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## Introduction

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# Introduction

## Cecilia Falk & Tomas Riad

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This special issue on Language Change of the *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* contains five articles relating to the topic in different ways, clustering around three main themes: (de)grammaticalization, word order and stress systems.

Grammaticalization is an area where much work on language change has been carried out. A question that has caused much discussion in recent years is whether grammaticalization is a unidirectional process, or whether it is possible to identify cases where grammatical items lose grammatical status, i.e. cases of degrammaticalization. In her article, **Kersti Börjars** discusses one change that has hitherto been seen as a quite clear case of degrammaticalization, namely the development of Swedish possessive *-s*. Muriel Norde argued in her thesis that the Swedish possessive *-s* underwent a change from a morphological genitive affix to a clitic that attaches to the noun phrase in syntax (Norde 1997). Börjars argues that the distinction affix–clitic is too simplistic, and shows that Modern Swedish possessive *-s* exhibits some mixed properties, best understood if *-s* is analysed as a phrasal affix. On the one hand, it occurs at the left edge of the noun phrase, on the other hand, it seems to be sensitive to the feature content of the element that it attaches to. Börjars suggests that two changes have taken place, both of a morphological nature. First, there was a change in how genitive is marked overtly, from a system with full agreement within the noun phrase to a system where genitive is marked only once. Then, there was a change (not yet fully completed) where this single marking appears at the right edge of the phrase instead of at the head noun. None of these changes, she concludes, can be seen as cases of degrammaticalization. It is not clear, however, whether they are instances of grammaticalization either, and the question remains open whether changes in the morphological marking like these are non-directional rather than uni-directional.

Grammaticalization is also the topic of the article by **Kjell Ivar Vannebo**, where he discusses pseudocoordination in Norwegian and in Scandinavian languages

more broadly. His investigation concerns the pseudocoordination of *ta og V*, ‘take and V’, as in *vi fâr ta og bere henne opp* ‘we must take and carry her up (we must carry her upstairs)’, which looks paratactic but which is really hypotactic. This construction has previously been argued to develop by grammaticalization (Ekberg 1993). In his paper, Vannebo looks for the historical evidence for this process and finds that desemanticization of *ta* must have taken place already in Old Norse, in view of evidence for a grammaticalized Old Norse *taka* in several other constructions beside pseudocoordination. He then discusses the possibility that the construction was spread from Greek to several European languages including Old Norse – originally a suggestion by Coseriu (1966) – but concludes that this areal linguistic explanation is quite unlikely to be right in view of the variable frequency with which it occurs in different Germanic languages, and the preponderance for it to occur in vernaculars. The close contacts between linguistic communities that such an explanation would seem to require are simply not there. In all likelihood, Vannebo concludes, the grammaticalization of (equivalents of) *ta* is an internal development in several languages, and it is not confined to the Indo-European language family.

Two of the articles, by Eric Fuss and by John Sundqvist, concern word order and changes in word order. In his paper, **Eric Fuss** discusses V2 properties in Gothic and Old English, arguing that V2 in these languages represents the historical core of V2, where the finite verb moves to C only in the presence of an operator in SpecCP. This suggests, contrary to what is traditionally assumed, that V2 in Old English is more like so-called ‘residual’ V2 in Modern English than the more consistent V2 pattern in the other modern Germanic languages. A difference, though, is that Old English verb movement applies to all verbs, including main verbs. Superficial deviations are discussed: Apparent violations of V2 in Gothic can be attributed to influence from Greek word order. Superficial verb-second strings in Old English with non-operators in SpecCP are analysed with the verb in T and the full NP subject remaining in situ inside the verb phrase. The difference between Old English and Modern English (apart from the classes of verbs that undergo movement to C) is argued to be due to the lack of an EPP feature in T in Old English. By virtue of this, full NP subjects remain in situ inside the verb phrase, creating the superficial V2 string XP–finite verb–subject, without any verb movement to C. Given this alternative (albeit not entirely new) analysis of the Old English clause structure, the actual change will not be the loss of verb movement to C in certain structural configurations, but instead the emergence of an EPP feature, forcing the subject to move to SpecTP; this change in the underlying grammar also gives rise to obligatory non-referential subjects.

