The development of configurationality in Germanic clauses and noun phrases

Kersti Börjars* and Pauline Harries†
*University of Manchester and †University of Central Lancashire

1   Introduction

Kiparsky (1995) argues that Germanic languages have developed projecting functional categories at clausal level over time and that this change has been associated with a number of other changes. In this paper we argue that a parallel development can be found to have taken place in noun phrases in some Germanic languages.

2   Kiparsky (1995) on the development of clause structure in Germanic

(i) Proto-Indo-European lacked a projecting functional category at clause level;

(ii) Proto-Indo-European clauses were endocentric;

(iii) Proto-Indo-European clauses had two information-structurally privileged positions at the left edge;

(iv) The changes that took place in Germanic gave rise to V-to-C movement;

((v) Proto-Indo-European had no syntactically embedded clauses.)

(1)   Indo-European clause structure (Kiparsky, 1995, 153)
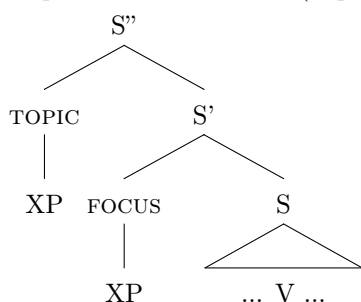
(2)   Germanic clause structure (Kiparsky, 1995, 140)
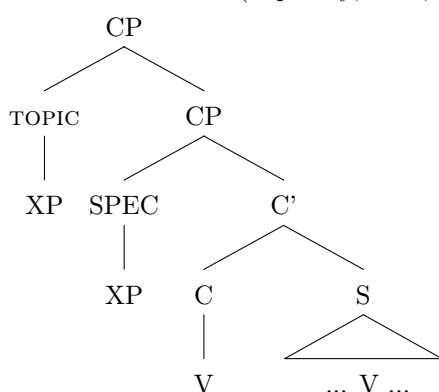
The idea that syntactic structure and functional categories emerge over time has also been applied to nominal constituents:[1]

- Himmelmann (1997)
  'The central hypothesis is that syntactic structure can be the result of grammaticalisation processes, just like grammatical elements are; that it is not just article-like elements which arise this way, but also the categories and the constituent structure that characterises nominal expressions' (translated from Himmelmann (1997, 1))

- Vincent (1997)
  The development of a D system from Latin to Romance languages as *ille* (and less often *ipse*) develops into an article. This development of a D-projection happens in parallel with a configurationalisaton of clause structure in Latin (see also Lyons (1999, 322–333) for a similar, though more general argument and Vincent (1999) for an account of how a PP projection develops in Romance).

3 Assumptions about grammar

- Different dimensions of linguistic information are represented independently (for a more general discussion of the role of this assumption in the analysis of linguistic change, see Vincent (2001))
  - c(onstituent)-structure as labeled constituent trees
  - f(unctional)-structure as sets of features-value pairs
  - ...

- A language (or maybe better certain structures within a language) can be configurational or non-configurational (see Bresnan (1982, 2001), Kroeger (1993), Nordlinger (1998))
  - Trees are not exclusively endocentric
  - Trees are not exclusively binary branching

- Functional categories are assumed where functional information is associated with a position (e.g. finiteness in second position in Scandinavian, see for instance Kroeger (1993, 6-7), Börjars et al. (1999))

- A distinction can be made between NP languages and DP languages (see e.g. Chierchia (1998) and on a different basis Bošković (2005, 2008), whose ideas have been applied to Old Norse in Lander and Haegeman (2012)). This distinction is contrary to distinction made between argument and non-argument nominals in Szabolcsi (1987) and Stowell (1989)).

4 The data

4.1 Old Norse

In Old Norse, definiteness can be marked either morphologically, as in (3-a) or syntactically as in (3-b).[2]

(3) a. hestr-inn
         horse-DEF
         'the horse'

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[1]See also Van de Velde (2010, 2011), who describes D as an "emergent category", but does not discuss its projection and does not develop the consequences for noun phrase structure further.

[2]Old Norse is a North Germanic language and is the common ancestor language of both the continental (Swedish, Norwegian and Danish) and insular (Icelandic and Faroese) varieties of Scandinavian. Between the period 700-1100, however, Old Norse develops into two distinct branches: eastern and western Norse. Much of the available written data comes from the literary period of Old Norse (1150 to1400) and comes from the western branch of Old Norse: Old Icelandic (principally) and to a lesser extent Old Norwegian.

b. (H)inn stóri   hestr
   DEF   big.WK horse
   'the big horse'

However, a noun phrase need not contain any explicit marker of definiteness in order to receive a definite interpretation. Noun phrases such as those in (4) receive an unambiguous definite interpretation.

