The meaning of syntactic position or movement in modern Danish syntax

Ole Togeby

Scandinavian Institute

Aarhus University

Plan

- I. Aims of linguistics
- II. Examples
- III. Theoretical framework

- IV. Formalism and functionalism
- V. Word order

Theoretical framework: Layers in syntactic analysis

- Three layers in analysis of syntactic relations:

- 1. **the phenomenon**: the abstract syntactic relation

- 2. **the notation**: the means of representing the abstract syntactic relation (in a meta language)

- 3. **the manifestation**: the overt manifestation of the abtsract syntactic relation (in object language)

- Croft p. 22

Theoretical framework: Layers in syntactic analysis

Example:

1. **the phenomenon**: embedded clauses

- 2. **the notation**: tree diagram of hierarchical structure, movements in the tree structure, slot filling in templates

- 3. **the manifestation**: conjunctions, word order, tense changes,

V. Word order:
General ordering principles

- Dik's requirements to af theory of language will delimit the meta language of language description in the following way:

- 1. Avoid transformations(structure-changing operations)

  - (i) avoid deletions of specified element

  - (ii) avoid substitutions of one specified element by another specified element

  - (iii) avoid permutations of specified elements

    - a. John dosn't like pancakes

    - b. PANCAKES John doesn't like

- 2. Avoid filtering devices

- 3. Avoid abstract semantic predicates

Word order: General ordering principles

- Word order is described by placement rules:
    - (i) placement rules are expression rules
    - (ii) placement rules are not movement rules
    - (iii) constituent ordering is not a deep property of languages
    - (v) there are no free order languages (different word orders have different menings)(Dik 337)

Word order: General ordering principles

- (GP1) **The principle of Iconic Ordering**

  - Constituens conform to (GP1) when their ordering in one way or another iconically reflects the semantic content of the expression in which they occur.

- (GP3) **The principle of Centripetal Orientation**

  - Constituents conform to (GP3) when their ordering is determined by their relative distance from the head, which may lead to "mirror-image" ordering around the head

- (GP7) **The principle of Pragmatic Highlighting**

  - Constituents conform with special pragmatic functionality (New Topic, Given Topic, Completive Focus, Constrative Focus) are preferably placed in "special positions", including, at least, the clause-initial position.

- (GP9) **The principle of Increasing Complexity**

  - There is preference for ordering constituentsin an order of increasing complexity (Dik 343ff.)

(71)   Underlying Clause Structure in FG

Level 4: clause (speech act)
σ4:   "briefly"
π4:   illocutionary force (declarative, interrogative, imperative)

Level 3: proposition (possible fact)
σ3:   "in my opinion"
π3:   subjective modality (evaluation, attitude)

Level 2: extended predication (state of affairs)
σ2:   time, location, space
π2:   tense, objective modality (time, space, cognition(?))

Level 1: core predication (property or relation)
σ1:   manner, speed, instrument,
       direction, beneficiary
π1:   (im)perfective aspect,
       (non-)progressive aspect
       (Subj, Obj)

