# Delimiting insubordination

A case study of independent *at*(*t*)-clauses in Danish and Swedish

Sarah D'Hertefelt & Jean-Christophe Verstraete

University of Leuven

# OVERVIEW

- Introduction

- Independent *at*(*t*)-clauses in Danish and Swedish
  - Evaluative constructions
  - Elaborative constructions

- Definition / boundaries

- Conclusions

2

# INTRODUCTION

**Insubordination**

= "the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses"
(Evans, 2007: 367)

**(1)** If you could open the window? (English – IC)

**(2)** That it should have come to this! (English – IC)

**Two criteria for insubordination > Evans**
- Formal marking as subordinate clause
- Conventionalized 'main clause use'

3

# INTRODUCTION (2)

**Aim of this presentation**

- Focus on one construction type: independent *at*(*t*)-clauses in Swedish and Danish

    - *At*(*t*) = originally complementizer


- To what extent can these constructions be considered insubordinate?

→ Refinement of Evans' definition of insubordination

4

# INDEPENDENT *AT(T)*-CLAUSES IN DANISH AND SWEDISH

**Two categories**

- Evaluative

- Elaborative

**Data**

- Spoken language corpora (*BySoc* and *Göteborg Spoken Language Corpus* (GSLC)) and Internet corpus (IC)

# EVALUATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS

- Literature: Andersson 1975, Andersson 1982, Petersson 2011, Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson 2010 for Swedish, Hansen & Heltoft 2011, Christensen 2009, Christensen & Heltoft 2010 for Danish, Delsing 2010 for Scandinavian languages more generally

- New in our approach: two subtypes (compare Verstraete, D'Hertefelt & Van linden 2012 for Dutch)
  - 'Unexpected'
  - 'Expected and negative'

6

# EVALUATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (2)

**'Unexpected' evaluation**

(3) **At       noget      så      katastrofalt      kan**
   AT       something  so      catastrophic       can.PRES

   **ende       så    godt..**       (Danish – IC)
   end.INF     so    well

   *[I can't believe]* ***that something so catastrophic can end so well****!*

# EVALUATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (3)

**'Unexpected' evaluation**

## Meaning

- Expressing speaker surprise (+ or −) at a remarkable aspect of a presupposed event

## Form

- Typically with scalar element
- *At*(*t*)-clause often preceded by particle *tænk* in Danish (imperative form of 'think'), less frequently preceded by *tänk* in Swedish
- Strong emphasis on one (or more) constituent(s)

# EVALUATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (4)

**'Expected and negative' evaluation**

(4) Varför  göra        en    löjlig      travesti      på    en    fin       och  klassisk
    why     make.INF  a     stupid     travesty      on    a     nice       and  classic

sommarvisa?  **Och**  **att**     **han**   **alltid**   **måste**      **blanda**  **in**         **att**
summersong   and     ATT        he        always       must.PRES     mix.INF    in.V.PART   COMPL

**han**       **är**          **bög**      **i**          **allt**          **han**       **gör**.       Vem      fan
he          be.PRES      gay        in           everything     he          do.PRES    who      devil

bryr                    sig          egentligen?            (Swedish – IC)
bother.PRES        REFL        actually?

*Why make a stupid travesty of a nice and classic summersong? And [it bothers me]* **that he always has to mix in that he is gay in everything he does.** *Who the hell bothers anyway?*

9

**'Expected and negative' evaluation**

## Meaning

- Expressing speaker's annoyance regarding the recurrence of an expected event

## Form

- Typically with adverb + modal verb combinations expressing:
  - Necessity: 'always have to'
  - Inability: 'never can'
- Very often preceded by particle *tænk* in Danish, less often preceded by Swedish *tänk*
- Strong emphasis on one (or more) constituent(s) (in Danish: most frequently the first constituent)

10

# ELABORATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS

Literature: Lehti-Eklund (2001), Lyngfelt (2003), Anward (2003) and Lindström & Londen (2001, 2008) for Swedish, Jensen (2003) for Danish

# ELABORATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (2)

**(5)** $D:  å0    man  står        å0        balanserar    å0          gör      så
         and    one  stand.PRES and        balance.PRES and         do.PRES  so

här/    så        påverkar            de{t}      ofta        balanssinnet
here    so        influence.PRES      it         often       balance.DEF

$P:     mm [26    ja ]26
        mm        yes

$D:     **[26 att ]26   du   känner    när    man    vrider     huvudet    på    ett    visst**
         ATT           you feel.PRES   when   one    turn.PRES  head.DEF   on    a     specific

**sätt [27    så ]27     kan        man    känna     [28 sej        lite ]28     yr**
way           so         can.PRES   one    feel.INF   REFL           little        dizzy

*$D: [if] one stands and balances and does like this, then it often influences one's balance*
*$P: hmm, yes*
*$D: **that you feel that if one turns one's head in a specific way one can feel a little dizzy***
(Swedish – GSLC)

12

# ELABORATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (3)

'Elaborative' < Halliday (1994: 225): elaboration

"does not introduce a new element into the picture but rather provides a further characterization of one that is already there, restating it, clarifying it, refining it, or adding a descriptive attribute or comment."

