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NORSKRIFT

Institutt for nordisk språk og litteratur

Postboks 1015, Blindern

OSLO 3.

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A STUDY OF THE USE OF
POLITENESS STEREOTYPES
IN MODERN SPOKEN NORWEGIAN

by
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INTRODUCTION

Every language has its own special array of stereotyped phrases used in greetings, leave-takings, thanking, and so on and, certainly among European languages, Norwegian is one of the richer in this respect. The particular expression used in a given situation will nearly always be dependent on the relationship between the interlocutors - the relative ages, degree of familiarity, and even the mood of the speakers at the time. These factors all combine to give Norwegian a wealth of conversation formulae which are, to a great extent, limited in use by fairly specific boundaries and which also, even in this age of more relaxed formalities, are still rigorously demanded in many situations by and from all ages and classes of speaker. Failure to observe these rules of conversational politeness can often result in quite serious offence being given, especially in areas such as thanking. This is applicable to the whole population, though probably more so to the older generations.

By "politeness stereotype" is meant the recognition of the status and value of the interlocutor as a member of the same society in that given situation, and hence the social obligations owed the one by the other, formulated by use of universally familiar speech units. ("Universal" here is obviously limited to the population for which such linguistic units are or might be relevant.)

The interest in this subject was originally aroused by the frequent lack of exact or sometimes even partial correspondence between Norwegian politeness phrases and those of other languages, most notably English. The aim of this investigation is to draw up a classification and description of the use of Norwegian politeness stereotypes in Oslo, and subsequently

to provide extensive guidelines concerning which phrase could or should be used by whom in any given situation - in short, that its use should be equivalent to that when spoken naturally by a native Norwegian.

The purpose will be to classify the phrases according to several variables such as any hierarchy factor, for example in age or experience, between the speakers, the degree of intimacy or familiarity between them, their mood or humour, any reference to the sex of the interlocutors inherent in the particular phrase or phrases used, class differences, depth of emotional feeling involved in the salutation, and the degree of formality required or employed in the situation.

Because of the many and large discrepancies in usage between Norwegian and English, it obviously serves no useful purpose to give English translations of the Norwegian phrases; in most cases they would be at best misleading, and more often than not, quite meaningless. The only way to convey their real meanings and manner of use is to present them in a context, and this is what has been done in the section describing the results of the study. Where any English translations or corresponding usages are included, they must be regarded, firstly as only an approximate guide, and secondly as idiosyncratic on the part of the writer. In some cases, an expression used predominantly in American English rather than British English will be included where this is thought relevant or helpful.

There is no bibliography attached to this study for the simple reason that, if any material relating to this field of investigation has in fact been published, the staff of the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Oslo were not aware of its existence, and hence there was no material available for background study.

METHOD

The material was collected in the first place simply by the "eavesdropping" method - overhearing exchanges in all the ordinary day-to-day situations of life. This original corpus was then added to from personal experiences, again in everyday contexts, and also a few specialized situations. In every case, the expression or phrases used were always noted together with the context of situation, the relative status of the interlocutors, and other relevant observations about that which might have taken place or been said immediately before or after the phrase was used.

When the data collected by these two methods had been collated, the remaining obvious situational gaps were filled in by elicitation. This was done by describing a situation to the informant which did not seem to be covered by any of the phrases previously obtained, and then eliciting in this way the appropriate response.

These three steps seemed to provide a fairly complete list and the less common items were gradually added by the informants themselves, either having been suggested to them by previously described situations which initially produced other items, or because those phrases were current in their own experience but not in that of other people.

The second part of the work on the material was done entirely in conjunction with native Norwegian informants. For every item in the list, they were asked to describe as exactly as possible how, when and by whom the particular phrase would be used. Each informant was asked to give, in as much detail as possible, any intuitions or emotional feelings aroused by the phrases. The results produced by one informant were then tested against replies from other informants.

No informant was questioned for more than one hour at any one session and no other person was admitted during these

sessions, in case the replies could for any conceivable reason be distorted. The informants always gave their replies in Norwegian and, except in those cases where the informant's command of English was for practical purposes as good as their mother tongue, the questions and invented situations were also formulated in Norwegian.

In this way the results from both sections corroborated each other, and the two parts of the corpus acted as a reciprocal test of its validity.

The initial corpus was collected from all ages and classes of people of both sexes who came from all over Norway, but who had lived in Oslo for a longer or shorter period of their lives. This part of the material was obtained from places all over Oslo, from public transport and local shops right through the spectrum to festive occasions and formal dinners. This includes both personal and business contacts, formal and informal occasions, student and working lives, from Østkanten and Vestkanten (a euphemism used by many Oslo inhabitants to neatly divide the population of the capital into working-class and middle/ upper-class respectively) and so on. However, the very fact that this information was collected in Oslo makes it justifiable to call the investigation one concentrating on Oslo forms. Any forms which subsequently turned out to be dialectal variants were shown up under further examination using the informants.

There were about 20 informants used in the second part of the research, all native Norwegians speaking the language as their mother tongue. The great majority of these were aged between 20 and 30, of both sexes, and from all class backgrounds (this being defined very roughly from their fathers' professions). All were either brought up in Oslo or had lived there long enough to adopt many of the Oslo forms of speech, though while still retaining certain essential features of their dialects. Where a certain phrase or word seemed to be peculiar only to a certain dialect or region, and does not generally belong to what is popularly

called "the Oslo dialect" (ie. that form of Norwegian spoken by a person born and bred in Oslo and who has lived there for the greater part of his or her life), it will be mentioned as a variant, but this study concentrates almost exclusively on the forms used by speakers of the Oslo dialect.

In addition, three people aged over 60 were questioned, two men and one woman. This was in order to obtain "first-hand" information about the forms which tend to be used more among the older generation nowadays. Although the younger informants were able to give seemingly detailed information about phrases they did not use themselves, this evidence obviously had to be tested against information from actual users. All three of the older group of informants had lived in Oslo for all their adult lives.

The results have been divided up into sections dealing with stereotypes used for greeting, greeting follow-ups, their replies, farewell, "please", apologizing, thanking, replies to thanking, and general good wishes. Finally, there is one special section devoted to vaer så god, which it is impossible to classify under any of the other headings. As a kind of appendix will be included a short discussion on the use of De (the polite form of the second person singular pronoun, corresponding to French vous, German Sie, Russian ВЫ, and so on).

Within the sections each phrase will be given with a broad phonetic transcription based on the symbols and diacritics of the International Phonetic Association, and any variations will be followed by as complete a breakdown as possible on the contexts that phrase is used in, the categories of people who would use it, the assumptions and codes behind its use, intuitive feelings, how its use will be received by the listener, and so on. From this analyses it should then be possible to distinguish underlying patterns behind the various sections, and to draw some theoretical conclusions.

RESULTS

1. Greeting

Hei! (hai)

This was originally a loan word from American English, and has now been assimilated into the language to such a degree that it has received Norwegian spelling. It corresponds almost exactly to the universal use of "hi!" in America, and hence can be used in almost all situations by any sets of peers, although it is slightly more common among young people and students than older people. It is simply the universal greeting when meeting people one is already acquainted with, either on "neutral territory", so to speak, or when one receives visitors, either pre-invited or just chance, in one's home. Depending on the situation, the mood of the participants, etc., hei! can either be followed up by further conversation or left to stand on its own, simply as a recognition of the other person's presence. The latter happens more between people who are acquaintances rather than good friends.

The person's name can sometimes be added, eg. hei, Marianne! This is occasionally heard as an initial greeting, but more often has a rather specialized use. For example, if two (younger) people are working together on a particularly tiring or arduous job; after a long period without any contact between them, one might use hei in that way to the other, including the first name, as a kind of tacit recognition that both are working hard, although not really enjoying the work, and realise it must be finished as soon as possible, with a certain amount of care and attention devoted to it.

Within the family, all members will say hei! to each other, regardless of age. It is also quite usual here to add a name or name replacement - for example, the daughter might say hei, pa! to her father. However distant the relations and however great the age-gap, hei! is still the normal form of family greeting.

At work, the boundary of how far up the scale hei! is acceptable depends on the relative levels of seniority. Hei! will always be used to great subordinates, but a certain degree of contact must first be established with one's superiors, before hei! is accepted. There is usually no problem with immediate bosses, especially where the second person singular pronoun, du, rather than the formal pronoun, De, is used, but hei! is very rarely used in conjunction with De, and becomes less widespread as the distance (salary or otherwise!) between the worker and his employers increases, and hence the contact between them decreases.

Hei! has a very small degree of emotional content, or undertone of intimacy, that other greeting forms do not have. However, in a few situations it need not imply any personal feeling, the most obvious example of this being its use with someone whom one has never been introduced to personally, maybe has never even talked to, but who one knows works in the same building. Just the fact of daily visual contact makes it possible, after a certain period of time has elapsed, to say hei!. The same could also apply, for instance, if two people take the same train or bus every day, and the subsequent visual recognition is a good enough excuse for the use of hei! However, between Norwegians, this process usually takes a considerable length of time to develop.

Hei hei! (hai hai)

The same applies for this as for a single hei!, except that a proper name will not be added, and this form of greeting will only be used between friends, family members, etc. rather than mere acquaintances. It involves a little more feeling and warmth than hei! alone, and presupposes more contact and perhaps more familiarity between the interlocutors. There is usually a feeling that the people concerned are genuinely happy to see each other, and this form of greeting is much more likely to be followed by a further exchange of some kind, either leading into other

pleasantries or into a full conversation.

Hei du! (hai dʌ:)

This is one of the warmest greetings one can give. The use of du in this way always conveys a feeling of familiarity and liking, and this phrase expresses real pleasure in seeing someone. Again, it is more usual among younger people, and only between peers. It contains a certain element of unexpectedness and surprise, as if the people concerned had not met for a while, and were not expecting to see each other in this situation either. This greeting will, almost without exception, be followed by further conversation.

Hei De! (hai di:)

This is used purely as a method for attracting someone's attention. Hei! can never be used together with De, the formal pronoun, as a normal greeting. In the context of attracting attention, an example would be if a stranger walks past on the street and drops something without realizing it, then another passer-by might call Hei De! in order to bring him back. The phrase can sometimes be replaced by hei der! (hai dar), literally translated as "hi there!". This achieves exactly the same purpose, and is a way of avoiding the decision whether to address the person concerned using the formal or informal pronoun.

Mornings! (mɔ:ɲɪŋs)

This is a very slang greeting heard frequently from people who work out on the streets, for example dustmen, postmen, dockers and so on, who get to know the people who pass by regularly, and every morning the workers will shout a cheery Mornings! to those people they have come to recognize, be they working-class folk like themselves, or elegant ladies from Vestkanten.

Morn! (mɔŋ)

Morn! is the neutral form of greeting, used by people of all ages at all times of the day. It is especially common in a business situation, where members of a large organisation know each other vaguely or just by sight, and will greet each other in passing without stopping to talk further. Although used quite extensively among younger people, its most general use is among older people, or between a younger and an older person, and especially by the junior party to someone he or she considers to occupy a more elevated spot in the "pecking order", so to speak - for example, a secretary to her manager, a student to the Dean of her faculty, and so on.

It is also the most common form of greeting in shops, restaurants and business life, where some form of greeting as a preliminary is required, and where there has been no previous contact between the people concerned before, except possibly in the same relationship as in the present given situation.

Morn! is thus somewhat more formal than hei!, with no particular warmth or special feeling in it. Its effect is not negative in the sense of creating distance between the interlocutors, but it does not in itself create any feeling of closeness or personal contact either.

Morn morn! (mɔŋ mɔŋ)

This is a more friendly extension of morn, giving a pleasanter, more open impression. It is more positive than simply morn, and when doubled is used much more among the more senior members of society. The most popular example would be that of the housewife popping into the corner shop several times a week, where she has been a good customer for years, and greeting the lady behind the counter, who is also a more or less permanent fixture, with a cheerful morn morn! The double form is only used between friends, not mere acquaintances, and never, when said seriously, among members of the family.

It can also be said with a certain humour lying behind it. In this case the people concerned must know each other well and share a certain sense of humour, and it also presupposes that the interlocutors have a cheerful temperament and are in fairly high spirits (or at least as far as one can gather before actually speaking to them). By using a more formal greeting between close friends, it becomes more personal and intimate for just this reason.

Adults often say morn morn when talking to children they know, as a sort of cheery, cosy greeting. It can never be meant seriously in this way.

