

**Norwegian Pronunciation,  
Rhythm and Tone**  
Erik Skuggevik, 26<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2022  
**Lecture 2**

**Today's Topics:**

- Vowels
- Stress at word and sentence levels
- Consonant omissions and merging

*Something we didn't have time for last week was to go through the vowels, so we will do that today.*

THE 9 NORWEGIAN VOWEL SOUNDS:  
*Approximate areas of focus (vocal placement) of the different vowel sounds in Norwegian.*

Wide lips at the front of the mouth:	Round lips at the front of the mouth:
i	y
e	u
æ	ø
Wide lips at the back of the mouth:	Round lips at the back of the mouth:
ɑ	å

Stress at sentence level: Shifting stress in a sentence changes the rhythm. In essence, stress means stretching one word at the expense of the other words in an utterance, which conversely become scrunched/compressed instead. The word that is stretched corresponds to what the speaker mentally considers the most important word (i.e. if you had to reduce the utterance to *one* word, what would that be?).

Stress at word level: Normally this refers to what *syllable* of a word is stressed, i.e. lengthened. The default for Norwegian words is stress on the *first* syllable. For instance, all these words are stressed on the initial beat, long vowel or long consonant:

**L**ørdag, **b**ursdagsselskap, **g**ammel, **f**lere, **s**øsken, **h**jemme, **B**ergen,  
**k**ommer, **b**arna, **j**enta, **g**utten.

These have stress on the second: Teater, dess**ver**re, foreldrene,

Some words are stressed on the third or fourth, but relatively few:

Servie**tt**, maleri, akademi**ker**/akademisk, demo**kr**atisk, demokrati, redaks**jon**

All words have an unstressed and a stressed version, most are almost the same, just lengthened/shortened a little, but there are many that you need to know about:

Jeg, seg, deg, han, noen → [jæi - jæ], [sæi - sæ], [dæi - dæ], [hann - an/'n], [noon - non]

But when unstressed words follow each other, words also join, vowels disappear, consonants merge, etc. Two vowels following each other are often reduced to one (usually the first), e.g. u-i:

Vil du ikke **bli** med? [vidukke-blii-med], Har du ikke **penger**? [haðukke-peŋer]

In unstressed words that end in -l (particularly commonly used ones), the l disappears in front of a consonant. In front of a *vowel* it is heard, because it is useful to keep the rhythm up. If the word is stressed, the -l will be pronounced anyway. Pay particular attention to common words like skal, vil, til,

Vil du **ha**? = [vidu-ha]. Jeg skal til **Gunnar**. [jæskati-gunnar]  
Skal ikke du **bli** med? = [skalikke-du-blii-me]

The same is the case for words that end in -r. But if the consonant next is one of these: d, t, n, l, s – then a new (retroflex) sound replaces them both.

*Hvordan* = voðan • *Vært* = væt • *Barn* = ban • *Herlig* = hæli • *Forsiktig* = fåfikti

Fordi, lørdag, cardigan, har du	pronounced: fåd̥i, lød̥a(g), kaðigen, haðu
Vært, fart, kort, for tiden, har tenkt	pronounced: væt̥, fḁt̥, kḁ̂t̥, fḁ̂tiid̥'n, hḁt̥eŋt̥
Barn, du sier noe, har noen	pronounced: ban̥, du-sien̥oe, hḁnoen
Herlig, farlig, har lenge,	pronounced: hæ̥li, fḁli, hḁleŋe
Forsiktig, forske, Mars, har sagt, er sant	pronounced: fḁ̂fikti, fḁ̂f̥ke, maaf̥, hḁfakt̥, æ̥fant̥
(Oslo, fisle, rasle, slapp av, anslag)	pronounced: o̥flo, fi̥fle, rḁfle, flappa(v), an̥flag̥

NB: Hvordan **går** det? pronounced: Voðan-gååðe?

## Listening Exercises:

A: Hva skal vi gjøre **nå**?

B: Hva skal vi **gjøre** nå?

C: Hva skal **vi** gjøre nå?

D: Hva **skal** vi gjøre nå?

E: **Hva** skal vi gjøre nå?

### Where is the stress (stretch) in these words?

Words taken from *Stein på Stein*, chapter 1:

1. Sjøfør
2. Gjøre
3. Jobben
4. Firma
5. Barnhehage
6. Forskjellige
7. Foreløpig
8. Matematikk
9. Gratulere
10. Eksamen

**Spelling to  
phonetic  
symbol:**

rd = d

rt = t

rn = n

rl = l

ng = ŋ

skj/sj/rs = ʃ

kj = ç

In order to understand what Norwegian *tonemes* (bønder/bønner) are about, we need to first get a grasp of other variables like stress, and vowel and consonant length, so we will deal with these in detail first.