

Your name:

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2020

Round 1



Problem 3. Norwedish? (10 marks)

Norwegian and Swedish are said to be so closely related that speakers of one can understand the other – they are mutually comprehensible. Like English, German and Dutch, the languages are classified as ‘Germanic’, but they are less closely related to English than Dutch is.

Below are some sentences in both languages with their English translations. Note: the accents matter as “a” is different from “ä” or “å” and the meaning of a word may depend on exactly which vowel is used.



Norwegian	Swedish	English
Kan du snakke litt langsommere?	Kan du tala lite långsammare?	Can you speak a little more slowly?
Jeg forstår ikke.	Jag förstår inte.	I don't understand.
Snakker du norsk?	Talar du svenska?	Do you speak Norwegian/Swedish?
Vi liker engelsk.	Vi gillar engelska.	We like English.
Han spiser middag.	Han äter middag.	He is eating dinner.
Når går neste tog?	När går näste tåg?	When does (the) next train go?
Hun liker frokost.	Hon gillar frukost.	She likes breakfast.
Dette er ikke Storbritannia.	Det här är inte Storbritannien.	This is not Great Britain.

[The questions for you are on the next page.]

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Q3.1. Write N or S in the last column to show whether the sentence is in Norwegian or Swedish.

Sentence:	English translation:	N or S?
Dette er flott.	This is beautiful.	
Jeg kan ikke spise frokost veldig tidlig.	I can't eat breakfast very early.	
Tåget är mycket tidigt.	The train is very early.	
Hon gör frukost bra.	She does breakfast well.	
Dette var ikke bra.	This was not great.	
Det här är bra.	This is great.	
Han har inte ett hus.	He doesn't have a house.	
Ett tåg var sent i går.	A train was late yesterday.	
Norsk är inte mycket svår.	Norwegian is not very difficult.	
Huset er flott.	The house is beautiful.	

Q3.2. Supply the Norwegian and Swedish translations below. Pay attention to the accents!

Norwegian	Swedish	English
		When is dinner?
		This is not the train.
		Can you understand Swedish?
		We like the house.
		She understands Norwegian very well.
		I cannot speak English very well.

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Solution and marking.

Scoring: (max 34)

- 3.1: 1 for each correct answer. (max 10)
- 3.2: 2 for each correct answer; 1 with one wrong, extra or missing word. (max 24)
 - Expect correct accents! But don't insist on clear shapes.
 - Expect correct inflections (e.g. *forstå*, not *forstår*)
 - Ignore capital letters (e.g. Norsk for norsk)
 - Ignore minor copying errors (e.g. englesk for engelsk)

Q3.1. Sentence:	English translation:	N or S?
Dette er flott.	This is beautiful.	N
Jeg kan ikke spise frokost veldig tidlig.	I can't eat breakfast very early.	N
Tåget är mycket tidigt.	The train is very early.	S
Hon gör frukost bra.	She does breakfast well.	S
Dette var ikke bra.	This was not great.	N
Det här är bra.	This is great.	S
Han har inte ett hus.	He doesn't have a house.	S
Ett tåg var sent i går.	A train was late yesterday.	S
Norsk är inte mycket svår.	Norwegian is not very difficult.	S
Huset er flott.	The house is beautiful.	N
Q3.2. Norwegian	Swedish	English
Når er middag?	När är middag?	When is dinner?
Dette er ikke toget.	Det här är inte tåget.	This is not the train.
Kan du forstå svensk?	Kan du förstå svenska?	Can you understand Swedish?
Vi liker huset.	Vi gillar huset.	We like the house.
Hun forstår norsk veldig bra.	Hon förstår norsk mycket bra.	She understands Norwegian very well.
Jeg kan ikke snakke engelsk veldig bra.	Jag kan inte tala engelska mycket bra.	I cannot speak English very well.

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Commentary

Some key differences (apart from obvious lexical differences such as the verbs “eat” or “like”) are:

- the formation of the negative: “ikke” for Norwegian, “inte” for Swedish;
- the demonstrative pronoun in Norwegian is the one-word demonstrative pronoun “dette” while Swedish has the two-word phrase “det här” (literally: “this here”).
- Most of the language names used in this problem end in -sk in Norwegian, but -ska in Swedish: “svenska” for example. The exception, however is “norsk”, which is the same in both Norwegian and Swedish (and this can be worked out in task 3.1 sentence number 9)!

Grammar-points for the translation task:

- Norwegian and Swedish verbs have the same inflection for every person singular and plural.
- The negators “ikke” or “inte” go after the finite verb (the verb that they are negating).
- These languages differ in the use of articles from other Germanic languages such as English. Indefinite articles exist – in this problem the indefinite neuter “ett” (Swedish) – but there are no separate definite articles like English “the”. Instead of a definite article in front of the noun, the noun receives a suffix. This problem only features the neuter definite forms: “huset” (the house in both languages), “toget” (“the train” in Norwegian) and “tåget” (“the train” in Swedish).