God dag! (godd:g)

This is much more formal than any of the other greeting forms. It is used rather more by older people, and a man will often lift his hat when saying it. Younger people will sometimes say god dag when they are being introduced to a person considerably older for the first time.

This phrase is also fairly frequently used on the telephone, again for business arrangements and contacts - for example, "God dag, dette er Congresservice på Blindern; kan jeg få resepsjonen?" (Good morning, etc., this is the congress service at Blindern; can you put me through to reception, please.) In this context god dag seems to be used just as often, if not more frequently, than morn, which would perhaps have been expected.

There is one other slightly special situation where god dag is used seriously, and this time equally among younger and older people, and that again is in business surroundings. If, for example, a customer has business with a particular firm and finds herself in an office confronted by several faces and with no obvious indication as to whom she should address herself first, and then there is a silence while both staff and customer wait for each other to begin, one of the

staff in the office will often both provide an opening and announce himself as the one prepared to deal with the enquiry by saying god dag, but in this case he will not add anything more until the customer has introduced herself. If, on the other hand, the office was only occupied by one person, or the customer knew whom she wanted to speak to, she would start immediately with, eg. "Morn, jeg ville gjerne få snakke med X om..." (Good morning, etc., I'd like to talk to Mr. X about ...)

God dag can also have humorous undertones, used between good friends who would normally say hei! or such to each other. Then it is spoken in jest, indicating a humorous mood in addition to the personal warmth and intimacy contained in the greeting they would normally use to each other.

God dag, god dag! (godɑ:godɑ:g)

This is very rarely used seriously, being said more humorously by younger generations. It is a very cheerful greeting, indicating maybe extraordinarily good humour, and is used only with friends, never with strangers or mere acquaintances. It can generally only be said in the morning. Younger people who usually try to avoid any greeting forms incorporating god .., considering them old-fashioned and only for older people, may be heard to use this double form, but always in jest. Those of the older generation will use the single form as a greeting, and not the double. It is heard quite often in a situation such as the following: a friend has her back to you, for example in a supermarket, and you wish to attract her attention and tell her you are there; then you might well say "god dag, god dag!"

God morgen (go:mɔ:n)

This can be used in either of two ways - either as a formal greeting to business associates whom one does not know very well, and particularly people one would say De to, at any time

before noon. However, it is quite a cheerful greeting, when one feels it really is a good morning, and so this greeting presupposes a good mood.

Otherwise it can be said humorously - perhaps to one's husband who is proving difficult to wake in the morning, or to the other members of the family who are already sitting around the breakfast table. Again one must be in good humour and feeling quite cheerful, as it is by nature a happy greeting. It is not dependent on age, although in its serious use there is a tendency for older people to say it more often than younger people.

God aften (go:aftn̩)

To a relative stranger, or distant neighbour above about 50 years old, god aften may be said as a very polite, formal greeting during the later part of the day, ie. after the evening meal which in non-rural areas in Norway is usually served between 3pm. and 4pm. The expression has been largely replaced now by god kveld, but although it has gone out of normal use there are still a number of older people using it regularly, especially in more rural districts.

God kveld (go:kvɛl̩)

God kveld is used in the same way and to the same people as god aften - a polite, fairly reserved greeting, not expressing any feelings or particular personal contact. Both god kveld and god aften are considered old-fashioned now. Similarly, god kveld tends to be used more, though not exclusively, in country areas rather than in the cities.

God kveld can occasionally be used jokingly among younger people, also later in the day, to friends one has not seen for a long time. The very fact it is an old-fashioned phrase only in natural use among the older generation gives it its humorous overtones.

NOTE: For younger people, all forms of greeting preceded by god .., ie. god morgen, god aften, god kveld, and so on, often seem slightly affected and unnatural when used, even by the older citizens. People of 20 to 30 consider them to be very closely connected to the De form of address, which is losing much of its popularity nowadays.

Velkommen (vɛlkɔmən)

This greeting is said either when welcoming people to a new house which has just been built, a new flat, summer cabin, and so on - in general terms, a "first-time" welcoming to a new place. Otherwise it is used as a welcome at large parties, weddings and suchlike, where there are a number of people present. It presupposes that something special has been prepared or laid on, and will only be said to people who have been invited, and are therefore expected - never to chance guests. The word of welcome is always on the lips of the host or hostess as they open the door, and the expression seems to contain assumptions of a certain degree of culture in both the hosts and guests, hence it is used more in middle-class and upper-class "society" gatherings.

Vel møtt (vɛl mɔt)

This is the standard opening to meetings and other formal occasions - for example, "Mine damer og herrer, vel møtt til det tredje landsmøtet av .." (Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the third national congress of ..)

It is also widely used by the chairman, president, etc. of large organisations, meetings and other formal situations where people have not met each other before. Then it will be said as a polite, formal greeting "on the floor" to individuals or small groups, rather than to a whole assembly. It is a very impersonal form of greeting.

Hallo (hallo:)

The person answering a private telephone will always open her side of the exchange with hallo, sometimes in isolation and sometimes followed by the name or number. Ja, hallo is also heard sometimes. It is usually said with an interrogative intonation pattern, ie. rising on the second syllable.

Otherwise, one sometimes hears "fine Vestkantfruer", ie. ladies of the upper middle class living in the more expensive areas of Oslo, greeting friends and acquaintances they meet quite often, with hallo instead of hei or its variants which most other people would use in a similar situation. Men will not use hallo in this way at all, and it is more or less limited to women between 35 and 50 years of age in the social group mentioned.

It is also possible to use hallo as a device for catching someone's attention, in exactly the same way as hei der! or hei De! Hallo is perhaps more common than either of the other two, probably because it does away with the necessity of specifying the pronoun.

2. Greeting Follow - ups

When two or more people approach each other, recognize each other, stop, say hello - then comes the pause whereby both parties commit themselves to entering into some sort of conversation, and it is this pause and conversational opening which "greeting follow-ups" is designed to cover. They express a general or specific interest in how things are, "how are you?", "how's life at the moment?", and so on. These phrases are of course just as relevant, again as opening phrases, in other situations, for example a hostess to guests who are just arriving, or a flatmate coming home from work.

Hvordan står det til? (vo:q̄a:n st̄: q̄ til)

This is the most "correct" and formal of this group of expressions, used especially by and towards older people. It does not correspond fully to "how do you do?" as, in the first place, an answer of some description is most definitely required and, secondly, the people involved must be already acquainted, however slightly.

Står det til? (st̄: q̄ til)

Står til? (st̄: t̄il)

These are both contractions of the previous phrase, and are both used in the same way and much more informally. Good friends of the same age would never use the full form to each other, nor would young people who, although not close friends with the person they were talking to, had met him or her at least once before. It can be used in any situation where, among older people, "hvordan står det til?" would be appropriate - ie. after greeting, where some indication is required that one or both parties wish the conversation to be continued.

Hvordan har du det? (vo:q̄a:n ha: q̄ d̄)

This is more personal than any of the phrases mentioned above, and hence will be used more among close friends. It is a way of asking more specifically for information, rather than just general politeness, and demonstrates genuine concern and interest - for example, it would be the most natural expression to use if a friend had been depressed or upset about something, or had been suffering a run of bad luck recently, and so on.

Hvordan går det? (vo:q̄a:n ḡ: q̄)

This is very often heard when adults are talking to young children, trying to show an interest in them and include them in the adult conversation, and asking them how they are.

It can also be used to convey the same as "hvordan står det til?" and its variations, by people with a degree of nationalistic feeling who object to using the forms of speech which are very closely linked to Danish, as the latter is. In this case, it can be said by anyone and to anyone, regardless of the degree of familiarity. However, some previous acquaintance is presupposed.

Hvordan går det med deg? (vo:qɑ:n gɑ: qø me: dai)

This contains a little more personal feeling than most of the other expressions. It is similar to "hvordan har du det?" but, as above, avoids the use of the Danish way of speech, and expresses more real interest in the people one is with. It is particularly common between friends who have not seen each other for a long time, and especially if one of them has had problems of one sort or another. The other friend would be likely to ask "hvordan går det med deg?" to indicate she was really interested and not merely being polite, and that, for example, sympathy and understanding were readily available if they were needed.

In all of the above expressions in this group, hvordan can be replaced by assen (ɑsɔr), which was originally used only in some of the non-urban dialects, but is now heard very frequently in Oslo, especially among working-class and lower-middle-class groups of the society.

3. Replies to Greeting Follow - ups

There are so many possible ways, with variations, of replying to an enquiry such as "hvordan går det?" or "står det til?", discussed in the preceding section, that it is difficult to know whether to include these answers as stereotypes or not. However, they find a place here, firstly for the sake of completeness, and secondly because there are a limited number

of these phrases and, depending on which one is used, they all convey their own special meanings and nuances to the listener. Hence there seems to be a justifiable case for including them in this study.

The interpretation of each phrase here depends to such a great extent on the individuals concerned, the facial or other gestures accompanying the reply, the situational context, and so on, that it has only been possible to give guidelines rather than a definitive or exhaustive analysis.

Takk, bare bra (tɑk bɑ:rə brɑ:)

This is the most polite and formal, and hence the most meaningless, of all the phrases used in answer to someone who is enquiring only out of politeness and a consciousness of duty, not from interest. Correspondingly the reply says nothing of value either, except that one appreciates being asked. It would obviously be said to vague acquaintances who know very little about one's personal affairs, and whom one has no wish whatsoever to enlighten.

Jo, bare bra (jo: bɑ:rə brɑ:)

This is similar to takk, bare bra except that it is less formal and stiff, and on hearing this the person enquiring would be reassured that everything really was all right. Again, there is no great emotional content, but as a generalization of one's present situation to people who are enquiring predominantly out of politeness, it suffices.

Fin, fint (fi:n fi:nt)

Kjempefint (ʤɛmpəfi:nt)

Both of these can be used interchangeably, and mean something quite particular. Either could correspond roughly to "fantastic", "really great", or some such reply showing a great deal of enthusiasm. For example, on asking someone who had just won

a large sum of money, the most likely reply would be "kjempemint!", meaning things could not possibly be better. Another example might be two boys at a party, both with their eye on a particular girl. When the boys meet the next day, the unlucky one might ask the other, "Åssen går det, da?" and get the reply "Fin, fint!" (depending, of course, on whether things went well!). This answer, in whatever situation, presupposes a very good mood and complete satisfaction with life at the moment.

Bare fint (bɑ:rə fi:nt)

Bare bra (bɑ:rə brɑ:)

This is a very general, common reply, considered by a few "finer" people to be slightly vulgar, but now standardized by most to mean "everything is fine, there are no more problems than one usually expects," and so on, though the situation does not merit anything stronger such as "fin, fint!". Again, the speaker will usually be in good humour, as this is quite a cheery and happy reply.

Jo da (jo: da:)

This means in general that things are neither particularly good nor bad, but life is plodding along just as it usually does. The reply shows a certain lack of enthusiasm, and is said more for the sake of giving an answer than to convey any special meaning.

Fint (fi:nt)

This is in a way a minimum reply, given in response to an enquiry by somebody whom one is not very interested in talking to. This reply generally serves the purpose of saying that there is nothing further to be discussed and that any conversation should be dispensed with if possible. It is not overtly unfriendly, but on the other hand not very friendly or encouraging either.

Jo, bra (jo: brɑ:)

Ikke så verst (ikə sɑ: vɑ:ft)

These tend to mean much the same, especially talking to people one knows, but not very well, and who probably do not even know about, let alone understand, one's problems. It indicates that life is not too rosy at the moment, but one is hoping for an improvement, and managing adequately in the meantime. Jo here gives this reply a hesitant, "so-so" quality, and "ikke så verst" can be translated almost literally as "not so bad".

Jo, takk (jo: tak)

This is most commonly said in reply to "hvordan går det?" especially to friends who know each other quite well. Its actual meaning depends very much on whom it is said to and the manner in which it is said - this reply, more than any of the others, relies greatly on intonation and non-verbal modalities such as facial expression, shrugging of the shoulders, and so on. For example, in reply to a question asked in the middle of a large family gathering, "jo, takk", accompanied by the appropriate expression, might well mean "yes, everything's fine", where one does not wish to lay all one's problems open to inspection, but on the other hand a close friend who gets the same answer might interpret it correctly as "everything's terrible". Hence it is impossible to lay down any firm guidelines here, as the interpretation of this phrase is so dependent on a great variety of factors.

