

**Aarhus Workshop on Clausal and Nominal Parallels
(20-21. November 2009)**

Katrine Planque Tafteberg (Aarhus): Object pronouns in French and Danish:

The syntax of weak pronouns has been the object of much linguistic research, and is well accounted for in both French and Danish respectively. Several parallels have been pointed out, especially in the Germanic literature on the subject (Josefsson 1992, Holmberg 1999 and others). However, there would seem to be no agreement as yet as to the Danish object pronoun, i.e. whether weak Danish object pronouns should be analysed as cliticisation on a par with French clitics. It therefore seems relevant to look deeper into this issue in order to establish to which extent the two phenomena are comparable, and how closely they are related. Cf. the following examples for illustration of the object positions in French and Danish:

- (1) Marie elsker stadig sin kat.
- (2) Marie elsker den stadig.
- (3) Marie aime toujours son chat.
- (4) Marie l'aime toujours.

The object pronouns *den/l'* differ syntactically from the position of the corresponding full noun *sin kat/son chat*. Both pronouns seek a position close to the verbal predicate. Besides syntactic incorporation, the French pronouns also undergoes phonological incorporation, as *le* is reduced to *l'* in contraction with the verb *aime*. In spoken language, *den* is usually reduced to syllabic *n* in Danish but, contrary to French, the phonological reduction of *den* is optional.

A very fundamental force in the general organisation of information structure tends to place weak object pronouns further left than full nouns. This is particular to pronouns in many languages. However, if this is an underlying force common to both French and Danish pronominal syntax, then which language-specific factors determine the position of French pronouns as generally proclitic whereas Danish pronouns are enclitic? A number of other puzzling parallels may be drawn between the phonological, morphological and syntactic behavior of these pronouns in French and Danish. The main focus of my presentation will be to compare and discuss some of these similarities and differences.

Selected references:

- Holmberg, Anders** (1999): "Remarks on Holmberg's Generalization". *Studia Linguistica* 53(1), pp. 1-39.
- Josefsson, Gunlög** (1999): "On the semantics and syntax of Scandinavian pronouns and object shift" (pp.731-757). In: Riemsdijk (ed.): *Clitics in the Languages of Europe*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York.
- Jørgensen, Henrik** (2000): "Begrebet "klisis" og dets anvendelse på analysen af de danske letled". Kjeld T. Kristensen (ed.) *Studier i Nordisk 1998 - 1999*, Selskab for Nordisk Filologi, København, pp. 37-50.
- Kayne, Richard S.** (1975): *French Syntax. The Transformational Cycle*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Togeby, Ole** (2001): "Letledspladsen". In: Jarvad, Gregersen, Heltoft, Lund & Togeby (red.) *Sproglige åbninger. E som i Erik H som i 70. Festskrift til Erik Hansen 18. september 2001*. Hans Reitzels forlag, København.