Prepositions expressing source in Norwegian

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1. Introduction

The preposition that marks the source argument of the verb få ‘get’ in the two written varieties of Norwegian, Bokmål and Nynorsk, is av. The same preposition is also found in this function in many spoken varieties, as in (1), an example taken from the Nordic Dialect Corpus.

(1) eg fekk rasarbane av farmor og faffar (Norwegian)

‘I got racing course from grandma and grandpa.’ (gjesdal_01um)

Av, which historically is a continuation of the Old Scandinavian preposition af (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007:64), also has a number of other uses in Norwegian, as seen e.g. in the entries for av in Beito et al. (1966) and Guttu et al. (1977). Some of these uses, all attested in the Nordic Dialect Corpus, are shown in (2)–(6). In (2), we see the ablative use of av, whereas it marks cause in (3), material in (4), the whole in a part-whole relation in (5), and the agent of a passive in (6).

(2) så sjiffta demm take demm ræiv av all stæin

then changed they roof.DEF they tore off all stone(DEF)

‘Then they pulled the leaves off the twigs.’ (enebakk_03gm)

(3) eg bler dårli av McDonald-mad

I become sick from McDonald-food

‘I get sick from McDonald’s food.’ (stavanger_01um)

(4) matpyllseddn da va bærre av innmat

food.sausages.DEF that was only from offal

‘The sausages were made from offal only.’ (aurland_ma_02)

(5) dæ var en del av livet

it was a part of life.DEF

‘It was a part of life.’ (stange_02uk)
When it comes to the expression of the source argument of få ‘get’, as in (1), there is however considerable variation in Norwegian, and there are a few other prepositions that can be used in the same function: tà, ut av, hos (Almenningen 2005: 619), hjá (Almenningen 2005: 506), and med (Almenningen 2008: 1215). In the Nordic Syntax Database and in the Nordic Dialect Corpus we find data that can be used to shed some light on this variation. For space reasons, Scandinavian varieties other than Norwegian will not be taken into consideration.

2. Results

2.1 Nordic Syntax Database (NSD)

In the ScanDiaSyn survey, in which the data for the Nordic Syntax Database were collected, the prepositions other than av which were tested in phrases expressing the source argument of the verb få ‘get’ were hos, hjá and med (but not the preposition tà).

The basic function of the preposition hos, found in all varieties of Norwegian that have this preposition at all, is as a marker of location, taking a human or at least animate complement. An example is given in (7), where hos åss means ‘at our place’. Another relatively common use of hos is exemplified in (8), where hos barn means ‘in children’ and denotes the existence of a property in a group of individuals (cf. e.g. the entry for hos in Landrø and Wangensteen 1986). The construction exemplified in (8) has a wide distribution in the sense that it is not associated with any particular variety of Norwegian. It can however be noted that it belongs to a relatively formal register. Accordingly, there are no occurrences of it in the Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC), which contains only informal speech.

Historically, the preposition hos has developed from the noun hus ‘house’ (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 506). In Old Norse, the corresponding locative preposition was hjá, from the noun hjá ‘married couple’ (Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007:515). In Danish and Swedish, hos had replaced hjá already in the Old Scandinavian period, and it has later replaced hjá in most varieties of Norwegian. Hjá is still found in Faroese and Icelandic. In addition, in its present-day forms like jà or sjà, it is used in dialects in the

(6) di bi tadd med av færelldra

they become taken with by Parents

‘They are taken (there) by their parents.’ (stamsund_02uk)
central and Western parts of Southern Norway, and in the form hjå it is also an alternative to hos in Nynorsk. In Bokmål, hos is used, and in many spoken varieties, we find hos or some variant of hos, like håss, åss, oss. Map 1 shows the distribution of (forms of) hos and hjå in present-day spoken Norwegian.

Map 1: The distribution of hos and hjå in Norway in the Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC). (Black = hos (with variants), white = hjå (with variants)).

