

## REVIEW

ANDREA HESSE: *Zur Grammatikalisierung der Pseudokoordination im Norwegischen und in den anderen skandinavischen Sprachen*. Tübingen & Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2009. 254 pp.

The book at hand is an elaborate study of the phenomenon of pseudocoordination (henceforth PK as in the original text) in Norwegian and other Scandinavian languages. PKs are paratactic combinations of lexical verbs (or VPs with lexical verbs) with verbs of position (e.g. *sitte og lese* 'lit. sit and read, be reading') in which the verbs of position lose their lexical meaning in favour of an auxiliary function. According to the author, PKs serve mainly the aspectual purpose of rendering the described situation's imperfectivity but can also express additional semantic meanings of visualization of the activity (p.80) or stressing its actuality (p.81) and atelicity (p.82).

Generally speaking PKs should be classified as syntactic aspectual markers. The constructions are characteristic for all North Germanic languages, although there is some variation as to their form and distribution in the individual languages. It seems quite probable that the author kept expanding the span of her interest and research as the study progressed, because the analysed material includes not only the canonical constructions with verbs of position combined with lexical verbs, but also analogical constructions with other verbs placed in PKs' left hand position (e.g. *gå* 'go', *ta* 'take', *være* 'be') as well as asyndetic coordinations (*sitte lese* 'lit. sit read, be reading') and repetitive verb phrases (*sitte og sitte* 'lit. sit and sit, continue sitting'). Some of the analysed PKs do not mark imperfectivity, as they express ingressive (*ta og gjøre noe* 'lit. take and do something') or carry modal meanings (*være ved* 'lit. be at, almost do something'). This expansion should not be perceived as a flaw, as the author has not declared that the study is devoted to imperfective constructions alone. The scope of the book is beyond doubt impressive and shows that Hesse has deep insight into the matter of PKs, which she attempts to analyse and describe holistically, and she illustrates their usage in context with numerous examples. On the other hand, such an extended scope makes the study at times difficult to follow and renders the final conclusions, indeed worthy of attention, somewhat blurred.

The book consists of 7 chapters, including an introduction and a recapitulation. In chapter 2 the author presents the theoretical core of her study, giving an account of the concept of PK as well as brief descriptions of linguistic theories regarding grammaticalisation and aspect. The brevity of Hesse's remarks on these two vast areas of linguistic research is to be looked upon as an asset, as the author limits her clarifications and comments to what is necessary for the study in question (see also below). Chapter 3-5 are devoted entirely to analyzing

the phenomenon in Norwegian, even though Hesse often points to Swedish examples to reinforce her statements. Chapter 3 is devoted to PKs with verbs of position and provides a detailed survey of how the aspectual meaning of the constructions of interest is grammaticalised. It also provides a description of the PKs' syntactic and semantic development. Chapter 4 resembles chapter 3 in that the material is analysed with regard to its aspectual, syntactic and semantic development, the difference being that the PKs in question do not have a verb of position as their left-hand side constituent. Thus, chapter 4 describes PK with the verbs *gå*, *holde på*, *drive*, *ta* and *være*. In chapter 5 Hesse explores some odd cases of Norwegian participial, asyndetic and iterative PKs. The following chapter provides a typology of imperfectivity markers in Scandinavian languages and a corpus-based review of PKs in Swedish, Danish, Faroese and Icelandic. Otherwise many of Hesse's examples from previous chapters are constructed by the author herself, though the author does realise what limits there are to *armchair linguistics* and takes the necessary precautions to assure the correctness of her language data (p.6). The corpus-based study provided in chapter 6 confirms the authors' postulate about PKs' frequent usage. The publication is closed with a concise conclusions chapter, where the author answers the questions she has put forward in the introduction.