Ålreit (ɔ:lrait)

OK (o: kei) or (o: kɔ:)

These two replies are beginning to come into fashion among younger people, especially students, obviously as a direct result of the increasing contact with British and American English. In themselves they do not give much information concerning one's state of health or satisfaction with life, but they will be used to indicate that the conversation should

continue. In other words, these two expressions dispose of the opening formalities with the minimum of fuss, and leave the way clear for proper conversation.

4. Farewell

Ha det (ha: də)

This is the most common way of saying goodbye, used almost universally among younger people and, to a great extent, now among older people too. It is said to friends and acquaintances, though not usually to people with whom one only has a business relationship. It is fairly impersonal, though not at all unfriendly, and is purely automatic and mechanical, hence with no overt show of liking or otherwise for the person one is taking leave from. If people are going away for a long time this phrase will probably be rounded out with other pleasantries first, but ha det is always the very last thing said.

Ha det bra (ha: də bra:)

This is used in similar situations, and to and by the same people, as ha det, but ha det bra imparts a little more feeling of warmth and interest, though it can be used equally with close friends and acquaintances, if one wishes to be slightly less impersonal. It tends to be used more than ha det alone if one is saying goodbye to a person who will be away for a while.

Ha det godt (ha: də gɔt)

This is almost identical in use to ha det bra, except that there is possibly a little more personal feeling in ha det godt. For instance, it might be said as a friend is leaving to go to the dentist, and one puts a kind of sympathy and genuine feeling into the farewell.

There was also an impression among some of the informants that ha det godt might tend to be used in preference to ha det bra when leaving members of the opposite sex, especially if one is interested in continuing or beginning some sort of relationship. This would be in keeping with the general impression of ha det godt, although this was by no means reinforced by all the informants. However, no-one denied that it could conceivably be the case.

Ha det hyggelig (ha: də hygəli)

This is used by and to the same people as ha det, ha det bra, etc., and in the same situations, except a little more feeling is involved, in the sense that the person saying ha det hyggelig is really concerned that you should have a good time and enjoy yourself. It is less superficial and shallow than merely ha det or even ha det bra and is in quite general and common use.

Hei (hai)

This can be used as a farewell as well as a greeting, and is adopted from the use among Swedish young people who rarely use anything else. Although its use is not so widespread as ha det, it is used in exactly the same way, except that some people feel it can sound rather abrupt. Again it presupposes no special emotion, either positive or negative, for the person one is leaving, but is merely a functional way of avoiding impoliteness. Within its limited sphere of usage, it is probably said most frequently on the telephone, especially to not-so-close friends and acquaintances where one does not wish to prolong the farewell process for longer than is absolutely necessary, and it often happens that the receiver is on the point of being replaced in any case as goodbye is being said in these situations, so the shorter it is the better.

Hei has in some cases been adopted by Norwegian younger people merely because they grew tired of ha det, which must rank as

one of the most mechanically-used politeness stereotypes, simply to change to something slightly more original, for what it was worth. Its use is more or less confined to Oslo among students and similar groups, and is by some very conservative circles considered to be a form of farewell used by more "reactionary" members of society, but this view seems to be based more on a misguided opinion of students in general, than on fact.

Hei hei (hai hai)

This is the same as hei alone in all respects except that the effect of doubling it often makes it seem less abrupt and curt, hence removing a little of that very impersonal impression that might be given when hei is used alone. But apart from this, everything discussed above concerning hei applies in this case too.

Morn da (mɔ̃ndɑ:)

Second only to ha det, this is a very widely used means of saying goodbye, said in all areas of business and office life, to people who give or receive information, help, services, wares and so on - in fact it is used by everyone in situations where the relationship has been a business one as opposed to personal. For example, the passenger alighting from a taxi would say it to the driver, if she felt inclined to say anything in farewell; the customer will say it to the shop-assistant after paying and having had her purchases wrapped; the client will say it to the bank clerk who has just cashed her cheque; and so on, in a multitude of other situations. It will very rarely be used between friends, except possibly on the telephone once in a while, because of the physical distance involved. There is no personal feeling whatever in this form of farewell; it is quite neutral and impersonal, though again without being in the least unfriendly in itself.

It is also the expression which is incorporated into a sentence when the general concept of saying goodbye to people is being

discussed, should such a context arise. The translation of "to say goodbye" is "å si morn da" - for example, as in "det er så trist å måtte si morn da til folk hele tida". (It's so sad having to say goodbye to people all the time.)

Morn igjen (mɔŋ iʝɛn)

The use of this expression is limited solely to business life, and is cooler and more formal than morn da, though it can be used in all the same situations. It is only rarely used by younger people, and an older man might well accompany the expression by raising his hat. Use of this phrase introduces or presupposes some sort of distance between the people concerned, either in age, superiority of one sort or another, experience, and so on. For example, a university professor would be very likely to say it at the end of an interview with a student whom he had had very little contact with; or the manager of a large organization might say it to the school-leaver who has enquired about the possibility of a job with the company, and who is obviously unsuitable.

Morn (mɔŋ)

In some circumstances it is possible to use morn as a farewell as well as a greeting. However its use is somewhat specialized - it would be said predominantly on the telephone to business contacts, and otherwise in a business environment, to people one does not know very well - either colleagues or visitors there purely on business - but where one does not wish to be ultra-formal or stiff. It is used quite naturally now in the cities, though this use originated in the rural areas - for example, it would in former times have been heard very often in a small country store or similar enterprise, and even now, the permanent inhabitants of a small tourist resort buried in the countryside will frequently use morn as a farewell to inhabitants and tourists alike.

... så lenge (sɔ: lɛŋə)

.. så lenge can be added to hei, ha det bra/ godt, or morn

(the latter being a contraction of morn da) and is used very frequently when, preceding the leave-taking, an agreement has been made to meet again in the fairly near future, and furthermore a date and time will usually have been arranged - ie. the agreement is specific rather than vague. The agreement can be, for example, to meet again the next day to eat out, or even to meet again on a definite date when one or both have returned from a holiday.

The choice of ha det så lenge, ha det bra/ godt så lenge, morn så lenge, or hei så lenge depends on exactly the same factors involved when choosing between the same phrases without the addition of så lenge. Though in the case of hei så lenge, this can occasionally be used with only a vague idea of a subsequent meeting behind it, and serves primarily to avoid the apparent abruptness of hei alone. In this respect it can differ slightly from the use of the other phrases incorporating så lenge.

Vi sees (vi: seəs)

This involves a definite feeling of "we'll certainly meet again quite soon", whether a definite agreement has been reached or not. It is a friendly, cheerful way of saying farewell, and although is heard mostly among younger people, can often be said between two older people. However it is not commonly used between people of different generations.

Ser deg i morgen (se:r dai i: mɔ:ŋ)

This is an exact translation of the English "See you tomorrow" and is used identically. The kernel "Ser deg .." can be expanded in different ways, for example "Ser deg senere" (See you later), "Ser deg igjen" (See you again), all these being used in exactly the same way and in the same contexts as in English. As might be expected, they are more commonly heard among young people, namely those who have had a certain amount of contact with the English language, as all educated people today under 30 years old have.

På gjensyn (pɔ: jɛnsy:n)

This is used more by older people, and has the sense that they are not going to see each other for quite a long time. For example, if a friend is leaving the country to return in four or five years' time, one might say as the final word, "På gjensyn". It cannot be used as a farewell when people are saying goodbye possibly for ever. In fact the literal translation (or as close to "literal" as is possible) is "until we see each other again".

The variation of this heard on the radio, at the end of a programme, is "på gjenhør" ("until we hear each other again"). This is used slightly differently in that the idea of a long separation is not present, but the overwhelming idea is one of reunion - ie. the programme is broadcast once a week or once a month on the same day at the same time, and so on.

Adjø (adjø)

This is now heard quite rarely, and only in situations which require something as near to "farewell for ever" as is practical. It sounds a little awkward and unnatural, though probably in this difficult situation it is never possible to sound normal and natural. It tends to give the impression of a word used to fill in a gap where nothing really suitable exists, but where one must say something. Adjø might conceivably be more at home among older people rather than younger.

Farvel (farvɛl)

This expression is now going out of use, but is still sometimes heard in older people's speech. It is rather poetic and formal, and used predominantly in upperclass circles. It is quite a neutral goodbye, expressing neither warmth nor any negative feelings, and as such would not be used to friends but rather to mere acquaintances, or to people who enter one's life on some pretext or other only fleetingly. However, the use of this term will nearly always provoke some mild reaction

of surprise or amusement among younger people either to whom it is directed, or who happen to overhear it in passing.

God formiddag (go: fɔrmida:g)

This form of farewell is not often heard, but where it is used it is only said before twelve noon, and in a work environment to someone leaving the office or workplace in the morning, for example to take over a watch, or to attend a meeting, etc. It is used as a farewell generally when the person concerned does not expect to return to the office that day before the rest of the staff have left.

God middag (go: mida:g)

This expression is heard quite often in an office or work situation. When one is finished with a normal day's work, it is customary to wish the other members of the staff "god middag" as one is leaving the office to go home and eat dinner (the gist of the phrase is "have a nice dinner", literally "good dinner"). Hence in Oslo the phrase will only be used before 4pm., when an ordinary working day finishes, and in the country areas will not often be heard after noon or one o'clock, when the main meal of the day is normally eaten. But it is only said to someone who is going home as usual to eat, not to someone who is going to a restaurant or somewhere else special.

The expression is not formal, but used just out of sheer politeness - hence it is particularly appropriate in a working situation where the people who work together are not necessarily the best of friends, but where everything reasonable is done to maintain a pleasant working atmosphere. Its use is possibly more common among older people, but it will come naturally also to younger people, especially if the initiative comes from someone of an older generation.

God natt (go: nat)

This corresponds fully to the English "good night", said when

either taking leave of guests late in the evening, or between family members who are going to bed. It is often varied by the more familiar "natt, da" or sometimes "god natt, da".

There are of course many other possibilities for saying goodbye, as there are with other common situations such as have already been covered, which are not so stereotyped. For instance, there is no single word in Norwegian which corresponds to the English "goodbye" which, perhaps with some embellishment, will always do in whatever situation regardless of the relation between the interlocutors. The situation where this lack is felt most acutely is when people who have become quite close friends must say goodbye, probably for a long time, and not quite knowing whether they will see each other again. It is not that, in these rather painful situations where much emotion is involved, use of a stereotype is avoided - one simply does not exist which adequately covers "goodbye" here. People tend to use phrases corresponding more or less to "it's been nice knowing you", "hope to see you again sometime", or other similar platitudes, and then the person departing will, hopefully, leave at some fitting moment during these, thus escaping the necessity of either party finding a suitable word or expression which actually says "goodbye".

5. Please

Vær så snill (va: ∫: snil)

This is the most usual and nearest translation to the English "please". It can either be used incorporated in a sentence, for example "kan du være så snill å sende meg brødet?" (can you pass me the bread, please?), where the "please" in this case is simply politeness, or where someone is making a polite, minor request - for example, an elderly lady who is having trouble coming down her front steps because they are covered in ice, might call out to a passer-by and say "kan du være så snill å hjelpe meg litt?" (would you be so kind and

help me a minute?). As shown in this example, være så snill often translates best as "to be so kind", although this is rather unnatural language in the majority of cases, rather than a prosaic "please".

Otherwise, vær så snill is often used in the sense of pleading, as a very personal expression. A child will say to her father, when begging to be allowed to watch television, "vær så snill å la meg se på TV i kveld!" (please let me watch television tonight!). It can also be really pleading, especially when said several times - for example, "vær så snill, mamma, vær så snill!" (please, Mum, please!), almost as a game, when it will be repeated either until Mother gives in, or the child is convinced he is not going to get what he wants under any circumstances.

Sometimes vær så snill is heard on its own, and in this sense means, depending on who says it to whom, "do shut up for a minute", "just a minute, please", and so on - most often said by a mother to her nagging or noisy child, eg. "Tor - vær så snill!".

Vær så vennlig (va: ∫: vɛnli)

This involves a rather negative feeling, and is a slightly more formal way of saying "please". It often has a sense of irritation or annoyance tied up with it, and will never be used within the family or between friends. It gives the impression more of an order than a request, with the bare minimum of politeness in its formulation. For example, the overworked conductor in a crowded tram, where everyone is standing at the back, might call out in a rather irritated, abrupt voice, "vær så vennlig å trenge foran!" (will everyone move forward, please). Similarly, a middle-aged lady who is used to having things done for her constantly might be having trouble doing up the zip of the dress she is trying on in the clothes boutique, and could direct her irritation at the young assistant, saying peremptorily, "vær så vennlig å hjelpe meg, da!" as if to say "what are you just standing there for, come

and help me!". Probably in English, in this sort of situation, the word "please" would not be used at all, thus abandoning all pretence at politeness. It is also possible to use vær så snill in these situations, which, although being semi-formal, removes the negative element.

