

# Genericity in Norwegian

Language is a tool that lets people communicate on any possible subject, no matter the context of a given proposition. By using certain grammatical tools of a given language, we are able to express almost any thought we might want to convey. One of such tools is a phenomenon called genericity. Genericity in language is a possibility to refer to a whole given species or some group of people, animals, plants or objects, by the use of certain expression types. By using an appropriate grammatical construction a native speaker of a given language is able to construct a generic proposition without having to use such expressions in a sentence as 'species', 'all dogs' and so on.

In Germanic languages, including the discussed Norwegian language, the choice of possible expressions of genericity is particularly rich. By choosing an appropriate noun form in a given sentence, native speakers of the language can e.g. refer to a whole polar bear species or some given representative member of a given group. The Norwegian language has as many as five different noun forms and these are: bare noun (without any article), indefinite and definite singular noun forms, as well as indefinite and definite plural noun forms. The choice of an appropriate noun form itself is not an easy task though. By choosing one of the mentioned forms, the speaker has to be aware of a general meaning of the sentence and whether it will have a clear-cut meaning for the recipient.

The goal of the project is to examine in what way the given noun forms function in generic propositions, and which ones obtain generic meaning most often. An important part of the research will also be to determine whether the mentioned noun forms can be used instead of each other in generic contexts and to what extent. By determining the noun forms that appear in generic sentences and by eliminating possible incorrect and/or unacceptable noun forms, we shall be able to form a set of guidelines one could follow when constructing a generic sentence in Norwegian.