However brief, the theoretical background of the book deserves some attention here. The grammaticalisation theory underlying the book is well presented, rendering both general (Heine *et al.* 1991, Lehmann 1995) and specific (Heine 1993) topics within the field. What one lacks, however, is a review of the methodological aspects of conducting a synchronic study to research language change. As mentioned before, the examples used by Hesse in chapters 3-5 are mainly constructed. Even though their existence has been checked on corpus material (Oslo-korpuset), and their correctness assured by a native speaker's proofreading, one does instinctively reject the validity of making hard claims about language change processes without any statistics from real language data. As a cross-reference, both synchronic studies described in Hopper & Traugott (1993) provide conclusions based on statistical research. Although the grammaticalisation process argued by Hesse to consist of four levels, as presented in example 29 (p.52), seems logically correct, confirming the claims by a diachronic or a statistical synchronic study would be most welcome.

As for the category of aspect and its relation to Aktionsart, Hesse bases her views on, amongst others, some already classic theories put forward by Vendler (1967) and Comrie (1976). Following the latter, the author considers imperfective and perfective aspect to be the outer and inner perspective that given events are presented in, respectively (p. 26). Inspired by Vendler and many of his followers, Hesse's theoretical background also includes the category of Aktionsart, i.e. a VP's lexical aspectuality or a set of a VP's features determining its ability to express the meaning of one or the other aspect (p. 27). Based on several syntactic tests, Hesse assigned VPs "+" and "-" values with regard to three features: dynamicity, durativity and telicity (p. 29), thus laying foundation for her

classification of Aktionsarten. Although not all of the applied tests seem entirely convincing, nor does the classification itself, these two issues shall not be addressed here, as the number of Aktionsarten and tests applied to distinguish between them may vary, depending on the language(s) in question as well as the purpose and character of a particular inquiry (see Sobkowiak 2009 and references therein). Still, some comments on the author's aspect-related statements need to be made, since they do seem relevant to the study's theoretical foundation. On page 33 Hesse states that the Norwegian verb *sitte* ('sit') is [-dyn] and should therefore be perceived as a state (STA) verb, which is inconsistent with her remarks on tests determining a VP's dynamicity on page 29. Consider the following examples:

- (1) a. Hvad gjør Lisa?  
b. Hun sitter på sofaen.

The verb *sitte* does indeed pass Hesse's dynamicity test and is therefore [+dyn]. This inconsistency may cast doubt on some of Hesse's statements on pages 34ff in chapter 3.

Moreover, the author seems to misinterpret the distinctions between (im)perfectivity and (a)telicity. Her examples (1-4) on p. 27 (here: 2a-d) suggest that modifications within a VP may alter a sentence's overall aspectual value. This is indeed true, especially with respect to ACCOMPLISHMENT sentences, but Hesse's choice of the present tense in the examples seems most unfortunate.

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|-----------------------------|---------------|
| (2) a. Knut spiser.         | (imperfektiv) |
| b. Knut spiser et eple.     | (perfektiv)   |
| c. Knut knasker på et eple. | (imperfektiv) |
| d. Ingen spiser et eple.    | (imperfektiv) |

The allegedly perfective sentence (2b) is actually different from (2a) in that (2b) is telic, while (2a) is atelic, but one cannot speak of an aspectual difference here, as the present tense is incompatible with the perfective aspect. The mentioned examples would be far more adequate, had they been written in the past tense<sup>1</sup>.

By using example (4) on page 35, repeated as (8) on p. 37 (here: 3a and b), Hesse expresses a view that a PK can cause an originally telic VP (3a) to become atelic (3b):

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|---------------------------------------|----------|
| (3) a. Lisa strikker en genser.       | (telic)  |
| b. Lisa sitter og strikker en genser. | (atelic) |

An undeniable feature of ACCOMPLISHMENTS is that they have a "set terminal point" which is „logically necessary to their being what they are." (Vendler 1967:22ff). If what Hesse claims were true, applying a PK as a marker of the

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<sup>1</sup> Although (2b) and (2d) would probably be ambiguous between a perfective and imperfective reading (see Vikner & Vikner 1997 for details on the relation between Danish simple past tense and aspectual values).