## Meaning

- Further specification / reformulation of what precedes

13

# ELABORATIVE *AT*(*T*)-CONSTRUCTIONS (4)

## Form

- Particles:
  - Descriptive: 'so', 'like this' …
  - Exemplifying: 'for example', 'so to say' …
- Formal (and functional) similarity with appositional clauses

(6)  Nu      har           jag    den    övertygelsen      **att**      **allt**      **blir**
     now    have.PRES   I      the    conviction.DEF   COMPL everything   get.PRES

     **bättre   med   tiden**           (Swedish – IC)
     better   with    time.DEF

     *Now I am of the conviction **that everything improves after a while***

# DEFINITION / BOUNDARIES

**Two criteria > Evans' definition**

- Formal marking as subordinate clause
  - Subordinating conjunction (original complementizer *at*(*t*))
  - Word order: sentence adverb before finite verb (AF-pattern)

(7) **Han kommer inte** till festen imorgon (Swedish – IC)
    he   come.PRES  NEG    to        party.DEF  tomorrow

*He doesn't come to the party tomorrow.*

(8) Det är synd **att han inte kommer** till
    it   be.PRES  sad      COMPL  he        NEG   come.PRES    to

    festen         imorgon.  (Swedish –  C)
    party.DEF     tomorrow

 *It's sad he doesn't come to the party tomorrow.*

15

# DEFINITION / BOUNDARIES (2)

- Conventionalized 'main clause use':
    - Syntactic independence
    - **NEW**: pragmatic independence (construction does not fall within the scope of a previous move in conversation, Lindström & Londen (2008: 128))

**Evaluative *at*(*t*)-clauses**

- Conventionalized 'main clause use'
  - Syntactic independence (though matrix easy to reconstruct)
    - BUT higher need for semi-embedding in Danish? (preceding *tænk*)
  - Pragmatic independence (can initiate interaction)

17

# DEFINITION / BOUNDARIES (4)

**Evaluative *at*(*t*)-clauses**

- Formal marking as subordinate clause
  - *At*(*t*):
    - Originally complementizer, now often considered 'subjective particle' (Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 1570)), 'frame particle' (Christensen (2009: 121)) in these constructions
  - Always with AF-pattern (Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson (2010, vol. 4: 10), Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 1570))

**Evaluative *at*(*t*)-clauses**


→ Comply with both criteria for main clause use, also described as 'main clauses' in 'traditional' grammars (Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson (2010, vol. 4: 759), Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 1570))

→ Comply with both criteria for formal subordinate clause marking


→ Insubordination in the classic sense

>> BUT higher tendency for embedding in some Danish constructions?

19

**Elaborative *at*(*t*)-clauses**

- Conventionalized 'main clause use'
  - Syntactic independence (though sometimes dubious cases)
  - Pragmatic dependence (only occurs within pragmatic scope of preceding turn)

**Elaborative *at*(*t*)-clauses**

- Formal marking as subordinate clause
  - *At*(*t*):
    - Originally complementizer, now often considered discourse marker (Lyngfelt (2003: 142), Lehti-Eklund (2001: 81), Englebretson (2003: 123)), evidential particle (Keevallik (2008: 125)), or linker (Thompson (2002: 143)) in these constructions
    - ! *At*(*t*) not always integrated in following construction, can be followed by a pause
  - Both with AF-pattern and FA-pattern ('main clause word order')

21

**Elaborative *at*(*t*)-clauses**

→ Comply with only one of the two criteria for main clause use

→ Formal marking as subordinate clause not always straightforward

→ No insubordination in the classic sense (! ←→ Evans)

22

**How can we define insubordination?**

- Conventionalized 'main clause use':
  - Syntactic independence (cf. Evans)
  - Additional criterion: pragmatic independence

    → link with presence vs absence of formal marking as subordinate clause:
    - Status of $at(t)$ (cf. circularity, Evans (2007: 370)); prosodically integrated or not?
    - Issue of word order

23

# CONCLUSIONS (2)

- Summary:
  - Importance of pragmatic independence, link with markings of subordination
  - Problematic cases when delimiting insubordination:
    - Remnants of embedding predicates (cf. *tænk* in Danish evaluatives)

