Argument placement in Mainland Scandinavian – stable variation and parametric change

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The Mainland Scandinavian languages show much-discussed variation in the order between subjects and sentential adverbs (e.g. Andréasson). In Norwegian and Swedish, DP subjects often follow negation (1a), whereas light pronouns precede negation (1b). There is however some variation: a DP sometimes precedes negation (2a), and pronouns occasionally (but infrequently) follow it (2b).[1]

(1a) *Därför   kom   inte grannen.*   (Sw.)
    therefore   came   not the.neighbor
(1b) *Därför   kom hon inte.*   (Sw.)
    therefore   came she not
(2a) *Därför   kom   grannen   inte.*   (Sw.)
     therefore   came the.neighbor   not
(2b) *Därför   kom   inte hon.*
    therefore   came   not   she

In modern Norwegian and older Danish and Swedish, there is similar variation in the vP-domain, w.r.t. objects and verbal particles. DP objects typically follow a particle (3a), whereas pronouns generally precede it (3b). Again, there is variation (4), particularly with respect to the placement of DPs.

(3a) *han ... slog   sunder dørrernæ*   (Sw., 15th c.)
    he   broke PRT   the.doors
(3b) *nu   kiänner jag Er igen*   (Sw. 17th c.)
    now recognize I   you PRT
(4a) *oc slog   swerdit   sunder*   (Sw., 15th c.)
    and broke the.sword   PRT
(4b) *men hwem ...   skulle hafwa kiänt   igen dig*   (Sw. 17th c.)
     but who   would have   recognized PRT you

The word order variation between arguments and adverbs/particles is historically stable. In Old Swedish, 41 % and 98 % of subject pronouns precede negation (Brandtler & Håkansson). Our own study of early modern Swedish and older Danish shows the same patterns. In Swedish texts from the 16th century and onwards, the frequency of shifted subject pronouns remains constant, and high (90 % or more). Just as in modern Swedish, there is, however, variation (5).

(5a) *Ammiral, Jag kiände Er   intet.* (Sw. 17th c.)
    Admiral I   knew   you   not
(5b)*är icke det så min Fiken?* (Sw. 17th c.)
    is not it   so my girl

The word order variation has thus persisted for centuries, although the frequency of postposed weak pronouns is consistently low – this has clearly always been the dispreferred order. During the same period, the Scandinavian languages have undergone a macroparametric shift to a consistently head-initial grammar. The order between phrases is not affected. To account for the stable variation, we propose that the order of phrases is a consequence not only of the functional sequence and general linearization principles, but that also prosodic and information structural factors play a role (cf. e.g. Erteschik-Shir & Josefsson). The fact that weak pronouns are much preferred in a shifted position is due primarily to a prosodic constraint: an in situ pronoun needs to be either promoted to a minimal prosodic word or incorporated into

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[1] We have investigated the Archive for Danish Literature (www.adl.dk), the Swedish corpus of drama dialogue (Melander Marttala & Strömquist) and the Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al.).

a minimal prosodic word (as suggested by Riad). Since the prosodic requirement can be met in different ways or be violated, the system allows for some variation.

For most varieties of modern and older Scandinavian, the placement of verbal particles follows the same pattern in the vP-domain as sentential adverbs in the CP/TP-domain. This suggests that particles should be analyzed on a par with other adverbs in these varieties, as adjuncts. This would also straightforwardly explain why particles are possible also with ditransitives:

(6) *Legen*   *skrev*   *meg*   *ut*   *en resept.*   (No. Tungseth 2008:98)
     the.doctor   wrote   me   out   a prescription
(7) *så*   *ge*   *mig*   *hit*   *en*   *skål som håller et halfstop* (Sw. 17th c.)
     so   give   me   here   a   bowl that holds a half.tankard

However, modern Swedish stands out with regard to particle placement. In older Swedish, we find the same variation as in e.g. modern Norwegian, and the parallel with subject shift: pronominal objects generally precede particles, whereas DP objects tend tend to be postposed (Larsson & Lundquist). Since the 18th century, however, all objects obligatorily follow particles in Swedish. It thus seems harder to posit a general linearization algorithm for CP and vP.

We will however propose that modern Swedish has the same principles for linearization of arguments and adjuncts as e.g. Norwegian, but that the particle has been reanalyzed as a lower head in the vP (cf. Ramchand & Svenonius). As a consequence, the word order in Swedish particle constructions becomes more restricted: modern Swedish is consistently head-initial, and particles will precede all types of objects. As a consequence of the reanalysis, examples like (6) and (7), which can be found until the middle of the 18th century, become ungrammatical.

With respect to the word order shifts in the history of Scandinavian, we appear to find two types of changes. The first type can be referred to as macro-parametric – it concerns the general principles for linearization of heads vs. phrases in the languages. The second type is micro-parametric; this is how we understand the syntactic reanalysis of the verbal particles in Swedish. The macroparametric shift to VO leads to a harmonic system (cf. Biberauer & Roberts.). Also the observed patterns of variation is general, and, in a sense, harmonic: the same principles of linearization of phrases holds in both vP and CP. This, we believe, is crucial for the variation to be stable.

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