imperfective aspect would also include the removal of the ACCOMPLISHMENT's „inherent terminal point” (Van Vallin 2005), which is logically impossible. Thus the two sentences in (3) are not different from each other in terms of (a)telicity, since both sentences are in fact telic (and imperfective, for that matter). It is worth mentioning that Hesse is by no means the only scholar to propose a solution of this kind. Applying a prepositional object instead of a direct object is perceived as a mechanism changing a given sentence's Aktionsart from ACCOMPLISHMENT to ACTIVITY<sup>2</sup> in Danish (Durst-Andersen & Herslund 1996, Hansen & Heltoft 1994), Swedish (Platzack 1979) and English (Smith 1997). This was argued against in Sobkowiak (2009:173ff), the counterargument being that this kind of aspectual marker does affect the overall aspectual value but not the Aktionsart. The same applies to PKs. In spite of these few imperfections, the theoretical background in Hesse's book is definitely well-founded and, on top of that, presented in a clear and suitably concise manner.

The description of the varieties of PK found in the Norwegian language is indeed profound and extensive. Not only does the author mention idiomatic or dialectal and often neglected structures such as the asyndetic construction (p.164), but she also makes successful attempts at explaining the basis for variation. At this point it is worth drawing the reader's attention to a compelling passage concerning the semantic content of locative verbs, and the analysis of their desemantisation in the forming of PK (p.61ff.), or the discussion concerning the basis for *oglå*-variation (whom Hesse, contrary to the commonly held view, attributes to conceptual and morphophonological reasons rather than the low degree of linguistic correctness of language users, p.150). The drawback of the descriptive Norwegian part is yet again the lack of diachronic perspective. It is puzzling that the author should employ historical linguistic data in one case (the PK with *ta* 'take' and its Old Norse equivalent, p.129ff.), and ignore it in other cases. Such a choice may have been dictated by the non-existence of the described structure in Old Norse, yet that statement is nowhere to be found in the text. Yet from the synchronic point of view, chapters 3 to 5 are a diligent rendition of the phenomenon in its full scope.

Equally, one must give Hesse credit for the immense amount of work she has put into building her Scandinavian text corpus, which is partially a parallel one (translations of Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Långstrump*). The corpus is applied for two purposes: to confirm the claim of PKs being a dominant marker of imperfective aspect in Scandinavian languages, and to investigate which constructions are used in Icelandic, the only one of the analysed languages where the PKs are virtually non-existent (Hesse mentions one corresponding hypotactic structure, *vera að* 'lit. be at' which hardly can be considered to be a PK, p. 225ff.). Icelandic is additionally used by the author as a trigger of a very interesting conclusion put forward in the last chapter (p. 243): she suggests that an interconnection exists between language norm and grammaticalisation processes.

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<sup>2</sup> In Hesse's terminology.

Hesse comments on the fact that most formal variation in PK is found in Norwegian and Faroese, and the least – in Icelandic, the two former being languages without a clear norm (at least for the spoken language), and the latter representing their normative counterpart. This finding would suggest that the strength of language norm may be a factor greatly influencing the process of grammaticalisation. Sadly, Hesse does not devote any more than a few sentences to the topic.

In spite of the mentioned weaknesses, Andrea Hesse's dissertation is without any doubt recommendable to all readers wishing to consider the phenomenon of PK from many different perspectives, including the descriptive and the comparative view. The author took the effort to include Icelandic and Faroese, languages receiving relatively little attention otherwise, which she should be highly praised for. Moreover, Hesse shows an impressively rich theoretical background, employing findings and theories from a vast spectrum of approaches, such as cognitivism, structuralism and historical linguistics, among others. Such a broad perspective could not indeed escape a few lapses, which nonetheless do not make it any less worthy. Hesse's book is by all means an important contribution to the study of not only Norwegian, but of all Scandinavian languages.

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#### INTERNET SOURCES

Oslo-korpuset av taggedde norske tekster [[www.tekstlab.uio.no/norsk/bokmaal/](http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/norsk/bokmaal/)]

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