In addition to expressing location, the Old Norse preposition hjá was also found after verbs like fá ‘get’, where a phrase headed by hjá expressed the source argument (cf. Heggstad, Ødebo and Simensen 1990: 187). This usage has been retained in certain parts of Norway, and accordingly, the test sentence shown in (9) was presented to informants in those areas that have retained (a form of) hjå.

(9) e fekk hanskane hjå Per Ivar (#996, Eidfjord)

I got gloves.DEF from Per Ivar

‘I got the gloves from Per Ivar.’

In many locations in the counties of Møre og Romsdal and North and South Trøndelag, the preposition med was used, as in (10), which shows the test sentence used in Volda, in Møre og Romsdal county.
(10) E fikk hainskainn **med** n Per Ivar (#996, Volda)

*I got gloves.DEF from him Per Ivar*

‘I got the gloves from Per Ivar.’

The core meaning of the preposition *med* is ‘with’. Throughout Scandinavian, it is used with an instrumental or comitative meaning. In Norwegian, and in particular in the dialects, it is however a very versatile preposition, as described e.g. in Almenningen et al. (2008: 1215).

Further, in some dialects of Norwegian, the source marking function that *hjà* had in Old Norse has spread to the newer preposition *hos*. Hence, outside the areas where *hjà* or *med* were tested, the preposition used in the test sentence corresponding to (9) and (10) was *hos*, as in (11).

(11) e fikk hanskan **hos** Per Ivar (#996, Ål)

*I got gloves.DEF from Per Ivar*

‘I got the gloves from Per Ivar.’

The locations where one of the three prepositions *hos*, *hjà* or *med* marking the source of *få* ‘get’ were generally accepted are shown in Map 2. We see here that the acceptance of these prepositions form two large clusters: one in the north and another in the west-central part of Southern Norway.
Map 2: Locations where the prepositions hos, hjå or med expressing source got a high score
(#996: Jeg fikk hanskene hos Per Ivar. ‘I was given the gloves by Per Ivar’)

The overall distribution of judgments shown in Map 2 does not differ much between age groups. As maps 3 and 4 show, the survey results among informants aged 50+ (map 3) were very much the same as the results among informants aged between 15 and 35 (map 4).
Map 3: Locations where the prepositions hos, hjå or med expressing source got a high score among older informants (50+ years).

(#996: Jeg fikk hanskene hos Per Ivar. ‘I was given the gloves by Per Ivar’
Map 4: Locations where the prepositions hos, hjå or med expressing source got a high score among younger informants (15-30 years)

(#996: Jeg fikk hanskene hos Per Ivar. ‘I was given the gloves by Per Ivar’)

If we look at the details of the database, we see that hos expressing the source of få ‘get’ was accepted by almost all informants in the three northernmost counties of Norway, i.e. Finnmark, Troms and Nordland,
from Sømna in the south to Kjøllefjord in the north. In Nordland, it was rejected by the young informants from Herøy as well as by one young man from Mo i Rana, and in addition, there was variation among informants from Kautokeino and Lakselv, two locations in Finnmark. In Kautokeino, it was accepted by a young man but rejected by a young woman and an old man, while it got a medium score from an older woman. In Lakselv, it got a high score from the older informants but a medium score from the younger informants. The divergences from the general pattern found in Kautokeino and Lakselv might be connected to the fact that many speakers in these locations come from a Sámi-speaking background, or alternatively, in Lakselv, from a Finnish-speaking background. This might be the reason why they have not completely adopted the use of hos found in other speakers from the north of Norway. However, in other locations where there are many speakers with Sámi as their first language, such as Tana, hos marking source was nevertheless fully accepted. Hence, there are still unanswered questions in this area.

In the county of Møre og Romsdal, the test sentence in (10), with med, was largely accepted. This in accordance with the distribution suggested in Almenningen et al. (2008). In the counties of North and South Trøndelag, on the other hand, it was rejected by most speakers.

In the counties of Sogn og Fjordane and Hordaland, as well as in the mountain areas of Buskerud and Oppland and also in some places in Rogaland, the (basically) locative preposition hjå was largely accepted as a marker of source. In Ål, hos was tested and accepted by all informants. In Gausdal, close to Lillehammer, sjå, the local form of hjå, was however rejected by all informants.