Vennligst (vɛnligst)

This is more often written than spoken, but when spoken is not a particularly pleasant form of request, carrying with it an extremely formal, chilly undertone. One example might be a telephone call from the police: "vennligst møt hos fremmedpolitiet klokken 9 i morgen!" (Kindly report to the offices of the aliens' bureau at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning). This is certainly not a request, but an order which one simply does not disobey, except under threat of serious consequences. Another situation might be, after a violent row with her boyfriend, a girl says icily to him, "vennligst se og ha deg ut!" (kindly get out of my house!). Again this is no request, and holds no pleasant sentiment. As seen here, the best translation is often "kindly" rather than "please".

Er du grei (aɔu: grai)

This is first and foremost an expression used more in some country dialects, although it can also be heard amongst people speaking an Oslo dialect. It is a very informal expression and as such is used only between friends, never mere acquaintances. It is perhaps even more friendly than vær så snill, making the request sound as little as possible like anything approaching an order. A typical situation would be, talking to a friend who knows her way around the kitchen, "kan ikke du koke litt kaffe til oss, er du grei?" (do you feel like making us some coffee, or something similar). In English, "please" probably would not be used at all in this type of situation - we would be more inclined to use some sort of tentative, veiled request, such as "what about ..", "would you mind ..", etc.

Er du snill (aq̄u: snil)

Again this expression is heard more frequently, though not exclusively, in the dialects. It is nearly always used in a family situation; for example a mother asking her daughter to do some chore, in a friendly manner though showing she is not prepared to take "no" for an answer: "kan du skrelle potetene, er du snill" (can you peel the potatoes please, dear - etc.).

There are many other ways of expressing the concept of "please", more by the way the sentence is constructed using adverbial phrases rather than by a stereotype. In many cases, requests will be made with no hint of a "please" anywhere, something which sounds very rude to most English ears but which would not be natural Norwegian if said any other way. This happens most often in situations such as buying a newspaper or fruit at a kiosk, or tickets for public transport or the cinema. For example, someone wishing to buy a newspaper will put Kr. 2,- on the counter of the kiosk and say simply "Dagblad". Or, at the ticket office in the railway station, a request such as "to stykker til Bergen, tur retur, ikke røyke" (two return tickets to Bergen, non-smoking), with no suggestion of a "please", is quite normal, and not considered impolite at all.

With many of these requests, it is often possible to add takk at the end, which in this case doubles as "please". It is not very usual in the case of a brief request, such as for a newspaper, but it is more commonly heard after a longer or "multiple" request - for example, at the same kiosk, "to epler og en banan, takk" (two apples and a banana, please), or in the cinema "to stykker til den første forestillingen i morgen kveld, takk" (two tickets for the first showing tomorrow night, please). Hence takk seems more widely used for longer requests, possibly arising from a subconscious feeling that the politeness additions should have much less part in such a request than the part of the sentence actually concerned with items desired. In "Dagblad, takk" 50% of the

request, in terms of independent units in the sentence, is given over to being polite, and, for most Norwegians, this gives the role of politeness and "manners" a far too great importance.

The way a sentence is organized, with its choice of verb and tense within the verb, and the use of adverbial phrases, can often incorporate the idea of "please" in different situations, even if it is not expressed explicitly. In situations where a higher degree of politeness is called for, for example in rather more exclusive shops, one often says, eg., "jeg ville gjerne ha en aftenkjole" (I'm looking for an evening dress, please), and this has an element of doubt in it, as if one is not quite sure what one is looking for. The gjerne here gives the sentence its politeness, without which the person addressed might feel the request is very abrupt and somewhat rude, immediately creating a certain antagonism.

"Jeg skulle gjerne ha" is the more natural expression, not quite as formal as using ville. Again, this would be used in shops and businesses of a fairly high standard, where a certain mastery of the rules of politeness is taken for granted.

The other commonly-heard expression with gjerne is "jeg ville gjerne ha". Whereas the other two use what may be considered the conditional tense of the verb, to indicate some uncertainty and perhaps deference, "jeg vil ha" is just a straightforward statement of requirement. This will be heard more frequently in smaller, general shops where people do not stand on ceremony - for example, in a local supermarket, "jeg vil gjerne ha en stor pose med nøtter". This is also regarded as a quite polite, respectful means of putting forward one's request, as are any requests formulated to include gjerne.

Among the more functional, straightforward ways of expressing a requirement are sentences concluded with takk - for example, "jeg skulle ha to par strømper, takk" (I'd like two pairs of

stockings, please), is more respectful, using the conditional tense, than for example, "jeg skal ha tre kilo poteter" which one is more likely to hear at the market-place.

Of course, all these depend to a certain extent on how the initial question from the shop assistant or whoever is phrased. In the fancier shops, when approached by an assistant who opens very formally and deferentially with "kan jeg hjelpe Dem med noe?" (may I help you?) one usually replies in a way to suit the occasion. However, when the man behind the market stall is shouting "vær så god!" fairly indiscriminately to all passers-by, whether or not they are interested in buying, one tends not to waste time with long-winded "polite" requests, but gets one's business there over with in as short a time as possible. In nearly all these situations, the Englishman who did not include the word "please" at some point during his request for service would usually be lacking in basic manners and consideration for other people, which is what the concept of politeness is all about, but Norwegians tend to express this in other ways, or even not at all, without being considered in the least rude or impolite.

In a restaurant, the usual way of ordering is, for example, "jeg skal ha biff med grønnsaker, takk" (I'll have the steak and vegetables, please), or "kan jeg få .." (can I have ..), which is perhaps used more frequently at more ordinary restaurants and cafes. Again, takk here is used to correspond fairly exactly to the English "please", as discussed previously where a request is made directly without wrapping it up in a complete sentence, in the traditional sense of subject and predicate.

In yet another way to indicate the concept of "please", the little word da can often be added to the end of a sentence or request. It occurs very often in family situations, where either a child is pleading to his mother for permission to go out, and sees no reason to be refused - "kan ikke jeg få gå ut, da?" (can't I go out, please?), where da is more an

afterthought to the effect that it is better to be polite than risk refusal as punishment for lack of manners. Or, a mother might ask her daughter for help in the kitchen by saying "kan ikke du komme hit og hjelpe meg, da?" (could you come here and give me a hand, please), again as if there is no thought of a refusal.

Da in these situations has the effect of taking any sting out of an order and making it sound like a friendly request, though the possibility of refusal does not seem to be taken into account. This also applies to da as an afterthought.

It can sometimes be developed into da vel at the end of a sentence, but this imparts a rather more negative feeling - a feeling of irritation and annoyance. For example, mother to daughter: "kom hit og hjelp meg, da vel!" (come and help me, please!) where the implication is something like "haven't you got anything better to do than read that rubbish while I'm doing all this for your benefit", and so on. Here, it is much less of a friendly request, both because of the use of da vel instead of just da, and the order itself is formulated in the imperative.

One further use of da which translates quite closely into "please" is, having rung up a total, the cashier will often say "det blir Kr. 22,15 da!" (that'll be Kr. 22,15 please). In this context, there is no other possible way of saying or implying "please", and it is often left out completely, with the cashier simply announcing the total amount of money due with no embellishments.

6. Apologizing

Unnskyld (*ʌnʃyl*)

In one use, unnskyld is a rough equivalent to "excuse me",

either as an apology when pushing past someone on the pavement or in a crowded room, or to try and clear a way through when the path is blocked by a lot of people. In the latter case, unnskyld is used on its own, repeated several times if necessary until the desired result is achieved. In the former case, it might sometimes be backed up by the beginnings of a sentence such as "unnskyld, kunne jeg bare komme forbi .." (excuse me, could I just get past ..), often spoken tentatively as if to apologize for being a nuisance, although the sentence itself is somewhat redundant, one's intentions usually being quite obvious.

Its second use in the sense of "excuse me" will be to introduce a question to a stranger, for example stopping a person at random in the street in order to ask for directions. It can either immediately precede the question, if you are both close enough to begin conversation at once (for example, "unnskyld, men kan De si meg veien til .." (excuse me, can you tell me the way to ..)), or the unnskyld can be used as a way of attracting attention, of telling someone who is some distance away that you want him to stop so you can tell or ask him something.

Unnskyld is also said, again as a translation of "excuse me", if, for example, one has to answer the telephone while one has company. It is used here as an apology for leaving the group for a short period of time, whether or not anyone was talking directly to you at that particular moment.

It is said in the sense of "I beg your pardon?" or "pardon me?" when asking someone to repeat a comment or something one did not hear properly the first time. It is not usually necessary to add anything to make them repeat their statement, if unnskyld is said with the right degree of enquiry in the voice. This is a rather correct, formal method of saying "pardon", used mostly to strangers or people one feels command a certain amount of respect beyond the norm. In everyday speech among younger people, it is more usual to say either

"hva sa du?" (what did you say?) or sometimes even in the present tense, "hva sier du?" if one interrupts in the middle of a narrative or a long exposition on the same subject, or occasionally these are abbreviated to simply "hva?" (what?) in very informal circumstances.

In some people's ideolect unnskyld can be used either instead of, or synonymously with, om forlatelse (see below) when, for example, treading on someone's foot or bumping into someone accidentally. Unnskyld can also occasionally be used in some of the same situations as beklager, but this is by no means a fast rule, and this use depends very much on the context. See below for details.

Unnskyld in its meaning of "sorry" can also be followed by a relative clause, for example, "unnskyld at jeg bryter inn, men .." (sorry to interrupt, but ..) or "unnskyld at jeg kom for sent" (sorry I'm late). This sentence construction is the only way in Norwegian to express the English "sorry" in these contexts.

Unnskyld meg (unſyl mai)

This involves rather more feeling than unnskyld alone, indicating that one really is sorry. Examples of common use would be when one has dialled a wrong number, and the subscriber at the other end of the line sounds more put out than necessary at being disturbed; then an apology along the lines of "unnskyld meg - da har jeg ringt feil" (very sorry - I must have the wrong number) would be in order.

If one rings late in the evening and wishes to apologize for disturbing the household at such a late hour, or if a guest arrives late at a dinner party or the like, where it was of some importance to be there at the right time, the usual apology, to show one really means it, is unnskyld meg.

Om forlatelse (ɔm fɔrlɑ:tɫsə)
though often realized as (mflɑ:dɫs)

This is most often said when unintentionally causing someone slight physical pain or discomfort - for example, standing on their toes or knocking into them - as in one of the uses of unnskyld. Om forlatelse can also be used, for example, when the person standing behind you, because you are blocking the way, has said unnskyld for the third time, and it is only the last time you realize who he is speaking to and why. Then om forlatelse will express "I'm so sorry" and just using that phrase will explain that you were not just being awkward, you genuinely did not realize you were standing in the way, and so on. It can in this type of situation often be followed by "det var ikke meningen" (I didn't mean (to bump into you) etc.). Use of this expression implies more sincere feelings than unnskyld, but is by some people considered rather clumsy and long-winded, and so some exclude this expression from their vocabulary altogether. Hence it is not indispensable in any situation, merely potentially useful.

(Jeg) beklager (jai bɛklɑ:gɔr)

Beklager, without the pronoun, will translate the English "sorry" on most occasions. It does not carry with it much genuine regret but is simply an expression of politeness. For example, when paying for an item costing Kr. 2,- with a hundredkroner note, one might say "beklager, men jeg har ikke noe mindre" (sorry, I've got no change). The use here of this expression implies something like "I know it's a nuisance, but I don't really care, and it's your job anyway", etc.

It is also used frequently on the telephone, either for ringing a wrong number - "beklager - har ringt feil" (sorry - wrong number), hence the same here as unnskyld, though the latter is perhaps slightly less common in this context; or "beklager, men han er ikke tilstede akkurat nå" (I'm sorry, he's not here at the moment), when answering the phone for

someone else. Again, it expresses no real regret, just an acknowledgement of some inconvenience caused.

It is possible to use beklager instead of om forlatelse for treading on toes and such, but this use is not that widespread, regarded by most people to be somewhat awkward.

