibsen into Italian:

I eftermiddag blir jeg ferdig med arbeidet der nede i skolehuset [210] > Oggi pomeriggio finisco mi lavoro, giù alla scuola ... [4]
... jeg hørte nede ved stoppestedet at Osvald skal være kommet [216] > Mi pareve giusto di aver sentito, all'imbarcadereo, che Osvald era tornato [11].
Og De ser vel flottig ned til ham om dagene? [216] > E anche voi, voglio sperare, lo vedete spesso, no? [12]
Mitt tøy står nede hos landhandleren [218] > L'ho lasciato di sotto, dal bottegaio [14]
Han kommer ned siden; nu ligger han bare oppe og hviler seg litt [219] > Deve scendere a momenti, si è solo messo un po' sul divano, a riposare [15]
Sist han var oppe og talte med meg ... [225] > Proprio l'ultima volta, quando è venuto a trovarmi [22]
Jeg fant fars pipe oppe på kammerset [227] > Beh, su in camera ho trovato la pipa di papa [25]
Så hørte jeg vår stuepike kom opp fra haven [237] > ... quando e arrivata la nostra cameriera, che andava a inaffiare i fiori del giardino [39]

Gaarder into Serbo-Croatian:

... falt blikket ned på en rød kassett [4] > ... pogled mi je pao na jednu crvenu kutiju [7]
1. ... han pekte ned på kassetten [6] > ... pokazujući prstom na kutiju [8]
2. ... da hun med ett kom feiende inn i Milano [23] > ... kada je dojurila u Milano [17]
3. ... den morgenen da vi gikk nede på Forum Romanum [43] > ... onoga jutra kada smo šetali preko Rimskog foruma [31]
4. ... så myste jeg mot solen og så opp på deg [65] > ... i ja sam žmirkala prema suncu i gledala te odozdo [45]
5. ... men [du] kikket rådløst ned i bakken [65] > ali si pogledao zbunjeno u tlo [45]
6. Kan du huske hvordan vi ble stående og peke opp på de snedekte fjellene ... [113] > Sećaš li se kako smo zastali i pokazivali na snegom pokrivenne planine ... [75]

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