Norwegian Pronunciation, Rhythm and Tone

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Lecture 7

Today's Topics:

- Consonant and vowel length
- The Miracle Trick
- Practice

Repetition: Sound check, vowels. Sound check, retroflex consonants.

We will do a fair bit of rhythm practice, as well as rehearsing the two tonemes (see L. 5).

Toneme check:

Toneme 1 has flat tone of the first syllable.

Toneme 2 has a dropped tone on the first syllable.

The Miracle Trick for Improving your Spoken Norwegian

If there is one thing that can drastically improve how you sound, it is this: Whatever your level of Norwegian, speak it flat, boring and monotone (!). This may sound like strange advice, but even if you aim for a flat or boring tone, you won't sound boring. Here's why: All students come with their own 'tonal baggage', places where your voice go a little up or down that you are not necessarily conscious of. If you aim for *neutral*, it's just one thing to focus on. Some students make various up and down tones because they are trying to 'sound Norwegian' – the problem is that there's too much to focus on – the correct places to potentially go up or down in tone takes a long time to learn. Besides, the 'sing-songy-ness' you might hear is not necessarily what you think it is.

This sing-songy-ness that some students have noticed about Norwegian, can be considered one of the "optionals", i.e, it is there for other reasons, emotional and situational. Basic rhythm and tone is best learned copying a relaxed and confident speaker – and that means pretty level and flat. Just listen to two friends who trust each other at a café – their voices are not going up and down a lot, there's no need, they know each other well.

Relaxed and confident people will speak at a much more even tonal level than nervous or worked-up people – so focusing on speaking with a flat and even tone, all you will risk is to sound balanced and confident.

Trust me, it works! We will listen and practice.

Every Norwegian word has one long sound!

We have covered this before, but it bears repeating: Every stressed word in an utterance has a stressed sound (i.e. a long sound). This can be a vowel or a consonant. Inversely, all other sounds are short. This is not the case in many other languages..

LISTENING EXERCISE: Which vowel or consonant sound is long in the following words?

Sofistikert – bidra – ramle – sykle – katastrofe – lim – mat – matte – snekre – støvler