

Unit accentuation and movement

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Unit accentuation

Unit accentuation is an important type of predicate formation in Danish (Thomsen & Herslund 2002, Thomsen 2002a, Thomsen 2002b). From a clause with a transitive verb and a definite or indefinite fully stressed object it is possible to derive an intransitive predicate consisting of the same verb with weakened stress and the object in non-definite (bare, naked) form incorporated into one monovalent predicate:

(1) *Jeg har bygget huset på syv måneder*
I have built-STRESSED house-the on seven months
'I built the house in 7 months'

(2) *Jeg har bygget hus i to år*
I have built-DESTRESSED house-NON-DEF in two years
'I have been building a house for two years'

The predicate in (1) is in the perfective (which can be seen from the duration adverbial with *på*: ... *på syv måneder*), and the predicate in (2) is in the imperfective (a duration adverbial with *i*: *i to år*).

In general, unit accentuation is the formation of one syntactic, semantic and communicative unit by unification of two parts, the one that loses its stress because it is incorporated in the corporate predicate, and the one that takes over and keeps the lost stress and thus becomes either the semantic or the communicative governor or head of the unit. The loss (or more precisely the reduction or weakening) of stress can be either progressive (the stress loser preceding the stress keeper) or regressive (the stress loser following the stress keeper).

Such a corporate predicate has been said to consist of a 'host' (the verb that loses the stress: *bygget* in (2)) and a 'co-predicate' (the non-definite noun that takes over the stress: *hus*) (Thomsen and Herslund 2002:12). I will not adopt this terminological usage here because as a metaphor it highlights the wrong aspects of the phenomenon. It is the verb (*bygget*) that is incorporated in the corporate unit which has the noun (*hus*) as the semantic and communicative governor. The corporate predicate functions as a predicate as the incorporated verb does, but that is not the important thing about these constructions. The remarkable thing is that the noun root, which determines the valency of the whole construction, functions as a predicate by incorporating a verb.

So here I will continue to refer to stress loser and stress keeper instead of host and co-predicate.

Stress in Danish is relative (Grønnum 1998); a word is only perceived to carry heavy stress if it is heavier than the stress on the other words. What is experienced by the audience as extra stress or emphatic stress is in fact only loss of the stress on the neighbouring words: The extra stress on *hus* in (2) *Jeg har bygget hus i to år* appears as such, because the stress is weakened on both *har* and *bygget* compared to the stress on the same words in sentences such as *Jeg har et hus* (I have a house) and (1) *Jeg har bygget huset på syv måneder*.

I will make the following notations of unit accentuation: the progressive stress loser is marked by ‘/’ at the beginning; the progressive stress keeper is marked by ‘#’ at the beginning of the word; the regressive stress loser is marked by ‘\’ at the beginning of the word, and the regressive stress keeper is marked with ‘#’ at the end of the word; a word with unmarked full stress is marked with ‘+’ in front of the word:

(1b) */Jeg /har #bygget +huset /på #syv +måneder*

(2b) */Jeg /har /bygget #hus /i +to #år*

(3) */hun #gav# \ham \dem*
she gave him them
‘She gave them to him’

One single stress keeper can take over the stress from two or more either previous or subsequent words, and it thus becomes the governor of the whole unit, e.g. *#var#* in (4) and *#her* in (5) (Togebj 2003: 38-48).

(4) */han #var# \her*
he **was** here
‘He certainly was here’

(5) */han /var #her*
he was **here**
‘It was here that he was’

In (2) unit accentuation has the effect that */bygge #hus* is understood as one monovalent imperfective predicate, and not as a transitive perfective verb with an object as in (1). In (3) the pronouns lose their stress because they qua pronouns are non-informative, and *gav* is focussed

because it is the stress keeper. In (6) both /*havde* and /*læst* lose their stress to #*avis*, although there are many both stressed and destressed words between the stress loser and the stress keeper; in fact there is a whole accent unit in between: /*på #det# \tidspunkt*.

- (6) /*Han /havde +faktisk /på #det# \tidspunkt +ikke /læst #avis*
 he had in fact on that time not read newspaper-NON-DEF
 ‘At that time he had, in fact, not read a newspaper’

Progressive accent units are discontinuous units. Listeners (or readers) will, when they perceive the words of the sentence one by one, record that a stress is missing, e.g. on /*havde*, until a suitable stress keeper turns up later in the sentence. In (6) neither +*faktisk* nor #*det#* nor +*aldrig* can take over the stress lost from /*havde* because they do not form one semantic unit together with an auxiliary, so the listeners must postpone their interpretation of a complete syntactic unit until they have read #*avis*.

