

REVIEW

PIOTR GARBACZ: *Word order in Övdalian. A study in variation and change.*
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The dissertation *Word order in Övdalian. A study in variation and change* by Piotr Garbacz is a clear example of the growing attention to a small Swedish vernacular, Övdalian. Övdalian is spoken today by around 2400 people in province Dalicarlia in the central part of Sweden (Garbacz 2010:17). Constant debates are being held whether Övdalian should be perceived as a Swedish dialect or as a separate language and what should be done to preserve this threatened linguistic variety.

The publication *Word order in Övdalian* is written in English and has 239 pages, out of which 48 contain tables with Övdalian structures and scores about their grammaticality, provided by local informants. The book contains a summary in both Swedish and Övdalian, which testifies to the author's command of the vernacular he examined. Besides, it is an interesting example of a conscious usage of a primarily spoken vernacular in an academic text. So far Övdalian has been investigated by numerous linguists but, as the author emphasises, it has not been the subject of many extensive studies as far as its syntax is concerned. Moreover, most of the publications have been based on outdated data while Garbacz focuses on his own material, collected among twelve older native speakers. He compares his own results mostly with Levander's dissertation which "has been the foremost source of knowledge of Övdalian up to now, as no thorough studies on Övdalian morphology and syntax have been made since the year 1909" (Garbacz 2010:49). As the amount of written texts is quite modest, Garbacz chose to elicit rather than obtain the collection of grammaticality judgments and therefore presented the native speakers with a list of possible sentences that they were asked to take a position on.

For the purpose of the publication Garbacz makes his own periodization, which is entirely based on Helgander's work from 1996. He introduces new terms for Övdalian that was spoken in the periods named by Helgander, which makes it easier to understand ongoing linguistic changes. Garbacz distinguishes *Classical Övdalian* (spoken by the generations born before 1920), *Traditional Övdalian* (spoken by the generations born between 1920 and the end of the 1940's) and *Modern Övdalian* (spoken by the generations born ca. 1950 and later). Throughout the book the author gives examples taken both from Classical and Traditional Övdalian which gives a deeper insight into the problem of syntax.

The first part of the book contains a general description of the vernacular and raises many important issues not connected with generative grammar, such as the

history of Övdalian, its periodization, structure and the position it holds today. As the subject of the publication is mainly Övdalian syntax, Garbacz explains these questions rather cursorily. Still the description is precise enough to comprehend the specific of this Swedish vernacular. In *Introduction* Garbacz writes that “[t]he entire population of Övdalian speakers is estimated to be around 2400 people, 1700 of whom live in Älvdalen” (Garbacz 2010:17). I would specify here that the numbers apply exclusively to Älvdalen parish, since the name *Älvdalen* might as well be understood as the whole municipality which consists of three parishes: Älvdalen, Särna and Idre, whereas Övdalian is spoken only in Älvdalen parish.

In the second chapter Garbacz presents works that support the idea of regarding Övdalian as a separate language. Nevertheless, the author stresses too strongly that the only criterion which is taken into account while classifying a dialect as a language, which is not met by Övdalian, is the lack of official contexts in which one can use it. However, since the aim of the work is not to decide whether Övdalian should be treated as a language or as a dialect these conclusions can be accepted in the presented form. Finally, this chapter contains an overview of the most important works on Övdalian morphology and syntax.

In the fourth chapter the author analyses word order properties of Traditional Övdalian and divides them in four groups: properties that are in common with other Scandinavian languages, properties that are in common with Mainland Scandinavian languages, with Insular Scandinavian languages and finally properties that are specific for Övdalian. This division gives a better insight in how unique and complex the vernacular is.

The second part of the publication treats Övdalian syntax from generative grammarians’ perspective. Having provided a part with general description of the vernacular the author discusses Övdalian clause structure and finally analyses more deeply two syntactic features: V^0 -to- I^0 movement (the feature that is undergoing a change in the language of the older speakers) and stylistic fronting (the feature that has already disappeared from Traditional Övdalian). The content of the second part might be nevertheless quite vague for non-generative grammarians. The book contains many examples of unique syntactic Övdalian features which could have been compared with other Scandinavian languages for better understanding of structures. All of them are translated into English so that the reader does not have to be familiar with Övdalian to understand the examples.

The dissertation *Issues in Övdalian syntax* by Piotr Garbacz, despite some minor shortcomings, has managed to fill the gap in the works on Övdalian syntax. It gives essential information as far as Övdalian in general and Övdalian syntax are concerned. One of the conclusions drawn by the author is that the majority of old Övdalian syntactic constructions has already disappeared or is going to disappear in the future whereas innovations are still visible. Garbacz questions the morphology-driven syntax approach, which would be maybe more natural to take when languages with rich case system are analysed and he chooses the parametric approach instead. Nonetheless, Garbacz concludes that his alternative explanation of the changes in Övdalian has not given fully satisfying answers either and we need “a refinement of our notion of parametric syntax” (Garbacz 2010:169).

The results of the dissertation argue against previous theory that the presence of rich verbal agreement is linked to the existence of verbal movement and stylistic fronting. In case of the vernacular in question the verb movement is optional whereas stylistic fronting is no longer productive in Traditional Övdalian “despite the presence of rich verbal agreement” (Garbacz 2010:167). Moreover, stylistic fronting in Övdalian is clearly not an effect of verbal agreement and V⁰-to-I⁰ movement, as it is stated with other Scandinavian languages (Falk 1993; Holmberg & Platzack 1995).

The main advantage of the research is the authenticity of data collected which renders some insight into how the vernacular is used today. Besides, the book is going to constitute a valuable point of reference in the future and can function as extensive grammatical material for anyone who wants to learn Övdalian.

LITTERATUR

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