(4) a. Hestr var allvænligr
        horse was allbeautiful.STR
        'The horse was beautiful.' (Gunnl 1.5)

     b. jarl var vinsæll við   búendr
        earl was friendly with farmers
        'The earl was friendly with the farmers.' (Hkr I.343.9) (Faarlund, 2004, 59)

The same holds for indefiniteness.

More generally, there is no evidence for a unified category Determiner. Definiteness markers are not in complementary distribution with each other, nor with possessive pronouns.

(5) a. þau in stóru   skip
        DEM DEF big.WK ship
        'that big ship'

     b. þitt hitt milda   andlit
        your DEF mild.WK andlit
        'your mild face' (Barl 187.13) (Faarlund, 2004, 60)

The syntactic definiteness marker is restricted to environments where the noun is modified by an adjective or where a weak adjective functions as the head of a noun phrase.

(6) a. (h)inn blindi   maðr
        DEF   blind.WK man
        'the blind man'

     b. (h)inir auðgu
        DEF   rich.WK
        'the rich'

(7) a. hina beztu   menn   ok hina vitrustu
        DEF best.WK man.PL and DEF wisest.WK
        'the best and wisest men' (Kgs 46.36) (Faarlund, 2004, 73)

     b. þú hinn blindi   ok hinn skynlausi
        you DEF blind.WK and DEF senseless.WK
        ''you blind and senseless person' (Barl 160.11) (Faarlund, 2004, 71)

The association between definiteness markers and adjective phrases is consistent with developments in a number of languages. Generally, if there are dedicated definiteness markers in a language, there will be more of them in a noun phrases that includes adjectival modifiers (see Renzi (1992) for Romance and Harris (1980) for Slavonic).

In fact, the only category within the noun phrase which is obligatorily marked for (in)definiteness is the adjective. The endings traditionally referred to as WEAK and STRONG force a definite or indefinite interpretation, respectively.[3]

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[3]It is probably better to refer to the feature associated with the adjective as (non)restrictive rather than (in)definite, but this may be a consequence of the difference in nature between an AP and an NP.

(8) a. Ef blindr   leidir blindan   falla baðir í gryfju
         if blind.STR.NOM lead blind.STR.ACC fall both in pit
         'If a blind person leads a blind person, they both fall into the pit.'

     b. Svo segir Bragi skáld gamli
         such says Bragi poet ancient.WK
         'So says Bragi, the ancient poet.' (Gylfa 1:12)

Conclusions so far

→ There is no dedicated definite article in Old Norse

→ There is no category D at the level of the noun phrase in Old Norse and hence no functional
  projection (cf Lander and Haegeman (2012))

→ The definiteness marker *(h)inn* is associated with the adjective phrase

→ More generally, the adjective is the key locus for definiteness marking (cf Curme (1910) and Hein-
  richs (1954))

The order within the noun phrase in Old Norse is generally described as relatively free; demonstratives,
adjectives and possessives can appear either before or after the noun.
However, there are patterns to the order which appear to be related to discourse-semantic interpretation.
In unmarked order, adjectives and possessives follow the noun, as in (9) and (10).

(9) a. Þa sá ek flúga ofan fjǫllunum ǫrn mikinn.
         then saw I fly   over mountain eagle big
         'Then I saw a big eagle fly over the mountain.' (Gunnl 4.8, (Faarlund, 2004, 69))

     b. næst gek í hǫllina   kerling gǫmul
         next went in hall.DEF woman old.STR
         'Next an old woman went into the hall.' (Eiríksmál, (Gordon, 1956, 15:333))

(10) a. dóttir   min hefði dreymt ...
         daughter my had   dreamt
         'my daughter had dreamt'

     b. hinum kærsta syni   sínum
         the   dearest son.DAT his.REF
         'to his dearest son' (Hóm 1.2) (Faarlund, 2004, 59)

However, if there is emphasis on the property expressed by the adjective, it would usually precede the
noun, as in (11). Similarly, if the possessive relation is emphasized or contrasted, the possessive precedes
the noun, as in (12).