In the counties of Hedmark, Akershus, Østfold, Vestfold, Aust-Agder, Vest-Agder and Telemark, forms of sjå marking source were tested in the locations Valle and Tinn, and rejected in Valle but accepted in Tinn. Elsewhere in this area, hos was tested and rejected, with a few exceptions: hos was accepted by one older woman in Kristiansand, by the older informants in Fredrikstad, and by younger informants in Nissedal and Rena. It is possible, though, that some of these results are false positives, since (11) would be grammatical throughout the region with hos Per Ivar meaning ‘at Per Ivar’s place’.

In the Trøndelag region, consisting of the counties North and South Trøndelag, the picture that emerges is quite complex. The results from this region will be discussed in the next subsection, where the survey data are combined with data from the Nordic Dialect corpus.

2.2 Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC)

Turning now to the Nordic Dialect Corpus, we will first look at occurrences of jå ‘get’ with the basically locative prepositions hos or hjå (including variants) marking the source. Examples of this are found in a number of places in the NDC. First, forms of hos with this function are attested in Northern Norway, in the counties of Finnmark (Kirkenes, Kjøllefjord), Troms (Bothhhamn, Kirkesdalen, Kvæfjord, Kvenangen, Lavangen, Tromsø, Tromsøysund), and Nordland (Bodø, Hattfjelldal, Herøy, Myre, Stamsund). There are also occurrences of forms of hjå in the West Norwegian counties of Sogn og Fjordane (Luster) and Hordaland (Lindås, Voss), as well as in Lesja and Lom in the county of Oppland and Flå in the county of Buskerud. All these locations are shown in Map 5.
Some of the authentic examples from the corpus are given in (12)–(16) below.

(12) å så fikk hann besje âss sekretær-ñ sin att… (Norwegian)
    and so got he message at secretary.DEF REFL.POSS that
    ‘And then he got a message from his secretary that…’ (kirkenes_03gm)

(13) ka du fikk hoss ho # Berta? (Norwegian)
    what you got at she Berta
    ‘What did you get from Berta?’ (myre_02uk)
(14) så dæ fikk ho hoss me (Norwegian)
so that got she at me
‘So she got that from me.’ (stamsund_03gm)

(15) e fekk femm krone jå tannå mi (Norwegian)
I got five crowns at aunt.DEF my
‘I got five crowns from my aunt.’ (lindaas_03gm)

(16) kann e få æin fasit jå deg? (Norwegian)
can I get a key at you
‘Can I get a key from you?’ (voss_04gk)

As it turns out, all the examples with hjå from the southern part of Norway in the corpus are produced by older informants. This is not necessarily significant, however, since there are not many expressed source arguments of få ‘get’ in the corpus at all. The absence of examples produced by younger speakers in the south could therefore be a coincidence. In the survey, hjå marking source was accepted by younger and older informants alike in Lindås, Luster, Lom, and Voss, while it was rejected by all informants from Flå. There are no data from Lesja in the survey. Taken together, the data appear to suggest that hjå as a marker of source is falling out of use in Flå, which is the location closest to Oslo in map 5. In the other locations in the south where it is attested at all, it is probably still retained.

In the north, by contrast, hos expressing source is attested in younger informants as well as in older ones. It was also accepted by almost all informants, with the exceptions mentioned in the previous subsection. This suggests that hos is or is becoming the preferred marker of the source argument of få ‘get’ throughout the north of Norway.

In the county of Møre og Romsdal, where the preposition med expressing source got high scores in the survey, we also find similar examples in the corpus. Moreover, these are from younger speakers as well as from older speakers. The example in (17) is produced by an older man, while the example in (18) is produced by a younger man.

(17) ho får pottet me me (Norwegian)
she gets potato from me
‘She gets potatoes from me.’ (surnadal_18)

(18) tja fekk ittje ho Marte et tilbud me na då (Norwegian)
well got not she Marte an offer from him then
‘Well Marte got an offer from him, didn’t she?’ (heroeyMR_01um)
Hence, corpus data as well as survey data suggest that *med* as a marker of source is not disappearing in this area. In fact, it extends into the neighboring county to the south, Sogn og Fjordane, where an example with *med* is attested from Stryn.

