

## Dative case – testing informant data and data collection methods

Janne Bondi Johannessen, Signe Laake and Arne Martinus Lindstad  
*University of Oslo*

Dative case is a feature that does not belong in any of the two standard written varieties of Norwegian, *bokmål* and *nynorsk*, but which is well known to exist in many dialects. The dative category has only survived on semantically definite categories: preproprial articles, pronouns and definite form of nouns, in contrast to other inflectional categories, and in contrast to Old Norse. Thus, dative is a category that belongs to the determinative system of nominals. Dative case is triggered in the complement position of certain verbs (indirect object of ditransitives and benefactive objects), adjectives and prepositions. A couple of examples are provided in (1):

- (1) a. ja ha ru ha ru vøre nå **åt** sæter-**n** du nei i høst? Alvdal: speaker 04  
yes have you have you been anything at pasture-Dat.fem.sg you no this autumn  
'So, have you spent any time at the pasture this autumn?'
- b. så jekk e tre daga i vek-**un** då i småskul-**un**... Vang: speaker 01  
then went I three days in week-Dat.fem.sg then in small.school-Dat.fem.sing  
'... then I went three days a week to the elementary school...'

We have two objectives with this talk, one empirical and one methodological:

First, we look at three dialects that are, by traditional assumption (see e.g. Faarlund 2000), thought to have dative, and check to which extent this is supported in actual speech. These are the dialects of Alvdal, Skreia and Vang (in Valdres). We show that dative forms persist in the spontaneous speech of at least some speakers from all three dialects. There are, however, considerable differences in the extent to which this grammatical feature is put to actual use, both among speakers of the same dialect, and interdialectally. Dative is maintained as a grammatical category in all three dialects, but in a much stronger degree among the older speakers, showing that the feature is perhaps on the verge of becoming extinct. This is supported by the fact that we have only found dative documented after certain prepositions, and there is variance between the speakers, cf. (2), an excerpt from a conversation between two informants (age above 50):

- (2) a. ... ja va de e snakke **mæ a** Gunnar om dagen Alvdal: speaker 03  
... yes was it I talked with him.Dat Gunnar on the.day  
'... yes, what was it I talked with Gunnar about the other day...'
- b. ... ru snakka **me n** Gunnar om nå så ... Alvdal: speaker 04  
... you talked with him Gunnar about something so  
'... you talked with Gunnar about something so...'

(To preserve anonymity, the male name *Gunnar* has been arbitrarily chosen in these examples.) The preproprial article *a* in (2a) indicates dative, while *n* in (2b) is the neutral option. Note that the preposition *med* 'with' is the same in both examples.

In addition, dative seems to be more prevalent in Vang than in the other two dialects. This might be due to the Vang dialect having preserved a richer inflectional system than the other two in the first place, and it is also grammatically more distinct from the standard language than the other two dialects, thus the pressure from the standard variety might not be felt that strong in this area.

Our second task is to compare two sources of data obtained from the informants. The first source is conversation and interview data, more specifically spontaneous speech recorded, processed and put into a searchable corpus. The second is based on speaker intuitions, i.e. the informants' evaluation of test sentences presented to them in a questionnaire. There is a certain degree of discrepancy between what the informants report in the questionnaire and their actual linguistic practice. One example are young speakers that accept examples like (2a), while they never produce such examples themselves, always resorting to the (2b) variant. This raises important questions about the methodology used in data collection, and shows that the notion 'grammar' (of an individual) in the technical sense of the word might be a vague concept when applying different methodologies. It also accentuates the necessity of having access to different kinds of data when doing fieldwork.