

Where do all the objects go?

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The plan for this lecture

- ▶ 1. The two levels in a Diderchsen model: fields and slots
- ▶ 2. The placement of objects in a sentence: actants and valency
- ▶ 3. The actual sentence slot where objects go
- ▶ 4. Placement and semantics: the interface

The concept of slot

- ▶ Remember the two levels of the sentence model: the fields and the slots
- ▶ Remember the overall structures of the model:
 - ▶ Fundamentfelt – neksus – indhold
 - ▶ Modalitetsfelt – kernefelt
(cp. [8], Heltoft version)

The concept of slot

- ▶ Slot level is based on constituency, but there is no uniform treatment of the slots.
- ▶ Verbal slots:
- ▶ If **P** is also a verbal slot (non-verbal stems included into the verbal constituent), there are three verbal slots in main clauses and at least two in dependent clauses.

The concept of slot

- ▶ The verbal slots contain the verbal constituent in a discontinuous fashion.
- ▶ Only **v** may have a 1:1 relation; both the others only contain part of the constituent.

The concept of slot

- ▶ Nominal elements have a 1:1 relation between constituent and slot, provided you do not count the object's position as one slot.
- ▶ If we acknowledge prepositional objects (as we should), they may have the preposition in stranding position, i.e. they are discontinuous:
- ▶ *Det tror jeg ikke på* [I do not believe that]

The concept of slot

- ▶ Adverbial slots may also have a 1:1 relation. Having at least the possibility of one-to-one relations, the adverb slots may also encompass an almost infinite string of adverbs.
- ▶ Mikkelsen 1911 gives 23 ordering rules, but sentences with up to 23 adverbial constituents in the two relevant slots have so far not been reported.

Some basic assumption

- ▶ In a text-based approach objects are not *per se* different from other kinds of nominals.
- ▶ We may define nominals as word forms that may represent a reference to an entity in the paratextual world in the shape of an actant of a predicate.

Some basic assumptions

Some factors in the semantic structure:

- ▶ a. the approach to the sentence is built around assumptions of valency in the verb;
- ▶ b. it ties up the concept of nominal to the concept of reference. Thus pseudo-actants are not relevant to the investigation (*spille fandango, lave en buk, stille træskoene*)

Basic object positions

- ▶ Front position and extraposition in front position
- ▶ Pronominalisation
- ▶ So-called 'normal' position
- ▶ Extraposition to the right

Basic object positions

- ▶ The front position (dan. 'fundamentfeltet') is an important factor of contextualisation in the way sentences are put to work in texts. The front position is either an intratextual reference used to interconnect the utterances of the text - that is the normal case - or it is the place of contrasting new elements. Such contrasting elements may often get the extraposition to the front position.

Basic object positions

(1) Den kan jeg ikke lide

'That one I do not like'

(2) Kaffe kan jeg ikke lide (men nok te)

Coffee I do not like'

(3) Den kop kan jeg ikke lide

'That cup I do not like'

(4) Den kop, den kan jeg ikke lide

[same gloss]

Basic object positions

- ▶ Pronominalisation is possible only if the referent is recoverable within the closest context of the previous verbal element referring to the same entity. Such a context may be a relatively loose matter. In a closely-knit conversation regular unstressed pronominal is possible if the referent belongs to what you might call a sphere of intimacy between the interlocutors, even when there has been no immediate mentioning of the referent in the proper form.

Basic object positions

Such examples are the well-known shifted objects (lette objekter), cp. The difference between (5) and (6):

(5) *Jeg kender ham ikke*

'I do not know him'

(6) *Jeg kender ikke "ham*

'I do not know HIM'

Basic object positions

- ▶ The absence of this possibility in many varieties of Mainland Scandinavian is an interesting phenomenon in the interface between syntax and prosody, cp. Southern Danish:

(5') *Jeg kender ikke _oham*

(6') *Jeg kender ikke 'ham*

Basic object patterns

- ▶ The normal positions are those that references may occupy no matter what status they have within the discourse. The 'normal' forms may be both definite and indefinite references. From a morphological point of view this group contains both stressed deictic pronouns and noun phrases proper.

Basic object patterns

- ▶ To call them 'normal' begs the question what is so normal about that. Once again it is the demands from the pragmatic situation of the written language that forces us to think of them as normal; we might in a sense also understand them as expansions of the plain pronominal reference in order to make their reference clear to the hearer.

Basic object patterns

- ▶ The 'normal' position is called so because of the commonplace understanding of the surface position:

F vna VNA

- ▶ **N** is generally understood as the place where objects belong.

Basic object patterns

(7) *Hans kyssede Grete*

'John kissed Mary'

(8) *Jeg foretog en opringning*

'I made a call'

- If we want we can test whether these objects are after the slot of infinites, i.e. in **N**; they are.

Basic object positions

- ▶ The extraposition of heavy elements, either whole phrases or sub-phrases is still another matter. Extraposition is normally neutral as to the status within the text, either as definite or indefinite. The only important criterion is the weight of the phrase in question.

Basic object positions

- ▶ Extraposition takes care of most object (and subject) clauses, but also of other heavy elements:

(9) Jeg har vidst siden i mandags at han var syg

'I have known since Monday that he was ill'

Basic object positions

*(10) Jeg nødte i går ham den underlige fra
Læsesalen*

'Yesterday I met the funny person from
the Reading Room'

Basic object positions

- The ordering might from a superficial glance look like an iconic arrangement: the further towards the end, the less bound by the preceding discourse.

Basic object positions

F	v	n	a	V	N	A	Ex
C.b. or in con- trast		C.b. only			Contextually bound or contextually unbound		Heavy elements (need extra subphrases for identifi- cation)

Basic object positions

- ▶ Another evident pattern is one that distributes the objects according to their morphological shape: pronouns in their slots and nouns in another.
- ▶ But this pattern is too rough. At least stressed pronouns must stand on the kindergarten (**N**)

Placement and Semantics

The semantic or pragmatic sources of the difference between subjects and objects:

- ▶ Theme-Rheme
- ▶ Known - unknown
- ▶ Agent-Benefactive-Patient
- ▶ Possessor - possessed

Placement and semantics

- Being an object means that you have been overridden in at least one of the previous respects. The two first of these are directed towards discourse structure, and hence introduce textuality into this level of syntax

Placement and semantics

We all remember the classical object examples, which I have so far also been using:

(11) John killed Bill in Central Park

(12) Sir Christopher Wren built this gazebo

Placement and Semantics

- The interesting fact is that many objects in actual texts are not of this kind:

(13) Harmen over Struensee-regimet når nye højder.

(14) Struensees tidligere ven, *grev Rantzau-Ascheberg* og den berygtede bondeplager, *generalkrigskommissær Magnus Beringskjold* danner en sammensværgelse.

Placement and semantics

- (14) ...derimod afviser både *J. E. H. Bernstorff* og *A. G. Moltke* et makkerskab med det noget grumsede selskab.
- (15) ...de sammensvorne (...) skræmmer den sindssyge konge til at underskrive arrestordrer mod Struensee...
- (16) Forinden har oberst Køller arresteret Struensee og Brandt.

Placement and Semantics

(17) Så let var det at fælde den mægtigste mand i datidens Danmark.

(18) Københavns befolkning hilser meddelelsen om diktatorens fald med stormende begejstring.

(19) (...) for at modtage undersåtternes hyldest.

Placement and Semantics

(20) Om aftenen fejrer den københavnske
pøbel kongens “befrielse” ved at plyndre
byens bordeller.