Regressive accent units are not discontinuous. If a word regressively loses its stress, it must stand next to and lean on the previous stress keeper or next to a word that has lost its stress regressively to a previous stress keeper. Regressive loss of stress is in this way always enclitic. In (3) *dem* leans on *ham*, which has lost its stress regressively to #*gav#*. There cannot be any stressed word between stress loser and stress keeper in regressive unit accentuation. This is apparent from example (7).

- (7) +*Pigen sendte# \ham \det +ikke*
 girl-the sent him it not
 ‘The girl didn’t send it to him’

The pronouns *ham* and *det* lose their stress to signal that as non-contrastive pronouns they are out of focus; but if the indirect object and direct object had been common nouns with innate stress the word order would have been as in (8):

- (8) +*Pigen +sendte +ikke +moderen +brevet*
 girl-the sent not mother-the letter-the
 ‘The girl didn’t send the letter to her mother’

Here there is no loss of stress, and we see that compared to (8) the indirect and direct object in (7) are in contact with the governor of the accent unit, viz. *sendte#*. They have so to speak jumped over the negation for unification with the verb, a phenomenon which in the Danish tradition is called ‘light constituent position’.

In both progressive and regressive unit accentuation the stress loser has lost some of its meaning or function, viz the possibility of being semantically salient and the communicative focus

of the sentence. In the first case, (2), (5) and (6), the verb is reduced to a bearer of the finite inflexion for its governor, it has become a sort of semi auxiliary, and in the second case (7) the objects are reduced to non-informative parts of the message, which has the predicate as its governor and communicative focus.

En dag så hun Niccolo i gaden, han gik langsomt og støt i samme gamle store kappe som han havde haft på da hun om aftenen først var fulgt efter ham. Men han så ikke hende. Karen Blixen: Ekko (side 201).

Dum, dummere, dummet - (...) danskerne bliver ifølge filosofien og forfatteren Peter Thielst "mere og mere dumme og overfladiske" (... fem spalter ...)

*"Dum" er dog et ord, psykologen Thomas Teasdale aldrig bruger. For ham er det nedsættende, følelsesladet og intetsigende i stil med "fjoget" eller "smalsporet". Han har i sin forskning på Københavns Universitet studeret militærets statistikker om kassation på grund af for ringe åndsevner, og testresultaterne giver ikke ham noget billede af, om de unge danske mænd er blevet mere eller mindre kvikke med årene. Politiken 10. oktober 1999 2. sektion side 1. Sidste sætning kan kun læses op således: og
 |testresul |taterne „giver |ikke |ham „noget |billede ...*

2. Types of accentuation unit predicates

Unit accentuation is an extremely rich way of forming predicates in Danish. The verb can lose its stress to many types of elements, each of which becomes the governor of the corporate predicate: a non-definite object (9), a preposition (10), a directional adverb (11) or an adjective (12) (Togeby 2003: 68-73):

| | CORPORATE PREDICATES | COMPOUNDS |
|------|--|--|
| (9) | /bygge #hus build house -NON-DEF 'be building a house', | husbyggeri house-building 'building of houses' |
| (10) | /bygge (+noget) #til (/på #noget) build (something) to (on something) 'extend something' | tilbygning to-building 'extension' |
| (11) | /bygge +noget #op build something up 'build up something' | opbygning up-building 'structure, composition' |
| (12) | /bygge #lavt | lavbyggeri |

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| build low | low-building |
| 'build low buildings | 'low buildings' |

Many of these corporate predicates have compound counterparts consisting of the same two elements (viz. a verbal root and a noun root, an adjective root, a directional adverb or a preposition), but reversed order of the constituents, a different word class and another communicative focus. They are shown in the second column of (9)-(12). The stress pattern of the compounds is a mirror image of the stress pattern of the corporate predicate, viz. main stress on the semantic salient part of the compound (the first part), and stress reduction of the verbal root (the second part); the derivative is always destressed although it determines the word class.

The Danish grammarian Kristian Mikkelsen (Mikkelsen 1911: 354) has called the constructions in the left hand column "loose compounds" and those in the right hand column "firm compounds". While corporate predicates are always combinations of verbs and something else, compounds are not so often verbal. Although we have many types of nominal compound counterparts in (9)-(12), there is only one verbal compound counterpart: *at opbygge noget*, 'to build up something', and not: **at husbygge*, *[?]*at tilbygge*, **at lavtbygge*. (Although the verbal compounds do not exist as verbs in the infinitive or the present or past tense, the present participle of the same verbs does exist, or can easily be formed: *hus-bygg-ende*, *til-bygg-ende*, *lavt-bygg-ende*. This present participle form is not a derivation of a compound verb with the structure [[hus-bygg]-ende], but a compound made out of a noun and a present participle with the structure [hus-[bygg-ende]].)

