Kathrine Thisted Petersen: The development of incorporation from Old Danish to Modern Danish: from unmarked case forms to marked indeterminacy and unit accentuation

Summary

In Modern Danish, the combination of an unstressed verb and a stressed noun such as ˌspille ˈfløjte, literally: 'play flute', or ˌgå ˌi ˈskole, literally: 'go into school', forms a complex predicate. The two characteristic features of complex predicates such as those above are: the indeterminate form of the noun, making it non-referential, and the desemanticization of the unstressed verb, broadening its semantic and aspectual properties. Thereby the whole combination becomes lexicalized to a greater or lesser extent. Based on these features, the combination can be defined as 'noun stripping', a subtype of the universal phenomenon known as 'incorporation' (Gerdts 1998; Gallmann 1999). The prototypical instance of the morphological incorporation process is the integration of a noun stem into a verb as illustrated by the example *ni-nica-qua*, literally: 'I-flesh-eat', from the Native American language Nahuatl, where the noun stem *nica* 'flesh' is incorporated into the verb *qua* 'eat' (Sapir 1911: 260). In Modern Danish, instead of being morphologically incorporated, the indeterminate noun is syntactically and phonologically incorporated into the verb.

In this dissertation, I use the functional features of incorporation in Modern Danish as a starting point for investigating the development of the phenomenon from Early Middle Danish (1100-1350) through Late Middle Danish (1350-1525) and Early Modern Danish (1525-1700) to Modern Danish (post-1700). First, the theoretical foundation of the dissertation is outlined. For the purpose of describing both synchronic and diachronic relationships, the theory of markedness established by Jakobson (1932) is used as the overall language model. As defined by Jakobson (1932), the unmarked member of a binary relation includes the meaning of both the marked and the unmarked member. In addition, I refer to relevant parts of the grammaticalization theory (e.g. Heine 2005) and the theory of specification in relation to morphological forms (Dalrymple et al. 2009). After a detailed presentation of the formal and functional features of incorporation in Modern Danish, I specify the topological and morphosyntactic differences between Old Danish and Modern Danish. Although stress markers are absent from Old Danish texts, topological factors make the usage of unit accentuation between verbs and incorporated arguments unlikely in most of the Old Danish period. Since words in the final position of a syntactic phrase are never unstressed (Jacobs 1999), the presence of OV word order in Old Danish texts with the verb in the final position presumably rules out the usage of unit accentuation in spoken language. Furthermore, indeterminate

nouns, which are referentially marked in Modern Danish and thereby candidates for incorporation, are referentially unmarked in Early Middle Danish (Jensen 2007a). This means that the formal features of incorporation in Modern Danish are absent from Old Danish. Therefore, the diachronic analysis is based on the functional features of incorporation.

The aim is to describe the development of incorporation from Old Danish to Modern Danish as an instance of an internally motivated language change which was actualized in unmarked environments before spreading to marked environments (cf. Andersen 2001a, 2001b), as well as to account for thus far unexplained changes in the Old Danish case system and the Early Modern Danish word order system. By examining the case system in the Early Middle Danish manuscript B 69,4^{o} of 'Scanian Law' from approximately 1350, I formulate the hypothesis that an indeterminate noun with an underspecifying case form is referentially unmarked and thereby a candidate for incorporation, whereas a noun with a regular case form is marked as a referential entity in the universe of discourse. For example, the substitution of the regular oblique case forms *fathur* 'father' and *mothur* 'mother' by the underspecifying case forms *fathær* and *mothær* in the sentence *hafwæ gud fathær oc gud mothær* 'have godfather and godmother' indicates the non-referential status of the nouns. In Late Middle Danish, on the other hand, the markedness relation is turned around so that indeterminate nouns are now marked as non-referential categories, as already proposed by Jensen (2007a). On the basis of a statistical analysis of article usage in the Late Middle Danish manuscript C 529 of the religious text 'Sjælens Trøst' ('Comfort of the Soul') from approximately 1425, I confirm that indeterminate nouns are used only non-referentially, particularly as incorporated arguments. In the same section, it is shown that the nominal case forms in the two Late Middle Danish manuscripts C 529 and A 109 are used in a random way, indicating the loss of their semantic and pragmatic function. In the subsequent statistical analysis of the word order development in Early Modern Danish from the beginning of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century in both formal and informal texts, I delineate how the VO structure was gradually established in written language, thereby signalizing the presence of unit accentuation in spoken language. At this stage of the language change process, the desemanticization of the verb makes the complex predicate lexically marked. The fact that the VO structure was first fully developed in informal texts and in complex predicates and periphrastic verb phrases in texts of all kinds of genres and registers indicates that unit accentuation was actualized in spoken language long before the standardization of VO word order in written language.

Finally, I conclude that hitherto unexplained changes in the history of the Danish case system, article usage, and word order have a functional explanation and constitute essential stages in the development of incorporation from Old Danish to Modern Danish. From a case-conditioned through an article-conditioned to a stress-conditioned mode of expression, the process illustrates the prototype of an internally motivated language change, which is actualized in unmarked environments before spreading to marked environments.