A twist that should be mentioned here is that the informant from Surnadal who produced (17), with *med*, was presented with an example with *hos* in the survey. He rejected this example, and so did the other informants from the same location. Hence, it appears that the preposition chosen by the investigators here failed to reveal the actual usage in the local dialect.

From the Trøndelag region there are only three instances in the corpus of *få* ‘get’ with an expressed source argument. In all these cases, which are shown in (19)–(21), the preposition is *tå*.

\[(19)\] å så hi demm fått *besje tå mora te* (Norwegian)  
\[
\text{and then have they got order from mother.DEF to}
\]
\[
\text{‘and they got an order from their mother to…’} \text{ (inderoejy_03gm)}
\]

\[(20)\] æ fekk melling *tå* n Hans  
\[
\text{I got message from he Hans}
\]
\[
\text{‘I got a message from Hans.’ (skaugdalen_36)}
\]

\[(21)\] han ha fått friarbrev på donngvis *tå* ei utnlannsk ei  
\[
\text{he has got proposal.letters on heap.wise from a foreign one}
\]
\[
\text{‘He has got heaps of letters of proposal from some woman abroad.’ (skaugdalen_36)}
\]

The preposition *tå* has developed from *ut-av* ‘out-of’ (see e.g. Rietz 1867:770-771, Aasen 1873), and in many dialects of Norwegian, it has replaced *av* — in some varieties in the form *ta*. Where *tå* or *ta* is used instead of *av*, these prepositions are in general found in the same contexts as *av* in the standard varieties.

However, the preposition used in Inderøy in the relevant test sentence in the survey was *med*, whereas *hos* was used in Skaugdalen. These options were rejected by all the informants in these locations. And since *tå* marking source arguments was not tested in the survey, we do not know how widespread the use of *tå* is. What we do know, however, is that the preposition *tå* is used in other contexts in many places in the Trøndelag region. We see this in map 6, which shows occurrences of *tå* regardless of function. The only location represented in the corpus that does not have any instances of *tå* is Trondheim, the main city of the region. This in accordance with the general tendency that *tå* is associated with traditional rural dialects rather than with urban dialects.
In addition to Skaugdalen, *hos* was tested as a source marker in Bjugn and Stokkøya, which both are situated on the coast to the north-west of Trondheim. The judgments were however negative, with the exception of younger informants in Stokkøya, who found it fully acceptable. In light of this, it is striking that in the corpus material from Stokkøya, there are no occurrences of the preposition *hos* at all. Instead, there is an example of the preposition *te* being used with the meaning ‘at someone’s place’, where the standard varieties of Norwegian would use *hos* or *hjå*. The example, which is uttered by a young woman, is shown in (22).

(22) æ e te mor mi i hælgen (Norwegian)
    *I am at mother my in weekends.DEF*
    ‘I spend the weekends at my mother’s.’ (stokkoeya_31)

The basic meaning of *te* is illative, i.e. it corresponds to English *to* (and to *til* in the standard varieties of Norwegian). In (23), we see the same speaker using *te* in an illative function:

(23) vi kjæm sikkert fram i titia te hotellet (Norwegian)
    *we come likely forward in ten.time.DEF to hotel.DEF*
    ‘We are likely to arrive to get to the hotel around ten.’ (stokkoeya_31)

Hence, it is not clear what the survey results from Stokkøya mean. It could be added, though, that the preposition *hos* is not much used in the Trøndelag region at all. In the corpus, only three of the informants from this region have occurrences of *hos*: an older woman from Trondheim, an older woman from
Inderøy, and a younger woman from Oppdal. In all three cases, *hos* marks location at a human referent. In addition, *sjå* is found in Oppdal and *sje* in Lierne; both *sjå* and *sje* are variants of *hjå*. Apart from these cases, prepositions other than *hos* or *hjå* are used to express ‘at someone’s place’ in Trøndelag, and other prepositions are also used to express the source argument of *få* ‘get’.