3. Corporate predicates and verbal compounds

It is not a precondition for corporate predicates with unit accentuation that a stress keeping noun phrase is non-definite. Unit accentuation takes place with definite nouns as governors too, the verb being either a divalent movement predicate (13), or a trivalent predicate (14). Some of these predicates have verbal compound counterparts, which, however, often have non-compositional or figurative meaning; 'emigration' does not necessarily involve 'wandering' (13), and 'cutting off' the retreat of the enemy does not involve real 'cutting' with a knife (14).

| | CORPORATE PREDICATES | VERBAL COMPOUNDS |
|------|---|---|
| (13) | <i>/de /vandrede #ud /i #skoven</i> they wandered out in forest-the 'they wandered into the forest' | <i>familien udvandrede til Amerika</i> the family out-wandered to America 'the family emigrated to America' |
| (14) | <i>/skære +grenene /af #træet</i> cut the branches off the tree 'cut the branches off the tree' | <i>afskære fjenden fra tilbagetog</i> off-cut the enemy from retreat 'cut off the enemy's retreat' |

In (15) the corporate predicate has compositional meaning and the compound figurative meaning, while in (16) the compound has literal compositional meaning, and the corporate predicate a totally different meaning.

(15) /De /hentede /ham #ind /på #kontoret De indhentede ham på kontoret
 they fetched him in on the office they in-fetched him on the office
 ‘they fetched him into the office’ ‘They caught him up at the office’

(16) /komme #an /på #noget ankomme
 come to on something to-come
 ‘depend on something’ ‘arrive’

In other cases the compound counterpart to a corporate predicate is not acceptable due to what has been called selection restrictions (17) and (18).

(17) /hun /gik #ud /i #haven *hun udgik i haven
 she went out in the garden
 ‘she went into the garden’

(18) +lyset /gik #ud *lyset udgik
 the light went out
 ‘the light went out’

And in still other examples the corporate predicate and the verbal compound are synonymous (19) and (20):

(19) +Denne +sætning /går #ud denne sætning udgår
 this sentence goes out this clause out-goes
 ‘This clause is left out’ ‘this clause is left out’

(20) /Der /gik +befaling #ud der udgik befaling
 there went order out there out-went order
 ‘orders were issued’ ‘orders were issued’

Valency bound locative arguments of movement verbs consist either of a preposition and a noun phrase, e.g. (17b) /Hun /gik /i #haven, (14) /skære +grenene /af #træet, or of a directional adverb, a preposition and a noun phrase, e.g. (17) /Hun /gik #ud /i #haven, (14b) /skære +grenene +ned /af #træet. If the final noun is moved to the front position or omitted elliptically, the preposition takes over the role as stress keeper: +Skoven gik# \de +ofte #ud #i, (litt.: forest-the went they often out

in, ‘they often went into the forest’), /*De /skar +grenene #af*, (litt: they cut branches-the off, ‘they cut off the branches’). If there is a directional adverb, it takes over the role of stress keeper irrespective of whether or not the prepositional phrase is omitted by ellipsis. In (21), in which there is no prepositional phrase, one can say that the meaning is compositional; if a ship is sinking, it is going downwards, but in this example an elliptical prepositional phrase is easily found: +*skibet /gik /ned #under +havoverfladen* (ship-the went down under sea level).

(21) +*skibet /gik #ned*
 ship-the went down
 ‘the ship sank’

But there are other examples of constructions in which the directional adverb has to be the stress keeper because no prepositions or noun phrases are omitted by ellipsis (22)-(24). In none of these cases is the meaning of the corporate predicate clearly compositional; if someone gives in her notice (22), she is not saying it upwards (if it is at all possible to ‘say a job’); if a light goes out (23), it does not involve that it walks or moves, and if it does move, out of what? If a shop closes down it is not going anywhere, and what is the literal meaning of going in, [in into](#) what?

(22) /*han /sagde /sin #stilling #op*
 he said his job up
 ‘he gave in his notice’

(23) +*lyset /gik #ud*
 light-the went out
 ‘the light went out’

(24) +*forretningen /gik #ind*
 shop-the went in
 ‘the shop closed down’

Constructions with unit accentuation and a directional adverb as the only possible stress keeper (in one of the possible meanings) are therefore best described as discontinuous units that are petrified as unanalysable lexical units, and not as a result of predicate formation. The meaning of the corporate predicate is never compositional.

4. The position of the stress keeper of the accent unit

Trivalent corporate predicates have another word order than the same constructions often have in English (Swedish and Norwegian).