- More research needed in a broad crosslinguistic sample to:
  - Help define the phenomenon of insubordination better (theoretical)
  - Fill gaps in the linguistic description of individual languages (descriptive)

24

# Thank you for your attention!

# ABBREVIATIONS

- AT               Danish *at*, originally complementizer
- ATT            Swedish *att*, originally complementizer
- COMPL        complementizer
- DEF            definite marker
- INF             infinitive
- NEG           negative marker
- PRES         present tense
- REFL         reflexive marker
- V.PART       particle part of a phrasal verb

# REFERENCES

**Corpora**

- BySoc Corpus, Danish Vernacular. Copenhagen University: LANCHART. Available online at http://bysoc.dyndns.org/index.cgi?.
- GSLC, *Göteborg Spoken Language Corpus*. Göteborg University: Department of Linguistics. Available online at http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/tal/index.cgi?PAGE=3.

**Literature**

- Andersson, Lars-Gunnar. 1975. *Form and Function of Subordinate Clauses*. Gothenburg Monograph in Linguistics 1. University of Göteborg.
- Andersson, Erik. 1982. 'Om gränsen mellan huvudsats och bisats i svenskan', in Mirja Saari & Marika Tandefelt (eds.) *Svenskans beskrivning* 13. Helsinki University. 69-76.
- Anward, Jan. 2003. '*Att*'. *Språk och stil* 13. 65-85.
- Christensen, Tanya Karoli. 2009. '*Hvem der bare havde en hund!* – om emotive sætninger i dansk', in Ken Fard, Alexandra Hosting et al. (eds.) *Sprogvidenskab i glimt*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag. 121-124.
- Christensen, Tanya Karoli & Lars Heltoft. 2010. 'Mood in Danish', in Björn Rothstein & Rolf Thieroff (eds.) *Mood in the languages of Europe.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 85-102.
- Delsing, Lars-Olof. 2010. 'Exclamatives in Scandinavian'. *Studia Linguistica* 61.1. 16-36.

27

# REFERENCES (2)

- Englebretson, Robert. 2003. *Searching for Structure. The problem of complementation in colloquial Indonesian conversation.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Evans, Nicholas. 2007. 'Insubordination and its uses', in Irina Nikolaeve (ed.) *Finiteness. Theoretical and Empirical Foundations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 366-431.

- Halliday, Michael K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Ed. 2. London: Routledge.

- Hansen, Erik & Lars Heltoft. 2011. *Grammatik over det Danske Sprog*. 3 vol. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.

- Jensen, Anne. 2003. *Clause Linkage in Spoken Danish*. PhD-dissertation, University of Copenhagen.

- Keevallik, Leelo. 2008. 'Conjunction and sequenced actions. The Estonian complementizer and evidential particle *et*', in Ritva Laury (ed.) *Crosslinguistic studies of clause combining. The multifunctionality of conjunctions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 125-152.

- Lehti-Eklund, Hanna. 2001. 'Om *att* som diskursmarkör'. *Språk och stil* 11. 81-118.

- Lindström, Jan & Anne-Marie Londen. 2001. '*men att de öppnades ju nog en ny värld för mej*. Kombinationen *men att* – en ovårdad och onödig finlandsssvensk variant?', in Marianne Nordman, Christer Laurén & Siv Björklun (eds.) *Svenskan i Finland* 6. Vaasa University. 104-116.

# REFERENCES (3)

- Lindström, Jan & Anne-Marie Londen. 2008. 'Constructing reasoning. The connectives *för att* (causal), *så att* (consecutive) and *men att* (adversative) in Swedish conversations', in Jaakko Leino (ed.) *Constructional Reorganization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 105-152.

- Lyngfelt, Benjamin. 2003. 'Samordnande *att* – en talspråklig sambandsmarkör sedd från ett syntaktiskt perspektiv', in Hans Landqvist, Sven-Göran Malmgren et al. (eds.) *Texten framför allt. Festskrift till Aina Lundqvist på 65-årsdagen den 11 september 2003*. Göteborg: Institution för svenska språket. 139-149.

- Petersson, David. 2011. 'Swedish exclamatives are subordinate'. *Working papers in Scandinavian syntax* 88. 169-237.

- Teleman, Ulf, Staffan Hellberg & Erik Andersson. 2010. *Svenska Akademiens Grammatik*. Ed. 3. Stockholm: Norsteds.

- Thompson, Sandra. 2002. '"Object complements" and conversation. Towards a realistic account'. *Studies in Language* 26.1. 125-164.

- Verstraete, Jean-Christophe, Sarah D'Hertefelt & An Van linden. 2012. 'A typology of complement insubordination in Dutch'. *Studies in Language* 36: 123-153.