Level 0: nuclear predication
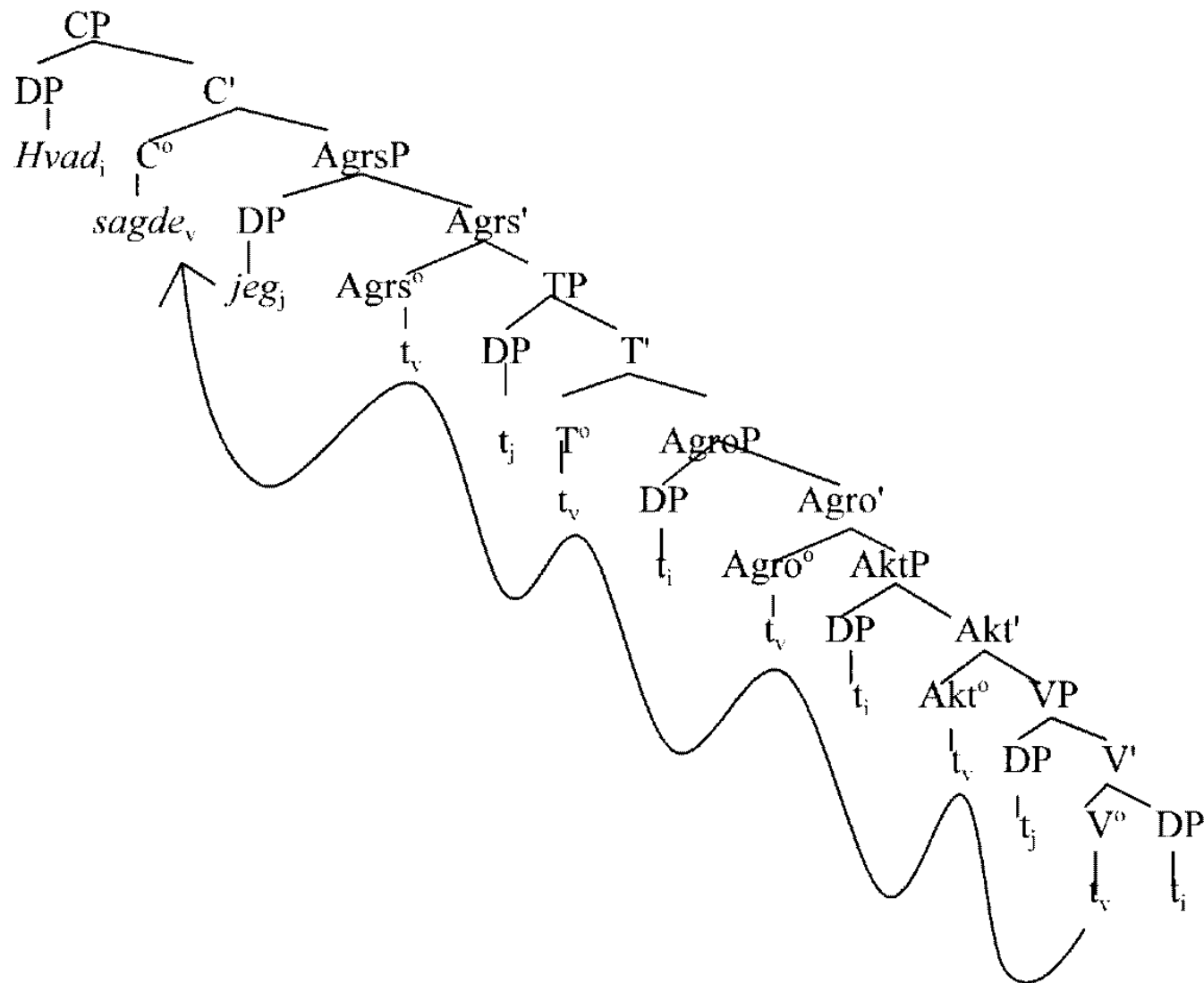Predicate and terms (arguments)

Word order:
Explanatory adequacy

- Apart from declarations of intent (about biology), what do generative grammarians in fact say about movement?

- Do they explain the color of the flower by the chemical composition in the cells

- Or

- Do they explain the colors as something by which the flowers attract insects?

Hvad sagde jeg

Word order: Explanatory adequacy

- The verb is said to move from the lowest t position in five steps to the position it occupies in the sentence that is the empirical data of the analysis (and the two other constituents have moved accordingly).

- This itinerary is an indication of both

  - (1) **that *Hvad* is the object and is placed in the front position**, and that *sagde* is the finite verb, placed in the second position, and

  - (2) **that the object is analysed as structurally higher than the verb**, which is structurally higher than the subject - with what it implies.

Explanatory adequacy
The meaning of the notation

- Platzack's tree diagram also expresses the following statements about the sentence:
- (a) it is imperfective aktionsart (expressed by the visit at Akto),
- (b) it is *Hvad* (what) which is the patient (Vo DP)
- (c) that the sentence is in past tense (To),
- (d) that it is *jeg* (I) that is the subject (Co AgrsP)
- (e) that the sentence is not subordinate (Co),
- (f) that it is a *hv*-question (DP C').
- That is the returns of the enormously deep tree structure; all these things are stated in one diagram by the metaphor that *sagde* moves from Vo to IP-Spec.
- The problem is:

- How is the meaning extracted from the manifest features, and not from the notation?

Explanatory adequacy:
The meaning of the notation

- All this is what I call characterisation of the meaning of the sentence. The minimalist approach in this way make a lot of semantics; they only disguise it as structure. It is a color-attract-insects-explanation and not a causal explanation.

Word order:
Explanatory adequacy – Acc + inf

One manifest structure does not carry the same meaning in all languages

Take the accusative + infinitive construction as an example. In Danish it is only found after verbs of perception:

- *Jeg så hende komme* (I saw her come),

- In Latin it is also found after verbs of meaning and utterance

- *præterea censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*

- (besides I hold Carthago (to) be destroyed).