Beklager on its own is a fairly mechanical way of expressing regret, without any particular commitment or involvement. However, once the pronoun is included, it becomes more than a mere politeness formula and becomes more bound, both to the people concerned and to the situation. Jeg beklager indicates feeling real regret, rather than just uttering the words emptily. Thus it is not used in situations such as doing people mild physical harm, dialling the wrong number, etc., where profuse regrets are not expected in the first place. But in situations where a little more genuine feeling and personal involvement are called for, jeg beklager is used - for example, "jeg beklager, men jeg kan ikke komme i dag" (I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't come today), when breaking an arrangement made previously. It can also be used in the same way as unnskyld meg when arriving almost embarrassingly late at a party or dinner - again indicating sincere apology. However, in this instance jeg beklager is often felt to be a rather more stiff and formal apology, out of place among friends, and acquaintances one has met several times before. A possible general translation for this might be "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid ..", where Norwegian combines the "double apology" used in English into one slightly stronger expression.

Dessverre (dəsvarə)

This can occur in any of the normal adverbial positions in a sentence, and its literal translation is unfortunately, though in many situations it will translate an impersonal, uninvolved and fairly uninterested "sorry", or "I'm afraid ..". For example, on making an enquiry at the theatre, one might be told "det er ingen billetter igjen, dessverre" (I'm afraid

there are no tickets left) by the cashier in the booking office, who in fact is not terribly worried whether or not one's evening is completely ruined because all the tickets for that particular performance have been sold.

Dessverre does no more than politely fill out the message one is giving. Another example would be, when answering the telephone: "han er dessverre ikke tilstede i dag" (I'm afraid he's not here today), where dessverre in this case expresses less interest in the situation than beklager. The latter might well be followed by, for example, "can I take a message?", but the use of dessverre often implies that one is not really bothered enough to do even that, only if the caller puts forward the suggestion himself.

Nei, dessverre is also heard as a reply to a request for something one does not possess. For example, if a friend asked if you had a pen she could borrow, a negative answer might be "nei, dessverre, jeg har ikke" (no, I'm afraid I haven't got one). This reply is probably more common between friends; to a stranger who put the same request, the answer would most likely be "beklager, men jeg har ikke, dessverre" (I'm sorry, I haven't got one, unfortunately), where more of a show of politeness is put on. As shown, dessverre can be combined with other phrases where its meaning corresponds more to the English "unfortunately".

Jeg er lei for .. (jai ar lai for ..)

This is used in a similar way to jeg beklager, but it carries with it more feeling and emotion. It indicates a certain amount of personal involvement, for example "jeg er lei for det, men jeg kan ikke komme" (I'm really sorry, but I can't come). It is also possible to include various adverbs: eg. "jeg er virkelig lei for det" (I'm terribly sorry about that), "jeg er veldig lei for .." (I'm very sorry ..) etc.

It also seems to be used as an indication of a guilty conscience

- for example, in the sentence "jeg er veldig lei for det, men jeg har glemt pengene" (I'm very sorry, but I've forgotten the money), the apology seems to be part of a bad conscience: for instance if someone had promised to pay back money owing on a particular day, but has not stood up to his part of the bargain.

Jeg er (veldig) lei meg (jai ar (veldig) lai mai)

This is used in situations where deeper feelings of regret or sorrow are called for. It is not a phrase which comes automatically or mechanically, as in other, less deeply felt phrases which are spoken out of sheer politeness. It can be said either to offer sympathy, synonymous with "du har min dypeste medfølelse" (you have my deepest sympathy), or because one has committed some blunder - for example, after the son has just damaged his father's new car, the first words he says might be "far - jeg er veldig lei meg men .." (Father, I'm terribly sorry, but ..). Or a third way it can be used is when one is sorry about something and cross with oneself at the same time. For example, if someone you very much wanted to see came to call while you were out shopping for ten minutes, and you know she will be away now for quite a long time, a predictable reaction might be " å, jeg er så lei meg!" said with a suitable degree of self-directed irritation.

There are many expressions in the area being treated here which cannot be considered as stereotypes, where the way of expressing regret or sorrow depends on the situation and is up to the individual. The ones heard most often include phrases such as "det var leit å høre" (I'm sorry to hear that), which is more of a polite, impersonal way of expressing sorrow, for example to an acquaintance on the death of a distant relative one has never met personally. This expression would probably not be used to a close friend, being replaced instead by something more personal. Other similar, fairly impersonal expressions which are sometimes heard are "det var vondt å høre", "det gjør meg vondt", and so on.

In fact, it is possible to make a generalization to the effect that, when Norwegians feel themselves personally involved in a situation, whether it be one which calls for joy or sorrow, they try to avoid standardized expressions which are in some cases inclined to lose their value by being used too much and too freely, and will often find some more original way of expressing their sympathy or pleasure, and thus puts over better what they want to say in order to indicate real sincerity rather than merely dutiful politeness.

7. Thanking

Takk (tdk)

This is the normal, neutral way of expressing thanks to someone who is doing what is expected of him or her, in rendering a service as part of a job, or in a gesture of courtesy such as holding a door open which is, one hopes, only to be expected. It is said as an answer to and recognition of ordinary gestures of politeness and consideration from one human being to another. Takk is also used as an acceptance of any object or article from a person whose express purpose it is to give it - for example, a waitress, a bus conductor, a bank clerk, a cashier, and so on. No particular emotions or deep feelings of real gratitude lie behind takk; it is simply the impersonal, minimum acknowledgement.

It also suffices as the same impersonal, unemotional standard to acknowledge good wishes - for example, for a good trip, a quick recovery from an illness, or any verbal good-luck message. For simply takk to be said in reply, the message itself will probably come from a not-so-close friend, or where the good wishes arose out of a sense of duty rather than from genuine sincerity.

Takk can also be combined with ja, jo and nei. For example,

if asked by the waitress in a restaurant whether you would like coffee now, rather than later, the reply would either be "ja, takk", corresponding very closely to English "yes, thank you", or "nei takk" (no, thank you) as appropriate. Here, the takk is really expressing appreciation for being asked and not forgotten about, and again is impersonal politeness.

Jo, takk will be said as a positive reply to a negative question. For example, a flatmate going away on holiday might ask obliquely whether you wanted any of her leftovers in the fridge by phrasing the question this way: "Vil du ikke ha resten av salathodet som ligger på hylla mi?" (don't you want the rest of the lettuce that's on my shelf?), and the answer, if affirmative, would be "jo, takk" (yes, thank you). This corresponds partly to the French use of si in answer to a similar negative question.

It is also sometimes heard in reply to an enquiry about one's health - the equivalent of "how are you?" etc. Jo, takk is just one of the many possible ways of answering, and the purpose of takk here is to say "thank you for asking". Sometimes it stands on its own, but more often it is followed by a closer description of just how things actually are.

Takk on its own is very much tied up with vær så god, which will be discussed later, in its meaning of "here you are", when an object, money, etc., is being passed from one person to another, and also in other relevant meanings of vær så god, where it is rarely said without being answered by takk.

Takk takk (tak tak)

This, contrary to expectation, is not a reinforcement of a single takk, following the tendencies of the greetings formulae, but rather indicates a limit where to stop. For example, if one's host is pouring a drink, takk takk indicates "when" - "that's fine, that's enough", etc. It is never used in its

double form to indicate a more sincere gratitude than takk alone - other forms must be used for this purpose. It is even possible to triple the expression - takk takk takk - and this would be used when, for example, the host keeps on pouring regardless! It could also have slight undertones of irritation - for example when a child is pestering his mother with chatter or complaints or the like, the mother might be heard to say "takk takk takk!" with increasing tones of annoyance, as if to say "that's quite enough, do please be quiet now, I really don't want to hear any more" - and so on. In theory, of course, takk can be multiplied almost to infinity, but that is entering the realms of the ridiculous.

Tusen takk (tʉ:søn tək)

This shows more appreciation than merely a brief takk, and is the most natural way of expressing sincerity rather than just politeness. There is a certain amount of emotional feeling in tusen takk which takk alone lacks. It can be said in a multitude of different situations, from the receiving of a gift, to being lodged for the night having lost one's way in the mountains, to acknowledgement of the audience's applause by the performer at the end of his show.

Mange takk (maŋə tək)

This carries with it almost the same emphases and nuances as tusen takk above, except that mange takk is more likely to be used by the middle- to upper-class, and middle-aged and upwards, as it is a rather more stiff and formal way of thanking.

Takk skal du ha (tək ska: dʉ: ha:)

The use of this phrase avoids being quite so abrupt and short as when saying merely takk. In contrast also to takk, takk skal du ha is rarely used in connection with vær så god.

It is said whenever a person has requested something and

subsequently receives it. It implies that someone has activated themselves in answer to another person's demand or request; although it may not be their job specifically to carry out a certain task, they have put themselves out to a certain extent to do it anyway. Takk skal du ha is a way of expressing thanks for the extra trouble when the provider of the service or whatever has done more than might be expected to give one what is required. In short, this phrase could be considered the standard appreciation for unexpected, unlooked-for politeness and consideration which exceeds the minimum.

Takk skal De ha carries exactly the same shades of meaning with it, except that one would be talking in this case to a stranger or to an older person one felt merited the formal way of address.

Takk for det (tak foꝛɛ:)

This is used very often at the end of telephone conversations, especially after asking for information of some kind. It can also be said when the information required is not available, or cannot be obtained. However, use of the expression implies that the information has been sought in the first place. There must have been some conversation first, and in a way use of this phrase says "thank you for the conversation, regardless of whether or not you were able to help me. But thank you for trying anyway". There is no particular feeling of warmth, real gratitude or personal contact behind the use of takk for det.

Strangely, this expression is also heard very much in Oslo amongst men and women serving on open-air market stalls, selling flowers, fruit, vegetables and the like. They rarely use any other expression when taking your money, whereas assistants serving in the larger ordinary shops are not heard saying this with any frequency, except perhaps in very small, privately-owned businesses, where the owner also makes any profit there is, serves the customers. Hence use of this

phrase could possibly be connected with people running their own small enterprises, where the person taking your money and the person directly responsible for how well the business flourishes are one and the same. However, this is only a suggestion and has in no way been proved to be the case.

There seems to be no great difference between the usage of men and women here, although there is a tendency for women to say takk for det slightly more often, men limiting themselves to a briefer, more functional takk.

Takk for meg (tak fɔr mai)

Takk for oss (tak fɔr ɔs)

One of these will be said by the guests to their host as they are leaving after a visit. It can be used either to good friends, whom one visits quite frequently, or to relative strangers. It implies that people have spent some time in each other's company, and that the hosts have demonstrated their hospitality by serving drinks, for example, or a meal. It is used very often after a whole day has been spent together, and only when the time has been spent in the host's own home, rather than on some neutral territory.

One of these is also often said after a period of several days spent as a guest in someone's home - perhaps the nearest equivalent of the English "thank you for having me".

Takk for meg will be said by one person who has been invited on her own, or has come on her own, and takk for oss is said by one or both of a couple who came together and leave together.

Takk for i dag (tak fɔr i: da:g)

This is said after having spent the whole day with someone, and is very frequently said by an employer to his staff at the end of a day's work. It presupposes in most cases that you will both see each other in the same situation the next

day, ie. that it is something habitual. It is also used on the radio at the end of a programme, usually those programmes which are broadcast regularly every day.

It does not contain such a sentiment of real thanks as does takk for meg - rather, it is a way of thanking someone for something they should have done anyway, as in a job. In takk for i dag there is much less emphasis on the aspect of one giving to another - it simply refers to the company, both or all profiting equally.

Takk for i kveld (tək fɔr i: kvɛl)

This phrase is used in the same way as above, when people have been having a pleasant time together during an evening. Again there is more emphasis on the actual fact of having been in good company rather than on the duration of the party or whatever.

Takk for i går (tək fɔr i: gɔ:r)

Literally meaning "thank you for yesterday", this is said to the host when meeting on the day after a party or social event. This is very much required by people of all ages and its omission will be regarded as rudeness or lack of appreciation on the part of the guest. It should be said immediately after greeting, and will often be followed by some other comments, for example "vi hadde det meget koselig" (it was very pleasant).

Takk for sist (tək fɔ ʃist)

This is required to exactly the same extent as takk for i går, but is used whenever the hospitality was given more than a day previously, ie. when takk for i går cannot be used. It must still be said even if several months have elapsed between the event in question and the next meeting of the guests of that occasion and their host, and again should

immediately follow any greeting stereotypes.