DANISH

(25) /Han /tog +frakken #af
 he took coat-the off

(26) /Hun /samlede +mønten #op
 she picked coin-the up

ENGLISH

He took off his coat

She picked up the coin

In Danish the stress keeping preposition or adverb is placed after the object, while it in English is placed before the object.

Positions, like stress, are relative (Heltoft 1986); a position can only be defined in relation to other positions. In Danish there are (at least) three adverbial positions: one immediately before the infinite verb (adverb-1), one immediately before the position of prepositional object (adverb-2), and one after this position (adverb-3) (Togebj 2003 : 71-72).

| subj - finite vb | adverb-1 | infinite verb | object | adverb-2 | prepositional obj | adverb-3 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| (27) /jeg har I have | hurtigt quickly | /sendt sent | +brevet letter-the | | #ud /til #deltagerne out to participants-the | |
| (28) /Jeg /har I have | | +sendt sent | +brevet letter-the | +hurtigt quickly | #ud /til #deltagerne out to participants-the | |
| (29) /jeg /har I have | | /sendt sent | +brevet letter-the | | #ud /til #deltagerne out to participants-the | +hurtigt quickly |

It has been claimed (Thomsen 2002 : 132) that a nominal stress keeper of the corporate predicate (the co-predicate) in Danish has a position like the prepositional object between adverb-2 and adverb-3. The supporting examples from Thomsen are the following:

| subj - finite vb | adverb-1 | infinite verb | object | adverb-2 | stress keeper | adverb-3 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| (30) /Jeg /har I have | | +læst read | +avisen paper-the | | | +flittigt diligently |
| (31) /jeg /har I have | | /læst read | | | #avis paper NON-DEF | flittigt frequently |
| (32) /jeg /har I have | | /læst read | | +flittigt hard-working (?) | #avis paper NON-DEF | |
| (33) /jeg har I have | flittigt frequently | /læst read | | | #avis paper NON-DEF | |

This position is already designated to prepositional objects that are not stress keepers, but which nevertheless share features of a corporate predicate, viz. prepositions incorporated in the predicate as connecting links between verb and object that only change the aspect of the predicate: *bygge et hus* (litt.: build a house) : *bygge på et hus* (litt.: build on a house - ‘be building a house’); *skrive en bog* (write a book) : *skrive på en bog* (litt.: write on a book- ‘be writing a book’) (Durst-Andersen & Herslund 1996).

| subj - finite vb - | adverb-1 | infinite verb | object | adverb-2 | prep. object | adverb-3 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) | /de /havde /they /had | +bygget built | +huset house-the | | | på 7 måneder in 7 months |
| (34) | de havde they had | +bygget built | | +længe long | /på #huset on house-the | allerede already |

‘They had already for a long time been building the house’

The whole question about the order of adverbials after the object is open to doubt. I don’t think that the evidence for the claim that stress keeping elements occupy the positions of the prepositional objects is unambiguous. First, all the examples I have seen are constructed and rest on the grammarian’s decision concerning their acceptability. It would have been better to give a couple of authentic examples. Secondly, there has been no specification of the type or subclass of adverb that fits into the adverbial slots of the template

| subj - finite vb - | adverb-1 | infinite verb | object | adverb-2 | prep. object | adv-3 |
|---|--|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| (35) | /Hun /havde she had | /sendt sent | +gæsterne guests-the | +venligt kindly | +ud /af #huset out of house-the | |
| (36) | /Hun /havde +venligt she had kindly | /sendt sent | +gæsterne guests-the | | +ud /af #huset out of house-the | |
| (37) | /Hun /havde she had | /spillet played | | +virtuost brilliantly | #violin violin | |
| ‘She had played the violin like a virtuoso (in her early days)’ | | | | | | |
| (38) | /Hun /havde +virtuost she had brilliantly | /spillet played | | | #violin violin | |
| ‘She played the violin brilliantly (last night)’ | | | | | | |

It looks as if they are manner adverbs such as *venligt* and *virtuost*. But thirdly, some people even say that (37) and (38) have slightly different meanings: (37) is about one occasion, say last night, when she played brilliantly, while (38) is about the artistic ability (like a virtuoso) that she once had, but has now lost.

On the other hand there are a number of examples in which a manner adverb can be placed in adverb-1-position or adverb-3-position, but not in the adverb-2 position.

| subj - finite vb - | adverb-1 | infinite verb | object | adverb-2 | prep. object | adv-3 |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (39) | /Han /havde he had | /bygget build | | | #hus house-NON-DEF | +helt +alene all alone |
| (40) | /Han /havde helt alene he had all alone | /bygget build | | | #hus house-NON-DEF | |
| (*41) | /Han /havde he had | /bygget build | | *helt alene all alone | #hus house-NON-DEF | |

So this question needs much more investigation.

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