In the latter function, *med* was tested in a number of places in Trøndelag. As already mentioned, it was rejected in Inderøy, and also in Namdalen and Røros. It was accepted by the older informants in Oppdal, Gauldal and Lierne, while in Meråker and Selbu, it was accepted by some of the younger informants as well as by the older ones. Finally, in Trondheim it was rejected by the older informants but accepted by the younger ones. These results seem to suggest that *med* is falling out of use as a marker of source in most places in Trøndelag, with the exception of Trondheim, where it appears to be gaining acceptance. However, although younger informants from Trondheim reported in the survey that they accept *med* in this function, there are no examples of it in the corpus. Moreover, native speakers inform me that they would use *te* or *av*. Corpus data confirm that these prepositions are both used in Trondheim, although there are no examples where they express the source argument of *få* ‘get’. Which prepositions are actually used in this function in Trondheim will have to be investigated further.

A preposition that has not yet been mentioned is *åt*, from Old Norse *át*, which has a number of uses in Norwegian dialects (and in Nynorsk). Its basic meaning is ‘to, towards; for’ (see e.g. Hovdenak 1986), and it is also frequently used as a possessive marker. A search in the Nordic Dialect Corpus reveals that *åt* is found in all parts of Norway, with the exception of Sogn og Fjordane county. This does not mean that it is found everywhere outside this county, since it is clearly associated with traditional rural dialects. But interestingly, some speakers of Trøndelag dialects inform me that they would use *tå* as a marker of the source argument of *få* ‘get’. There are however no examples of this usage in the corpus, and since it was not tested in this function in the survey, the precise distribution of *tå* as a marker of source is not known.

What we can tell from the corpus is that *åt* is found in the same contexts as *te*, i.e. with locative or illative meaning, as shown in (24) and (25) (these examples should be compared to (22) and (23)). In addition, in some dialects *åt* replaces *tå* or *av*. In (26), we have an example where many other dialects would have *tå* or *av*.

\[(24)\] de va vell likens åt däkk å de? (Norwegian)

\[\text{it was PRT similar at you.PL too it}\]

‘I guess it was the same at your place?’ (roeros_03gm)

\[(25)\] hann sykkla jo åt staa (Norwegian)

\[\text{he biked you.know to town.DEF}\]

‘He biked to town, you know.’ (roeros_03gm)
Note that (24), (25) and (27) are all from the same location. It is evident that in the Røros dialect, åt is a multifunctional preposition. Moreover, since its meaning overlaps with te, and also with av and tà, which all appear as markers of the source of ‘få’ in Norwegian, it is perhaps not very surprising that åt can also be found in this function.

While there is much variation in the Trøndelag region as to how the source argument of få ‘get’ is expressed, there is little variation in other areas. In the western part of Norway, to the south of the areas where we find med or hjå, only av is attested in the corpus. One of the occurrences was shown in (1), and another one is given in (27).

(27) eg fekk jo nye rullesji av onngane (Norwegian)

I got you know new roller skis of children.DEF
‘You know I got new roller skis from my children.’ (karmoey_03gm)

In the south of Norway, and in the coastal areas around Oslo, we also find av, whereas inland from Oslo we find ta or tà. One example of each from the corpus are shown in (28) and (29).

(28) dømm fe litt avlasstning tà en aan (Norwegian)

they get a little help of each other
‘They get a little help from each other.’ (gausdal_08gk)

(29) så fekk je en ta onngkeln min (Norwegian)

then got I one from uncle.DEF my
‘Then I got one from my uncle.’ (alvdal_03gm)

3. Discussion

The review of relevant data from the Nordic Syntax Database and the Nordic Dialect Corpus given above shows that there is considerable variation in Norwegian with respect to prepositions marking the source argument of få ‘get’. It should further be noted that only phrases representing the source in transfer of possession are taken into account. To express a source of communication or the source in transfer of location, other prepositions are used, such as frå in (30) and (31).