However, if the people see each other very often, or hospitality is offered by one party or the other on a regular basis, it is not so necessary to say this. It can also be said to others besides the host or hostess, for example to other guests at the same party whom one spent some time with, and then on meeting a few days or weeks later one may say to the other "takk for sist", in the sense of "thank you - I enjoyed your company, and it was pleasant talking to you". This use is by no means required to such an extent as its primary use - it is completely up to the individuals concerned, whether they enjoyed each other's company at the time so much that they consider it is worth mentioning again some time later.

Takk for maten (tak for ma:tn)

This is always said by all who have eaten to whoever has provided a meal, before rising and leaving the table. It does not only apply to guests but to all the members of the family, after every meal of the day, be it a formal meal sitting around a table or just a snack taken informally, for example while watching television. In the latter case, it should be said before the food is cleared away. Again, it is considered extremely rude and unappreciative if it is not said, and is one of the few things concerning manners and politeness which a Norwegian mother will spend some time and effort teaching her child not to forget, as it carries so much importance in Norwegian society.

Besides this phrase being directed at the immediate provider of the meal, for example the mother of a family, takk for maten is also being said to the original Provider at the same time. Very few Norwegian families say any form of Grace now before beginning a meal, but give their thanks after a meal instead, in this way - thus absolving themselves from any impression of ingratitude towards their Giver, but on the other hand not making the religious connection too obvious, as if the majority of families are somewhat embarrassed by

any overt show of religious faith, by giving only "earthly" thanks, as it were.

In more informal situations, such as a meal where only the immediate family are present, the phrase can be shortened to takk for mat, especially said by younger members of the family to one or other of their parents, but visitors to a home will never abbreviate it, being considered sloppy and impolite if they did so.

Takk for nå (tak fɔ̀nɔ̀:)

This is used between people who know each other fairly well, and is said after people have perhaps spent some time together, for example at an impromptu gathering of friends one evening. It implies that the particular group of friends are together quite often and so no special show of gratitude, appreciation, etc., is necessary, just a quiet, unemotional comment that the time has been passed pleasantly. Usually it is assumed that the people involved will see each other again in the not-so-distant future, and in this sense is very similar in meaning to takk for i kveld - except that takk for nå covers all times of the day and any length of time spent together. It is also heard frequently, spoken by the presenter, at the end of radio programmes, in the sense of "thank you for listening, and I hope you'll join me at the same time next week", etc.

Occasionally, it will be said in the sense of "thank you for the time we've had together - it's been nice knowing you" between friends who knew each other quite well, but without being particularly close, as they are leaving each other for a long time with no idea when or if they will meet again. It expresses all the sentiments necessary while avoiding any show of emotion or tearful farewell. Because of this, it tends to be used in this meaning much more between men than women.

Takk for følget (tak for føle)

This is most commonly said after two or more people have walked together for a while, perhaps on the way home from work, or on a hike and then, on turning off from the rest of the group, one person will say takk for følget, meaning "thanks for the company". But it cannot be used after any event where people have stayed in one place as the phrase implies movement.

It is also heard, for example, when a driver picks up a couple of hitch-hikers, drives them quite a long way, and has a pleasant time talking and listening to them, then on dropping the hitchers off the driver might say to them "takk for følget" in the sense of "thank you for relieving the monotony - it was nice having your company".

Takk for laget (tak for la:ge)

This is rather old-fashioned way of saying takk for nå, thanking someone for their companionship during a day or evening. This is also only used between people who know each other quite well. It cannot be said usually if people have been together for longer than a day but is quite common among older people after, for example, they have met each other by chance on the beach, or picnicing in the forest, and have joined each other for the rest of the time there - as one person or group is leaving, they will say "takk for laget".

Takk for gjestfriheten (tak for jæstfri:he:te)

This is said on leaving, mostly to and by older people, after one has been a guest in their home for a period of a few days. It is quite a formal way of showing gratitude, not involving any particular feeling except appreciation that the hosts have gone to a certain amount of trouble to accommodate one. It is especially used when the visitors did not, on arrival, know their hosts very well.

Takk for samværet (tak for samvæ:re)

This is most often heard at the end of religious gatherings, said in the sense of "it was pleasant being in your company." It is also said, instead of takk for nå and the like, by people who are religiously inclined at the end of social gatherings which are not particularly religious by nature, but where most of the people present are fairly staunch members of the Church.

Takk for samtalen (tak for samtã:ln)

This expression's most common occurrence is in situations such as where a person with an enquiry has begun to speak to someone qualified to answer it, and then both end up by having quite a lengthy general conversation on other matters. Takk for samtalen means literally "thank you for the conversation", and corresponds very well to the extensive use in America of "it was nice talking to you".

For example, a customer in a book-shop might ask the assistant if it was possible to obtain a certain book, and after the enquiry had been answered one way or the other, the people concerned might, for some reason, begin talking about books in general, or any other topic of conversation, and when eventually the customer leaves he will probably say "takk for samtalen". It has an element of unexpectedness about it, as the "conversation" referred to in the stereotype will not usually have been planned or anticipated, and thus will come as a pleasant surprise. It can also often be used on the telephone; after ringing a company for information and not getting it, the caller might decide he likes the voice of the secretary at the other end of the line anyway, and will continue talking in just general conversation for several minutes. At the end of this, either he or the secretary might well say "takk for samtalen" - again the element of spontaneity is present.

Takk for hjelpen (tak for jɛlpən)

This corresponds closely to the English "thanks for your help", said in similar situations - for example, your car breaks down and someone stops to give you a hand out of a difficult situation. Appreciation in this situation would be indicated by takk for hjelpen. It is not necessary that the "good Samaritan" has in fact achieved anything or made any progress; it is enough to thank him in this way for having done his best to help.

Takk for lånet (tak for lɔ:nə)

This is exactly the same as "thanks for the loan" when handing back a borrowed item to the owner.

Takk for oppmerksomheten (tak for ɔpmarksɔmhe:tn)

This will often be said in a telephone conversation, thanking someone for having remembered them and sent either verbal or written good wishes, condolences, etc. - for example a woman who has recently been widowed might ring and thank her friends for their help and support during her husband's illness by saying "takk for oppmerksomheten"; newly-weds will use the same expression to verbally thank friends for wedding-presents. It is a general phrase, perhaps slightly formal and reserved, used to express gratitude for material gifts, or for help and sympathy in difficult situations.

There are of course many other similar phrases which could be included here, all preceded by takk for, but those are self-explanatory and directly translated from Norwegian to English, and hence need no explanation, as their use is obvious when determined by a given situation - for example, takk for opplysningen (thank you for the information), takk for alt (thanks for everything - often said on parting for ever or similar emotional situations), and so on. Such expressions are not stereotypes in themselves, but are simply put together to meet the demands of the situation at the time.

Every one of these phrases, from takk skal du ha onwards, may be prefixed by tusen .., to put greater emphases on how grateful and appreciative one really is, and thus takes the particular phrase out of the ranks of mere expected politeness and puts into it some genuine warmth and feeling. For example, tusen takk for maten would indicate that, apart from being grateful for being fed, the meal was also extremely tasty.

8. Replies to Thanking

Vær så god (va]øgo:)

This is the answer which springs most automatically to mind when someone expresses thanks for help, some sort of service, or just for having been given something, either material or intangible. The nearest translation would be the American use of "you're welcome", or perhaps "don't mention it".

A mere takk or takk for det does not often merit a reply, but after more profuse thanks Norwegians feel compelled to reply, and the usual answer to tusen takk, mange takk, takk for meg/ oss, takk for hjelpen, takk for lånet, takk for opplysningen, and so on, is vær så god, as in all cases where something has been received, in response to a request - but it will not be used where the giving and receiving are mutual in any way. In this respect, vær så god is somewhat one-sided.

Vær så god is often said in reply to takk for maten, although this is not strictly correct. However, it is being used more and more among younger people, especially those who are not used to the role of housewife, serving dinner and acting as hostess, and the immediate reaction, on hearing takk for maten, as with takk for most things, is to reply with vær så god. It is very much an acquired habit to be able to say vel bekomme when necessary, which is the correct reply.

It can also sometimes depend on whether the person serving the food and the person who prepared it are one and the same. If not, the reply is very often vær så god - for example, if staying overnight in a youth hostel and, on finishing breakfast, one thanks the girl who lays the food ready for serving, and refills the coffee-pot, etc., her reply would probably be vær så god as she was not directly responsible for planning and preparing the food. Similarly, nurses serving dinner to patients in a hospital will invariably answer takk for maten with vær så god for the same reason that someone else was responsible for the actual preparation of the food.

Vel bekomme (vɛl bəkɔmə)

This is the correct reply to takk for maten, always used by older people and by those who are well used to the duties of housewife and hostess. This will always be said by the master of the house after a formal dinner, in reply to the thanks offered by his guests, although it was the servants who actually prepared the meal, but it is the duty of the host to receive the thanks. Vel bekomme is often considered a proper return of the politeness, whereas vær så god is not.

Ingen årsak (inɛn ɔ:ʃak)

This is a slightly more correct, stiff way of saying vær så god and will be said in all situations where people show gratitude for a service which goes beyond the bounds of merely dutiful politeness. Although there are no fixed generalizations which can be made according to the relationship between use of this expression and age, there is a tendency for this not to be used quite so much among younger people nowadays. It simply says that it was no trouble to give the help asked for, it was all part of the job, and no excessive time or effort were required to do the favour or service. It is purely a phrase expressing politeness, with no other meaning or anything personal contained in it. It is in fact an abbreviation of "det er ingen årsak til å takke meg" (there's no reason to thank me) which has now become stereotyped.

Ikke noe å takke for (ikə no: ɔ: takə fɔr)

This is exactly the same as ingen årsak in all respects except it is not quite so formal, and hence used more by younger people. It applies in all the same situations, though is not as popular as vær så god. However, the latter is often used in situations where the thanks are given in a quite restrained way, and where ikke noe å takke for might seem out of place, as this would tend to be used in reply to slightly more effusive thanks.

I like måte (i: li:gə mɔ:də)

This is used for replying to thanks when the pleasure has been mutual, and through this reply the second party can also show appreciation. Occasionally the reply is lengthened to takk, i like måte, although most people consider this takk to be superfluous, it already having been said once.

Hence it is used to answer, for example, takk for i går, takk for sist, takk for samværet, takk for laget, takk for følget, and similar phrases where both parties have had a pleasant time and have enjoyed the time spent together, even though one was host and the other guest. I like måte is in fact thanking for pleasant company and an enjoyable time, whereas the original thanker is showing appreciation for the hospitality.

I like måte is also used when one has been wished a good holiday, Merry Christmas, good luck with exams, and so on, and one wants to return the good wishes to others embarking on the same thing. It is simply a way of saying "ditto" yet avoiding repetition of the words used in the first instance. Use of the expression on its own is quite mechanical and uncommitted, though obviously personal contact and sincere enjoyment, rather than just politeness expressed from a sense of duty, can be shown by adding a sentence or two to the effect that it really was most pleasant and I hope you come again soon, etc.

Selv takk (sɛl tak)

This is similar to i like måte, though used with less frequency. Again, it is used where the situation is reciprocal, where each person does the other a favour or some sort of service. It could well be said after takk for besøket (literally "thank you for the visit"), where i like måte is obviously not possible as the visit has not been reciprocal, but the guest wishes to indicate that she has had a good time, and is thanking for that. Another example is, if two people have worked together for a while on the same project, which then reaches completion, one might say selv takk in reply to the other's takk for hjelpen. Vær så god would not be appropriate in this particular context, as both have benefited from the results of the project and both have contributed to it.

Although heard less often, selv takk is not spoken so automatically and mechanically as i like måte, and for this reason often contains a little more feeling and sincerity, and also individuality.

Takk, det samme (tak də same)

This again is very similar to i like måte, but not heard so often. It is used especially after being wished good luck, but again the events must apply to both people. For example, as two students are entering an examination room, one might say to the other "lykke til" (good luck) and receive the reply "takk, det samme". It can also be said to answer "Happy Easter", "have a good summer", and so on, and even more abstract wishes such as "håper det er bare bra" (hope all goes well) when both have reason for entertaining such hopes.