(11) a. hann átti tvá laungetna sonu
         he   had two illegitimate sons
         'He had two illegitimate sons' (Eg 294.24) (Faarlund, 2004, 69)

     b. Þá váru hér menn Kristnir. Þeir vildu   eigi vera hér við heiðna menn,
         there were here men Christian they wanted NEG be   here with heathen men
         'There were Christian men here. They did not want to be here with heathen men.' (Lib
         Isl) (Gordon, 1956, 34:24)

(12) a. Þessi er þin dóttir   eigi mín.
         this is your daughter not mine
         'This is your daughter, not mine.' (Gunnl 3:35)

     b. þar   með gáfu Svíar   honum Ǫnundar   nafn
         there with gave Swedes him   Onund.GEN name
         'In addition the Swedes gave him the name of Onund' (Hkr II.194.14) (Faarlund, 2004, 60)

Conclusions so far

→ The relatively free word order suggest a flat structure in which categories are not associated with a particular structural position (see Gil (1987) on the potential connection between configurationality and the obligatoriness of (in)definiteness).

→ The positioning of prominent and contrastive elements at the front supports an analysis in which the noun phrase contains a dedicated discourse-prominent position on the left edge (for a summary of work on information structure within the noun phrase, see Aboh et al. (2010), work which has suggested an information structurally motivated position (such as Giusti (1996), Bernstein (2001) or Haegeman (2004)) have done so within a very different approach to syntactic structure from that taken here.

All this gives us the following tree for the Old Norse noun phrase:

(13)   Old Norse noun phrase structure
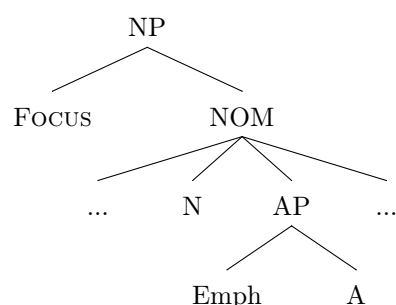
4.2   Early Faroese

Between Old Norse and the modern period, a number of important changes take place in the nominal phrase. There are close prallels between Early Faroese noun phrases and those of Modern Icelandic.

Firstly, the noun becomes the morphological locus of definiteness marking, irrespective of the presence or absence of adjectival modification. The syntactic definiteness marker *hinn* is no longer required to mark the adjective as definite.

(14)   a.   maðurin
              man.DEF
              'the man'

        b.   gamli   maðurin
              old.WK man.DEF
              'the old man'

The ordering possibilities linked to discourse-semantic interpretations are lost. The order is now firm: demonstratives < adjective < noun, as in (15).

(15)   tann gamli maður
        DEM old.WK man.DEF
        'that old man'

The fronting of a possessive with a contrastive interpretation remains in the grammar as a relic of this older system.

(16)   a.   hesturin   mín
              horse.DEF my
              'my horse'

b.   mín hestur
my   horse
'**my** horse'

There are signs that a preference for there to be some definiteness marking on the left edge is developing. This can be in the form of a definite noun, a syntactic definiteness marker (e.g. demonstrative) or an adjective with WK/STR marking. We do not have enough data to demonstrate this conclusively for early Faroese, but given the similarities between the two languages, we can use Modern Icelandic to illustrate, as in (17) (data from Sigurðsson (1993, 83) and Þráinsson (2007, 103)).

(17)   a.   þessar **flrjár** frægu   bækur
DEM   three famous.WK books
'these three famous books'

b.   ***flrjár** frægu   bækurnar
three famous.WK books

c.   frægu   bækurnar   **flrjár**
famous.WK book.PL.DEF three
'three famous books'

There is no indefinite article Early Faroese (or in Icelandic).

Conclusions so far

→ Noun phrases in Early Faroese are more configurational than their Old Norse counterparts

→ Definiteness is no longer associated with the AP, but with the noun phrase

→ Definiteness marking is starting to become associated with the left edge of the noun phrase

→ The WK/STR feature on adjectives can fulfil the requirement for definiteness on the left edge

4.3   Modern Faroese

4.3.1   (In)definiteness markers

Modern Faroese has developed a new syntactic definiteness marker from the distal demonstrative *tann*. The syntactic marker occurs when there is premodification.

(18)   a.   genta-n
girl-DEF
'the girl'

b.   tann lítla   genta-n
the   little.WK girl-DEF
'the little girl'

As (18-b) shows, the syntactic definiteness marking co-occurs with the morphological marker on the noun; Modern Faroese shows double definiteness. This is the case also when there is a definite syntactic element other than the article, as in (19) (See Harries (Forthcoming) for an explanation of the lack of double definiteness in some noun phrases.)