- In Latin the construction may express a proposition, while it in Danish only expresses a state of affairs in which someone perceives some entity (the accusative) and something that this entity is or does at the time of perception.

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- Is it true that the finite verb moves from V to IP-spec in main clauses and not in embedded clauses?

- Well it is true that main clauses and subordinate sentences have different word order in Danish: *Hun kom ikke* (She came not) *: ... at hun ikke kom* (... that she not came).

- If that is the impact of the theory of movement it is true, as well as the description made with Diderichsens sentence scheme, and the descriptions made in all other grammars of Danish are true.

- The question is: What does it mean to be an embedded clause?

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Object position: Jun 14-17

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clause

- **From an ontological point of view nothing is moved.**

- The differences in the two sentences are differences in the order of which some processes of interpretation or productions of utterances run in the brains of speaker and listener. Linguistic structures have no extension in space, only in time. There is no left or right in linguistic structures, only first, second ... and last.

- The term 'movement from V to IP-spec' can not be anything but a metaphor for 'not last but second', and if this difference should be measured by brain scanning, it would show up as some processes running earlier than others, not as something moving round in the brain. If it is found in Brocca's area, it is not a spacial difference, but a temporal one.

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Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clause word order

- Taken as a metaphor the notational meta-language in minimalist theory is intended to express much more than the fact that the word order is different in main clauses and embedded clauses in Danish.

Explanatory adequacy
The meaning of the notation

- In this respect this analysis is descriptively equivalent to the analyses made by a sentence scheme (which gives an account of the word order) supplied by an analysis of what Diderichsen calls sentence members (subject and object and so on), of semantic roles (2-roles), of tense and aktionsart and of information structure, the only difference being that the generativist metalanguage is throughout metaphoric, while the Didericsenian metalanguage is sober with a single innocent metaphor. They are equally descriptively adequate, and can be translated to each other. It is the same true story told in different languages.

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- If we look at the ways minimalist theories explain language development it becomes even more absurd. In the good old Old Danish times we had Vo-IP-Spec movement in both main clauses and embedded clauses. Then the verb suddenly in the Middle Age stopped wandering in subordinate clauses, while it still were extracted, repelled, moved around on long itineraries in main clauses until this very day. Optimality Theory explains that this change happened because the constraints 'Vo-right' and 'Verb-in-Vo' changed rank when the person morphology was worn out.

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- If I should explain the fact that Danish has **F-v-n-a-V** word order in main clauses, and **k-n-a-v-V** word order in embedded clauses, I would do it in this way: If you want to analyse how we interpret an embedded sentence like

- *at hun ikke ville give   drengene bøgerne   i går*

- that she not would give boys-the books-the yesterday,

    - 'that she wouldn't give the boys the books yesterday'

- you start with first word and put it in the first slot with a feasible category name (*at* only fits in the **k**-slot - *k* for conjunction - not in F or v), then you continue with the next word further in the scheme (*hun* in the **s**-slot - *s* for subject, *ikke* on **a** - a for adverbial), and then you have to put both *ville* and *give*, on the **V**-slot.

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Explanatory adequacy:
Embedded clauses

		Konjunktional					Omsagnsfelt				Uds.adv.
F	**v**	**k**	**s**	**y**	**a**	**V**	**R1**	**M**	**R2**		**A**
		fordi	*hun*		*altid*	*var syg*					
			der			*stod*			*ved siden af dem*		
		at	*hun*		*ikke*	*ville give*	*drengen bøgerne*				*i går*
		hvad	*jeg*		*ikke*	*havde ventet*					
		hvem	*Gud*			*giver*	*embede*				
		jo mere	*vi*			*er sammen*					

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- That the finite verb is placed at the **V**-slot, and not at the **v**-slot where finite verbs in main clauses are placed, indicates the embedded sentence has no reality status (truth value) of its own, but is dependent on the meaning of the reality status of the matrix sentence and the type of syntactic function it has in this sentence. If we take the main clause

- *Hun benægtede at   hun ikke ville   give drengene bøgerne   i går*

- she   denied   that she not would give boys-the books-the yesterday

- not only the reality status (truth value) of the embedded clause *at hun ikke ville give drengene bøgerne i går* is undecidable because *benægte* (deny) is a non-factive verb; but the meaning of the clause is also dependent on the meaning of the matrix verb, the meaning being:

- 'she said that she (in fact) would give the boys the books yesterday

Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- This analysis reflects the fact of a certain word order in embedded clauses signals to the listener that it has no reality status for itself.