Å, jeg ber (ɔ: jai be:r)

This is used mostly over the telephone, especially as a reply to takk for opplysningen, in the sense or "that's quite all right, don't mention it". It is quite formal and stiff, and

as such used more by older people. It is said with distance in mind, either to acknowledge any distance which exists already, or to introduce a note of coolness, perhaps even haughtiness, into the conversation. Å, jeg ber sounds rather pseudo-sophisticated, used by the older generations, especially from Vestkanten, and by women more than men who tend to speak rather condescendingly. Because of the feeling of distance, it is particularly appropriate on the telephone, and is often used in an office situation, where the personnel are quite remote from the client they are doing business with. It will never be said to friends or acquaintances, only to strangers and older business contacts whom one is not on particularly friendly terms with, the phrase sometimes being used to try and impress, and to put the other person in his proper place.

For all del (for al de:l)

This can also be used in answer to takk for opplysningen and takk for hjelpen in some situations, but is not so explicit. Its chief effect is, after receiving thanks for something, one answers politely with for all del and this indicates that one's attention is now occupied elsewhere and there is really no more to be said or discussed. For example, a guest is checking out of her hotel, has settled her bill, and turns to the receptionist to say thank you. The receptionist, who has already started checking in the next guest, will respond politely with for all del but will continue almost without interruption her conversation and paperwork with the other guest. This reply has the feeling of rejection in it, while still remaining ultrapolite, as is shown by a further example - a man offers to carry a lady's obviously heavy suitcase at the station, but she refuses his offer politely with for all del - roughly translatable as "thank you for offering, but I can manage it myself". And after this reply, the offer will very rarely be repeated.

Again, this expression is not in current usage among younger people; it is very much associated with the upper classes, and those aspiring to be members of that particular social stratum.

Jo (jo:)

This is said sometimes as a reply to tusen takk for hjelpen, for example, or takk for lånet. It is also possible after the less specific tusen takk, when there is in reality nothing much that needs to be said at all, but one feels obligated to acknowledge the expression of gratitude in some way. It is not that commonly used, and tends to carry with it an inherent feeling of awkwardness and unnaturalness when used, as if it was the first utterance which sprang to mind whereas some other expression might have been better suited to the situation.

There is a growing tendency in this area also to avoid the most mechanical stereotypes, and, when the occasion arises, to say or add something else when accepting thanks which makes the situation a little more personal and spontaneous. In fact, the limited number of sentences and expressions used for the purpose of avoiding the original stereotypes, are on the point of becoming stereotyped themselves. For example, in reply to thanking phrases such as takk for meg, takk for sist, takk for følget and others in the same vein, there are several variations on the same theme as "det var (bare) hyggelig", "det var meget vellykket", etc. Another possibility after, for example, takk for følget, takk for gjestfriheten, and other expressions of gratitude such as "takk for at du kjørte meg hjem" (thanks for driving me home) is "det var ingenting" (another way of saying "don't mention it", although literally translated it means simply "it was nothing"). One expression which seems to have become especially popular among students and younger people after takk for lånet and takk for hjelpen is OK (either pronounced (o:ke:i) or Norwegianized to (o:kɔ:)), and âlreit (ɔ:lrait) is also sometimes heard. These were originally taken from popular American slang and assimilated quickly into the Norwegian language, assuming Norwegian spelling in the case of âlreit. These are now almost as ubiquitous in Norwegian as they are in American and British English, and in some cases seem almost set to take over from

the traditional accepted expressions. However, total acceptance of these forms into active use will take a long time among the older people, and in fact OK and álreit tend to be used fairly exclusively among younger people.

9. General Good Wishes

There are a number of stereotypes which do not fall into any particular category, but which should be mentioned all the same. There is very little to say about the majority of them, as they exist in English and in many other languages, and convey exactly the same meaning, so the translation alone should be sufficient to describe their use. Comments will be given where the Norwegian usage either differs from or is additional to English usage.

First, there are what can be called "temporal greetings":

god jul (go: ju:l) - Merry Christmas

gledelig jul (gle:dəli ju:l) - Merry Christmas

god påske (go: pɔ:skə) - Happy Easter

godt nyttår (gɔt nytɔ:r) - Happy New Year

god pinse (go: pinsə) - Happy Whitsun

god sommer (go: sɔmər) - "have a good summer".

There is no exact equivalent to this in English, but Norwegians will usually say it to friends and acquaintances, especially in a student milieu, before the long summer break, and in any environment where people go away for quite a long time at the beginning of the summer.

god helg (go: helg) - " have a good weekend"

god søndag (go: sɔnda:g) - "have a good Sunday".

Neither of these last two sound particularly natural in English, but they are self-explanatory. They are quite commonly said by older people, and especially those who still regard Sunday as a holy sabbath and not simply the day before Monday.

Then come the "congratulatory stereotypes":

gratulerer (gra:tʉ:lɛ:rər) - congratulations

gratulerer med dagen (gra:tʉ:lɛ:rər me: dɑ:gɳ̥) - happy
birthday

til lykke med dagen (til lykə me: dɑ:gɳ̥) - happy birthday/
many happy returns

There are also the "straightforward good wishes":

lykke til (lykə til) - good luck

god bedring (go: be:driŋ) - get well soon

And lastly the group where a suitable gloss might be "wishes for one's enjoyment":

god tur (go: tʉ:r) - have a nice walk/ trip.

This is very Norwegian, and is said to anyone leaving on a hike or going ski-ing, even a short trip of no more than a day's duration, or to someone going on a holiday which will involve a fair amount of travelling, by whatever means of transport, or in fact anyone going on any sort of trip whatever, its duration being irrelevant.

god ferie (go: fe:riə) - happy holidays

god fornøyelse (go: fɔrnøysə) - have a good time.

This is more difficult to translate accurately, as again an exact equivalent simply does not exist in English. It is said as a kind of farewell to people going out to eat, to a folk or jazz concert, and other similar entertainments which they are, to a greater or lesser degree, excited about, and have been looking forward to. However, it is not at all appropriate if someone is going to a performance of a serious play, a classical concert of any other cultural experience, or to gain spiritual elevation.

It is also possible to say this to someone leaving for a special trip, if it is something he or she has been planning and looking forward to for a long time. For example, if a Norwegian friend has dreamed all her life of a trip to Canada, and eventually the dream comes true, god fornøyelse would be

very appropriate on her departure.

vel bekomme (vɛl bəkɔmə) - (in fact a contraction of
"jeg håper det bekommer deg vel".)

It is impossible to give even a rough translation for this rather specialized use of vel bekomme (it must be kept distinct from its other use as a reply to takk for maten). The most usual occasion when it will be said is if people happen to meet friends who are dining out at a restaurant. If they interrupt them while they are actually eating, say hello, perhaps stop to chat for a couple of minutes, then it is customary to say "vel bekomme" as the "intruders" leave, meaning something like "I hope you enjoy the rest of your meal". But this expression will never be heard in a private home, nor before people begin the actual process of eating.

There are a couple of expressions which can be regarded as stereotypes but which it is impossible to classify into any other group. One such is

forsyn deg (fɔʃy:n dai) - help yourself

forsyn dere (fɔʃy:n dɛ:rə) - help yourselves

which is very frequently said by a host or hostess to guests at the beginning of a fairly informal meal, and in effect means simply "help yourself/ selves to as much as you like, don't wait to be asked", etc.

Skitt fiske (ʃit fiskə) is a very interesting expression, as it opens up a whole realm of superstitious belief which can still be found in a few people today, even in the large towns. This expression, very roughly translated, means "I hope the fishing's terrible!", and was originally said to fishermen, who depended on their catch for a livelihood, when they were going out in the boats to fish. It was thought that, if the villagers wished the fishermen good luck and good fishing, the fish would hear, be frightened away, and would not bite, but if they wished them a bad catch, the fish would be reassured and stay. So this expression has come down through the years and has developed and expanded its usage to be said

whenever someone needs good luck - for example in sport, before interviews and especially when going up to examinations.

Tvi tvi (tvi: tvi:) is also a superstitious expression and again means "good luck". Tvi can either be doubled or, occasionally, tripled, and is similar in result to keeping one's fingers crossed for somebody. It is most commonly said before a journey or examination, and not only among students, but the phrase seems to be gradually dying out of modern use.

10. Vær så god

Vær så god deserves separate treatment for two reasons: firstly, because it is the most frequently occurring stereotype in the Norwegian language; and secondly, because on the whole it defies classification in any other section. This very common phrase can have many different meanings, depending entirely on the context, and will cover very many situations where in British English we have to invent a sentence or borrow an idiom from American English. In most situations, no one standard idiom exists in English which will convey the same meaning as vær så god.

However, the various uses of vær så god can be divided roughly into several sub-groups, and these are best described and explained by illustrations. To begin with, its usually compulsory use as a reply to thanks (for example, in answer to takk for hjelpen, mange takk and, more questionably, takk for maten) has been discussed above.

Then there is the use of vær så god in the sense of "please". For example, in reply to a flatmate who asks whether she may borrow a half-litre of milk, "vær så god, bare ta!" indicates something like "please, help yourself". In many cases the sense has developed to mean "just take as much as you want". Similarly, to translate the English "please, sit down", a

Norwegian would say "vør så god, sett deg!". After a meal has been prepared and is waiting on the table, the hostess will come to her guests and simply say "vør så god", or "vør så god, alle sammen!" (.. everybody), where the English would have to manufacture something along the lines of "would you all like to come and sit down now, dinner's ready".

In the same sense of "please" can be included examples such as when offering one's seat to an elderly passenger on a bus. "Vør så god" in this situation would mean "please, do take my seat" or "do sit here", etc. Similarly, in the sense of "after you", vør så god is used - for example, two people are being very polite when trying to decide who should lead the way through a door, with the result that in the end one or other has to say "vør så god" (you first, please).

A second group of uses of vør så god could be characterized by "here you are". The expression is always heard in shops, banks, businesses, etc. where one person is handing something to another person. For example, in a shop the customer asks for a bag of coffee. The assistant hands it to her, saying "vør så god" as she passes it over the counter, and at the same time will probably say the price. The customer takes out her money and says "vør så god" as she either gives it directly to the shop assistant or cashier or puts it on the counter. Then vør så god is repeated once more when the cashier hands back any change which might be due together with the receipt.

To English ears, these repetitions might seem rather excessive, but they are in fact quite natural, even to the point of being necessary. It is not considered "proper" to omit vør så god at any of the stages mentioned above, though of course much less emphasis is laid today on what used to be considered the "correct" way to behave.

The same system applies in, for example, a bank or post-office where various papers and money are being passed back and forth

across the counter (but obviously, if the repetition of vær så god seems to be getting ridiculously frequent, as might happen if some complicated business is being done, the expression is usually reserved to the final exchange of papers or money); and also in a cafe or restaurant. When the waitress either passes your plate over the counter, or serves the food at your table, she will usually accompany it with vær så god as she finishes serving.

There is one rather special situation where vær så god can mean two things at once: that is, where a friend asks to borrow, for example, your pen, or your newspaper, and the reply vær så god will mean both "yes of course, help yourself" and "here you are" as you pass it to her. Hence two purposes are served here.

Another place where vær så god is often heard is connected to the sense of "here you are" but is not directly linked with physically passing an object from one person to another. For example, after a lecturer has spent a good part of his lecture constructing a theoretical model on the blackboard, he might, on completion, stand back, gesture towards his diagram and say to his students "vær så god - her er systemet!" (well, here you are, this/ here is the system!). In this way it also acts secondarily as an appeal for attention.

A very similar example is related to that special language used by mediators of telephone conversations. For example, when calling a company with a central switchboard, it can happen that one ends up with the wrong person on the wrong extension; but then, when one has been cross-connected to the right extension, the person on the first extension will say that the connection has been made and one's contact is waiting to speak by saying "nå skal du få en samtale med X - vær så god!" (you're through now to Mr. X). In English, we probably would not translate vær så god here at all, as is often the case when it involves the idea of handing something over (in this example, a telephone conversation!).

Vær så god often renders the meaning of "go ahead", or expressing assent or consent. For example, if someone indicates the empty seat next to you on a train, or in a doctor's waiting-room, and asks "er det ledig her?" (is this seat free?), the reply will usually be "ja, vær så god" ("yes, go ahead" or "yes, help yourself" - again the English language has no one standard phrase which satisfactorily covers these eventualities, but must rely on finding some idiom or short sentence which will do in the circumstances). A similar example is the question "er det noen som leser denne avisen nå?" (is anyone reading this paper?) as the enquirer points to the newspaper lying beside you, and the answer vær så god says simultaneously "no, there isn't" and "yes, you may take it", hence giving your consent.