(19)   a.   tann bilin
DEM car.DEF
'that car'

b.   hetta gamla   orðið
DEM   old.WK word.DEF
'this old word'

Indefiniteness is now also marked syntactically:

(20)   a. Í gjár   keypti hann ein   bil
             yesterday bought he   INDEF car
             'Yesterday he bought a car.'

        b. Ein   ríkur   maður gav honum bókina
             INDEF rich.STR man   gave him   book.DEF
             'A rich man gave him the book.'

Conclusions so far

→ Marking for (in)definiteness has become obligatory

→ (In)definiteness marking is now firmly associated with the left edge of the noun phrase

→ The adjectival WK/STR can no longer satisfy the requirement for definiteness on the left edge, but an adjective must be preceded by a syntactic definite element.[4]

4.3.2 Possessives

There is still some variation in possessor–possessum order when the possessum is unmodified. However, when there is adjectival modification, the preferred order is with the possessor preceding the noun and the adjective, as in (21-a).[5]

(21)   a. mín gamli   hestur
           my   old.WK horse
        b. gamli   hestur mín
           old.WK horse   my
           'my old horse'

There is a trend attested in both Icelandic and Faroese towards a preference for a definite marked noun if the possessive follows the noun; whereas (22-a) is the traditional form, (22-b) is gaining ground.

(22)   a. barn mítt
           child my
        b. barnið   mítt
           child.DEF my
           'my child'

Conclusions so far

→ The distribution of possessive determiners, which give a definite reading, is further evidence of the generalisation that definiteness is associated with the left edge, and the adjectival WK/STR marking cannot satisfy this requirement.
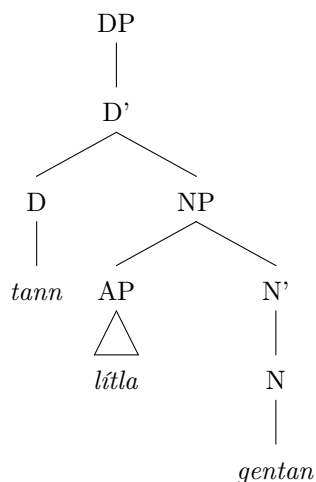
4.3.3 Analysis

→ (In)definiteness marking has become associated with a structural position, this is taken as evidence of the existence of a functional category and an associated projection

→ There is little freedom of word order and there is evidence that the noun phrase has developed from a flat to an articulated structure

→ the noun phrase no longer has an information structurally privileged position

This leads to th analysis in (23), to be compared with (13).

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[4]Harries (Forthcoming) argues that the interaction between absence and presence of syntactic definiteness and adjectival marking can be used to indicate restrictiveness.

[5]In the corpus created for Harries (Forthcoming), 97% of the noun phrases containing a possessive pronoun and a modified possessum had the order in (21-a).

(23)   Modern Faroese noun phrase structure

```
                DP
                |
                D'
              /    \
            D       NP
            |      /    \
          tann   AP      N'
                 /\      |
                /__\     N
               lítla    |
                       gentan
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A definite noun may occur under D if the noun phrase in which occurs does not contain premodification. This is similar to the way in which a finite verb occurs under I in Scandinavian languages to create verb-second order. This gives the tree in (24).

(24)   Modern Faroese noun phrase structure: unmodified definite noun

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        DP
        |
        D'
        |
        D
        |
      gentan
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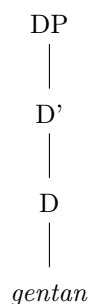
This analysis can be compared to the appearance of a finite verb in a clausal functional projection (C in Kiparsky (1995). It does not require a process of "inflectional derivation" as proposed by Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002), but relies on functional categories sharing the categorial features of their associated lexical categories (cf 'extended projections' as proposed by Grimshaw (1991, 2005), and as a natural consequence of the notion of co-head in LFG).

5   Conclusions

Parallels with clausal development:

- A projecting functional category has developed

- Lexical elements with appropriate feature can occur in the functional category ("movement")

- information structurally defined positions are 'grammaticalised'

Present analysis:

- Captures the change as grammaticlaisation in the sense that syntactic structure develops

- Supports the view of grammaticalization not as a "destructive", but a "constructive" process, compare von Fintel (1995) who argues that grammaticalisation creates lexical material for functional

information which previously lacked this and is also consistent with his demonstration of the place of formal semantic accounts of grammaticalisation (cf Eckardt (2006))

- Provides a framework for approaching the historical relation between the development of definite and indefinite articles (cf Van de Velde (2010, 2011) approach to expansion of D category membership)

- Suggests that the development of definiteness marking in Scandinavian is anchored in discourse structure, and is not directly related to the loss of cases as suggested by for instance Holmberg (1993) and Giusti (1995)

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