(30) e fekk brev frå han (Norwegian)

I got letter from him
‘I got a letter from him.’ (alvdal_04gk)
(31) jæi hadde fått di frå Jonnsrusaga (Norwegian)

\[ I \text{ had got them from Jonnsrud sawmill.DEF} \]

‘I had gotten them from the Jonnsrud sawmill.’ (lommedalen_ma_02)

A corpus search for få followed by frå (the form found in Nynorsk and in many dialects) or fra (the Bokmål form, also found in many spoken varieties) suggests that the usage seen in (30) and (31) is common in all parts of Norway.

Greater variation is seen in the preposition marking the source in transfer of possession, as already mentioned. Interestingly, the geographical distribution of the prepositions is quite clear. In the north, i.e. in the three northernmost counties Finnmark, Troms, and Nordland, we find hos, which primarily marks location at a human referent, here as well as in many other parts of Norway.

In the county of Møre og Romsdal, me(d) is the preposition most frequently used to mark the source of få ‘get’. Me(d) is an old Germanic preposition, found all over Scandinavia in a number of functions (see e.g. the entries for med in Almenningen et al. 2008 and Svenska akademiens ordbok 1893– ). That it can also mark the source of få ‘get’ is noted in Almenningen et al. (2008), and strikingly, the authentic examples given there are all from Møre og Romsdal or from neighboring counties. In addition, Almenningen et al. (2008) observes that med can even be used in the meaning ‘at someone’s place’, i.e. as a locative marker with a human complement. Again, the examples are mainly from Møre og Romsdal county. Hence, it appears that in this county, med has partly the same functions as hos has in the north. As one can see from Map 1, neither hos nor the synonymous hjå is found in Møre og Romsdal, and it follows that some other preposition has taken over the functions that hos or hjå has elsewhere.

A question that now arises is why hos or med should mark both location and source. Syncretism of location and source is found also in other languages, although it is not very frequent (see Pantcheva 2010). In the case at hand, the fact that hos and med take a human complement when they mean ‘at someone’s place’ as well as when they mark the source of få ‘get’ could have paved the way for the syncretism. Recall that it had applied to hjá already in Old Norse, and it has later spread to hos in the north and to med in Møre og Romsdal. In addition, it is retained with hjå in the areas to the south of Møre og Romsdal and inland from there, in those locations where hjå is still in use.

In the Trøndelag region, which is located between Møre og Romsdal and Nordland, we find forms of hjå marking location in the southern periphery (Oppdal) and in the eastern periphery (Lierne). However, in these locations, and also in some other locations in Trøndelag, med was accepted as a marker of the source of få ‘get’, in particular by older informants. This indicates that med has been used in this function earlier, perhaps alongside hjå.

Elsewhere the Trøndelag region, the preposition that is attested as a marker of the source og få ‘get’ is tå, which has developed from and is synonymous with the standard form av – the basic meaning of both is ‘of, off, from’. In many varieties of Norwegian, not only in Trøndelag, but also in all locations to the south of the area where hjå is used, av or tå (including the variant ta) has replaced the locative preposition hjå as a marker of source.
However, although it is not attested in the corpus, I have been informed by speakers from Trøndelag that the preposition marking the source argument of få ‘get’ in many places and for many speakers is åt or te, which are found in all locations in Trøndelag that are represented in the corpus and in the database, with the exception of Trondheim, where te is found but not åt. In all other locations, there is variation between individual speakers, and even in individual speakers. This variation appears to reflect a situation where te is replacing the more archaic åt. A nice illustration of the variation is seen in (32), which is uttered by a young woman from Meråker:

(32) hjemme åt oss … når neheim te mamma
home ÅT us when one is home TE mother
‘home at our place… when one is at my mother’s’ (meraaker_02uk)

An interesting point here is that åt and te have illative meaning in other contexts. This means that in many places in the Trøndelag region there is syncretism of goal (illative) and source, instead of syncretism of location and source. As Pantcheva (2010) points out, syncretism of goal and source is another infrequent pattern in the world’s languages. Hence, the marking of the source argument of få ‘get’ in Norwegian in general and in Trøndelag in particular is very interesting from a typological point of view.

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