Perhaps a more standard example which best illustrates this usage of vær så god in the sense of giving consent is in reply to the question "kan jeg røyke?" (may I smoke?) where "ja, vær så god" means "yes, go ahead".

The last major group of the senses of vær så god can be summarized by "next, please", or expressing readiness. It is very often heard in a shop, at the market, in an office or any business where customers are being served in one way or another, and it means here "who's next, please?", or that the clerk, shop assistant, waitress or whatever have finished serving one customer and are now waiting for the next request, order, or whatever business the customer may have with them.

At the same time vær så god used in this way also says "what can I do for you?" or "can I help you?" Hence vær så god said by, for example, a clerk at a post-office counter combines both a general statement of availability (ie. "I'm ready to attend to you now") and a specific enquiry, directed at one particular person (ie. "what can I do for you?).

Vær så god will sometimes be heard on crowded trams or trains, called out by the conductor who is trying to move among the

passengers to collect fares, but as there are so many he does not know if he has managed to take fares from everyone. So vær så god in this case could be translated by "any more fares, please?", again conveying the idea of readiness and waiting to give a passenger one's attention.

In the same sense, vær så god is often used on the telephone. For example, if during a telephone call taken on someone else's behalf, the person answering might need to fetch pen and paper to take a message, and on returning, equipped with the necessary materials, she will say "ja, vær så god" to indicate she is ready to take down the message, and the caller should go ahead.

It is quite common, especially in an office or other place of work where there are several people each with their own telephone extensions within a company, for an employer to lift the receiver and answer with, for example, "Baardseth, vær så god!" - i.e. one's own name precedes the indication that one is ready to listen and waiting for the caller to introduce himself. If one member of the staff in an office answers the telephone of a colleague who is not present, it is customary to say, for example, "Liv Jørstads telefon, vær så god!" where vær så god serves the same purpose of communicating readiness.

There is, of course, an almost unlimited number of examples which could be included here, but any further illustrations would all fit into one or other of the groups discussed above. The ones given seem to be the most representative in that the situations they occur in are very well-known to most "ordinary" people, and they illustrate most clearly and concisely all the nuances and shades of meaning lying behind vær så god.

CONCLUSION

Probably the main point shown by the survey was the high number of cases where it is not possible to give even a rough translation of the Norwegian phrase which is at all satisfactory.

The Norwegians have a much greater range of politeness stereotypes which over the years have been tailored to suit every possible situation and every participant, whereas in English we are forced, more often than not, either to borrow a phrase or expression, condemned as "slang", from American English, or to try to find some suitable sequence of words which might possibly fit the occasion.

Norwegian also has a number of politeness stereotypes pertaining to situations where in English we either say nothing at all, or try to allude to our pleasure, appreciation, enjoyment or whatever in a rather round-about way. This is probably best exemplified by referring to the number of different expressions used in Norwegian for thanking. For instance, English has no equivalent for takk for maten - we would probably tell the hostess that we enjoyed the meal very much, and presumably we consider that our thanks are implicit in that expression of our enjoyment. Similarly with takk for sist - this should be the very first thing Norwegian people say to each other, after greeting, when they meet after a party or other event, whereas English again has no stereotyped way of saying "thank you" to the host of a previous occasion. We are most likely to choose a suitable moment during the ensuing conversation to mention "in passing" "how much we enjoyed ourselves last Friday" or something similar and equally ill-defined.

There are many other areas where a lack of correspondence between English and Norwegian is very apparent, and it works both ways. For example, there is no one word in English corresponding to the very special and ubiquitous var så god in Norwegian. It depends entirely on the situation which phrase we select in English, and often the choice does not seem determined by any set of firm rules, or even reliable guidelines.

Conversely, "goodbye", as mentioned previously, has a number of possible equivalents in Norwegian, depending on several factors, and so, to a somewhat lesser extent, has "please".

Norwegians simply omit any reference to politeness in many cases where English people would be quite offended if the sentence was not preceded or concluded by "please", but where in Norwegian it would sound most unnatural to include or add any word in this connection. This has nothing to do with any lack of manners or disregard for politeness on the part of Norwegian people, but they simply consider the expression of "please" an unnecessary part of their everyday language in many social environments.

On a more minor level, there is one phrase which the majority of English people use quite automatically, and which is completely lacking in Norwegian: namely "bless you" after someone has sneezed. But many Norwegians feel they want to say something, so they will borrow a phrase, occasionally the English "bless you" but more often German "Gesundheit!". It is strange that, after all this time when they obviously feel they need an expression to use in this context, these people who have perhaps more than their fair share of linguistic nationalism have not yet found a genuine Norwegian blessing!

One interesting point which came to light during this study was that the English express many more feelings and attitudes by use of varying intonation patterns within the same phrase, whereas in Norwegian these variations are shown through the selection of a different phrase. Take, for example, the English word "goodbye" which can, in fact, be used in almost every situation which requires some form of leave-taking. Depending on the pitch and intonation pattern of this word, it can be used with close friends, probably uttered with a relatively high pitch and a high level intonation, possibly falling very slightly on the last syllable, or with business associates, perhaps over the telephone, spoken with a much lower pitch and an intonation falling from mid to low, and also usually with much less vowel extension on the diphthong, than in the case of saying goodbye to a friend. However in Norwegian, it is not acceptable in the majority of circumstances to use the same stereotype for both the situations given above, and the rules concerning selection are fairly strict. And

when uttering a Norwegian stereotype there is very little opportunity for any considerable variation in intonation, without causing a given phrase to sound unnatural and artificial.


Apart from grouping all the politeness stereotypes on semantic grounds, there are several other criteria which could be relevant to many of them. One of these is the quality of what can be called terminality. The terminality of a phrase is the extent to which it can be considered the final speech item in any verbal exchange between two or more people. The degree of terminality, ie. whether it is high or low, will vary not only between sections or classes, but also between items within a class. For example, most greeting stereotypes have a low terminality, as the phrase used to open an exchange will usually be answered by the second party involved, either with the same phrase, or with an item to open a conversation ("conversation" is here understood to mean that verbal interaction which ensues after the exchange of politeness stereotypes; "exchange" refers to any verbal contact between two or more people, regardless of what form this takes). However, some greeting stereotypes may have higher terminality than others, although every terminality can vary as a function of any context, expressed in sociological and psychological terms referring to whether two potential interlocutors will commence verbal interaction or not.

For example, hei used as a greeting stereotype may in some situations have a very high terminality, especially in the case of the response item rather than the initiating item, as it often happens that two people may pass each other in a corridor or on the street, acknowledge that they are acquainted by exchanging the greeting hei, but it is not necessary for there to be any further exchange or conversation. Hence because hei can stand as an independent and isolated item in an exchange, it can be said in this context to have high terminality.

On the other hand, hei du will nearly always have very low terminality owing to its quality as a very warm and friendly

greeting, and this by nature requires some further exchange on the part of both interlocutors.

Now consider the group of greeting follow-ups such as hvordan står det til? and Åssen går det med deg?; these can all be said to possess minimum terminality as, owing to their nature as an interrogative item, they require an answer of some sort, and therefore further exchange.

A further illustration can be drawn from the group containing thanking items. Again there can be some variation within the group; for example takk alone usually has high terminality (though not maximum, as in certain situations it is possible to follow this by some other item, such as a farewell stereotype). But a phrase such as takk for maten has very low terminality, as it is socially unacceptable not to answer this even within the most informal family group, by either vel bekomme or vær så god. (It can be noted here that there is a third possibility, though this cannot be included with the stereotypes: between members of the family, or people who eat together every day, the provider of the food can sometimes be preoccupied, still eating, or simply cannot be bothered to formulate the necessary words, so will acknowledge takk for maten by uttering (m) as a very long syllabic consonant with the Norwegian double tone, having the pattern  . Although the phoneme is, obviously, monosyllabic, the "tone rules" are broken here and the whole pattern of tone 2 is stretched over the one syllable. But, although this "reply" cannot be considered together with the other stereotypes, it still does not alter the degree of terminality of the phrase takk for maten).

This last example brings us to another criterion which could be used in the classification of politeness stereotypes, and that is the criterion of conditional relevance. This can be explained in the following way: given one item, the conditional relevance of a second item on the first describes to what

extent that second item can be expected; and further, upon its occurrence, to what degree can that item be seen as a second item dependent on the existence of the first. Then by implication, upon the non-occurrence of the second item, it will be considered to be officially absent.

This point should become clearer through illustration. For example, vel bekomme can be considered to be conditionally relevant on takk for maten as, given the occurrence of takk for maten, the reply vel bekomme is expected to follow. The latter is also dependent on the former, thus fulfilling the second requirement for conditional relevance (we are here not taking into account the specialized use of vel bekomme as a member of the group of general good-wishes stereotypes), and if it is not uttered there will almost certainly be some disfavoured reaction, either overt or disguised. Hence it is regarded socially to be absent if it does not occur.

Similarly, takk, bare bra can be said to be conditionally relevant on hvordan står det til?. Because of the formal nature of the enquiry, takk, bare bra would be the item with the highest degree of expectability owing to its corresponding formality, and, as above, the second item is only introduced because of the occurrence of the first. Any eventual non-occurrence would be considered rude and ill-mannered, and thus socially absent.

By applying conditional relevance, the formal contrast between the initiating item and response item can be defined. Consider the case of greeting stereotypes, where the distinction between an initiating item and a response item usually has most validity. The initiating item is, in fact, characterized by its lack of conditional relevance, it taking the place of the "given first item" in the definition above. Hence it is the unmarked item of the pair. But the response item will be that item which is marked by conditional relevance as, in its capacity as a response item, it can be expected to occur after the utterance of the initiating item.

It should perhaps be mentioned here that the initiating item and response item may in some circumstances be the same linguistic item, or they may be two different items. For example, at the beginning of a telephone conversation in a business context, the initiating item "god dag" spoken by the caller will, almost without exception, be followed by the response item "god dag" uttered in acknowledgement by the person answering. But on the other hand, "velkommen" will be used almost exclusively as an initiating item, and the response item in this case might take the form of one of several choices, for example "god kveld", "hei hei!" and so on, obviously depending on the situation and the people involved.

Although this survey is a complete entity in itself, it opens up many other fields for study. One area which might prove very interesting is a comparative study along the same lines between Norwegian and the other Scandinavian languages, most notably of the neighbouring countries Sweden and Denmark. The impression formed from only a very brief and unsystematic investigation, concerned more with Swedish than Danish, hints that, while there are many similarities in usage, there are many interesting differences too. Perhaps some of these might be explained with reference to historical factors, but many would need deeper examination.

The study of Norwegian politeness stereotypes could also be extended to examine dialectal variation, differences in usage between the various social classes and what effects these differences have on the different sectors of society, and so on. Studies of this nature, however, would require much more time and research than were allotted to the present one.

APPENDIX

It might be useful here to give a brief description of how De, the formal, second person singular form of address, is used.

As already mentioned, it corresponds very roughly to vous in French, Sie in German, and so on, but it is probably worth an examination in more detail.

De is only ever used in formal, ultra-polite situations, and usually by older people. It can also be used to express a certain servitude, though in the positive sense of the word. For example, a young, very junior shop assistant might use the De form to an older, elegant customer who looks as if she is used to being treated with a great deal of respect and civility. Conversely, the same customer would probably say De to the shop-girl, with the thought of showing her who is in charge of the situation.

If a young school-leaver rings a prospective employer whom he has never spoken to before, he might well begin by saying De to be on the safe side. One can often avoid giving offence by using the formal pronoun to begin with, and then changing to the more familiar form later if the situation seems to call for it. However, in any educational environment, whether at secondary school or university, De is very rarely heard - teachers address students as du, the familiar form, and vice versa. A student would have to be an extremely conservative speaker of "riksmål" (the so-called official language, bearing many of the characteristics of Danish) to use De to a teacher or lecturer.

When talking to a complete stranger, the use of De by one or other can often give the impression that the user feels rather awkward, and not quite on top of the situation. It has the effect of expressing a certain humility, of almost asking very politely for the right to speak. But this is obviously a very rare usage, and most people, especially the younger generations, are in fact making conscious efforts to abolish the use of De altogether. Most young people never use it themselves, and, by their reactions, encourage older people to speak to them always using the du form. It is definitely dying out now, and probably within ten or even five years will have disappeared completely from the modern spoken language.