Whereas Fuss’ article mainly gives alternative analyses of well known facts, and through this forces a new interpretation of what happened, the contribution of **John Sundqvist** challenges the status of a well established trigger of syntactic change, namely the loss of morphological inflection. It is an old observation that V-to-I

movement seems to be somehow related to rich verbal inflection. One might therefore expect that the loss of inflection would lead also to the loss of verb movement to I. The one-to-one correlation between verbal inflection and V-to-I has been questioned before, and in his paper, Sundquist shows that the development of the embedded clause word order in Early Modern Danish rather supports a weaker version of the correlation, where verb movement to I can apply also in languages without agreement in person. To account for the loss of verb movement, Sundquist proposes that structural ambiguity plays a central role: embedded clauses with a subject gap and adverbials before the finite verb are ambiguous between a Stylistic Fronting analysis and an analysis with the verb in situ. The large number of clauses of this type eventually leads to the loss of verb movement.

Fuss' and Sundquist's theoretical approaches are similar in that they both take changes in word order (and other syntactic changes, such as the emergence of obligatory subjects) to reflect change(s) in properties of an underlying grammar. This raises the question of possible triggers of reanalysis, parameter resetting or whatever notion we assume for language specific differences. Changes in the morphological system have often been invoked as independently motivated changes that could lead to reanalysis of the grammar. Without elaborating the technical solutions of the interaction between morphology, grammatical functions and (narrow) syntax, Fuss proposes that changes in the tense system of English is the cause for the emergence of a strong EPP feature of T. As mentioned above, Sundquist rejects morphology as a clue for a proper setting of a 'V-to-I-movement parameter'. Instead he proposes, following Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998), that V-to-I is but one of several separate consequences of a Split IP, other visible manifestations including transitive expletive constructions and the availability of a VP-external object position. The final loss of V-to-I is the ultimate consequence of lack of positive evidence of a Split IP – the large number of structurally ambiguous clauses in combination with the lack of further positive evidence for a Split IP. (The existence and further development of the suggested phenomena which correlate with a Split IP in Danish remain to be investigated, however.) This would mean that parameter resetting could be propelled by small-scale changes in the data that the parameter in question is supposed to account for. On the one hand, this proposal is likely to be controversial, since it does not identify an independent change in the language learner's input; on the other hand, it is in accordance with other findings which suggest that morphology perhaps does not have the great impact on syntax that we used to think.

In the phonology contribution to this issue, **Haïke Jacobs** discusses the change of stress in several languages, including Icelandic, Faroese, Polish, Czech and Latin. At some stage of their development, these languages have each had initial stress, but they have, to different degrees, changed the position of main stress to somewhere towards the end of the word. In models where stress is assigned from either edge of the word, this amounts to a change of direction, from the right to the left. Most

Germanic languages have changed in this respect and Árnason (in Zonneveld et al. 1999) in fact suggests that a similar change is incipient in Faroese (but not Icelandic) today. Jacobs challenges the view that right-to-left assignment of stress usually goes together with a quantity sensitive stress system. While it is dubious whether Faroese or Icelandic, both of which have quantity insensitive systems, are actually in the process of changing direction of stress assignment, Polish clearly has, and Polish has a quantity insensitive stress system. The paper also provides an evaluation of two rule based models for stress assignment to see how well they can express a change in direction of stress assignment, and it turns out they aren't equal. Jacobs further provides the technical account of the same subject matter in terms of optimality theory. The remaining, burning issue of why such a change should take place is addressed in the final discussion. The tentative proposal is that structural ambiguity is the source that opens up for so-called imperfect learning. This is thus a similar proposal as the one given for word order change by Sundquist.

This special issue of *NJL* closes with a book review. The appearance of a major handbook within a field of research may or may not be a major event within that field. Some handbooks are too secondary in relation to the research carried out, others are too small or too narrow in focus to qualify as major. Yet others try to cover a field that is already too broad. The real influence of a handbook can only be fully judged in retrospect, but the recently published first volume (of two) of *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages* (chief edited by Oskar Bandle, Zürich; Bandle et al. 2002) clearly has the ambition to provide both reference to and influence on the research within the field. The reference function is covered by a large number of articles (all in all 230) covering the various topics and themes of this diverse field. The influence function is provided for by allowing methodological pluralism and by engaging specialists to present up-to-date analyses and overviews, with a specific instruction to identify areas where there are gaps in research. We have asked **Staffan Hellberg** to review the first volume of this work in this special issue on language change.

Clearly, the topic of language change continues to draw the interest of many linguists, and the different articles in this special issue each contributes to this ongoing discussion. We thank the authors and the anonymous referees for their contributions.

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