- If I should explain why the Danes and Swedes in the Middle Age suddenly changed the word order of subordinate clauses from **FvnaV** to **knavV**, I think that the most probable explanation is the following:

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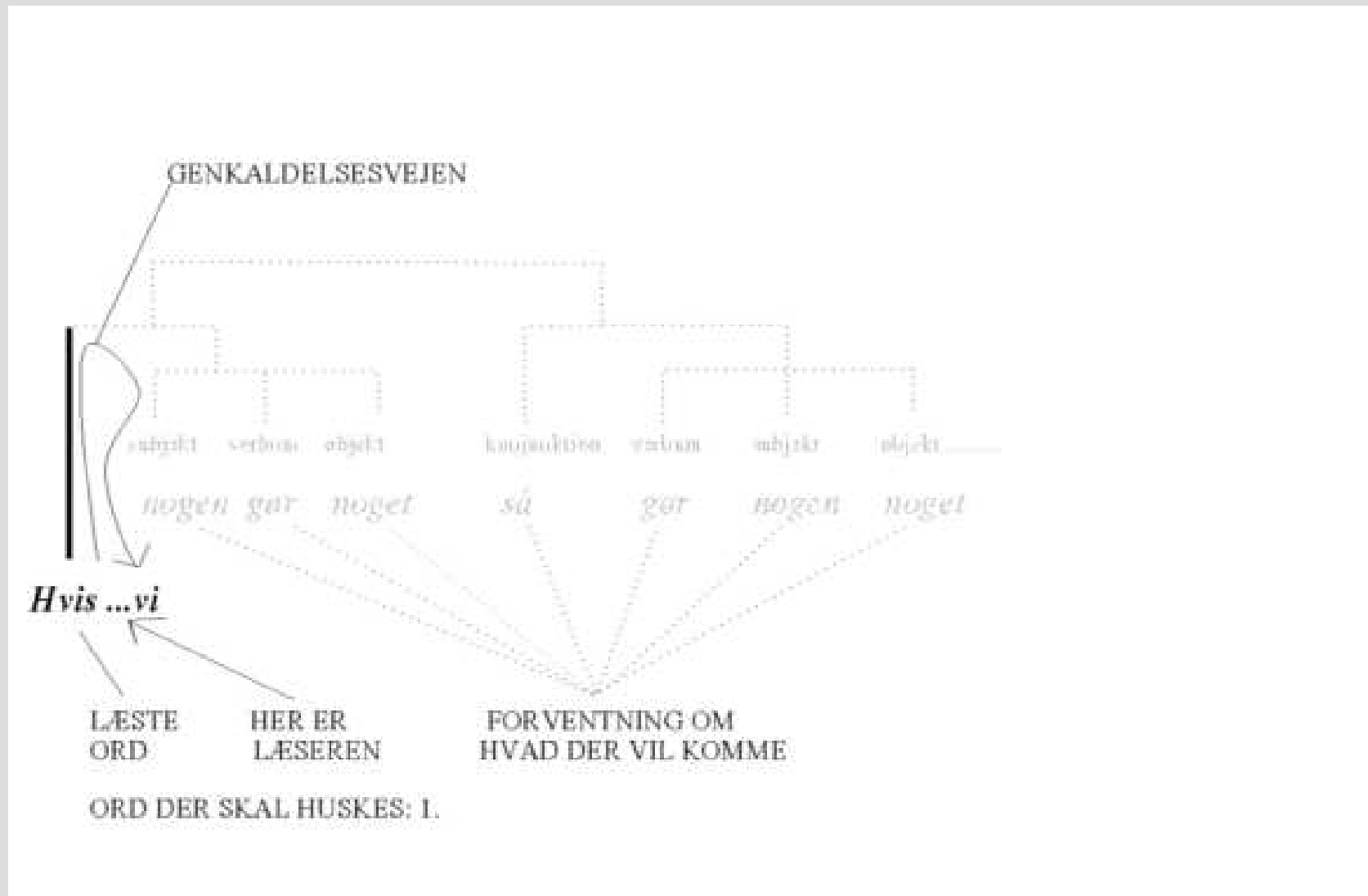# Explanatory adequacy: Embedded clauses

- At that time it was not possible to express the meaning difference between sentences stating reality and sentences expressing state of affairs with no reality status the way it had been done until that time, viz. by subjunctive mood, because the subjunctive inflexions had been worn out during some centuries.
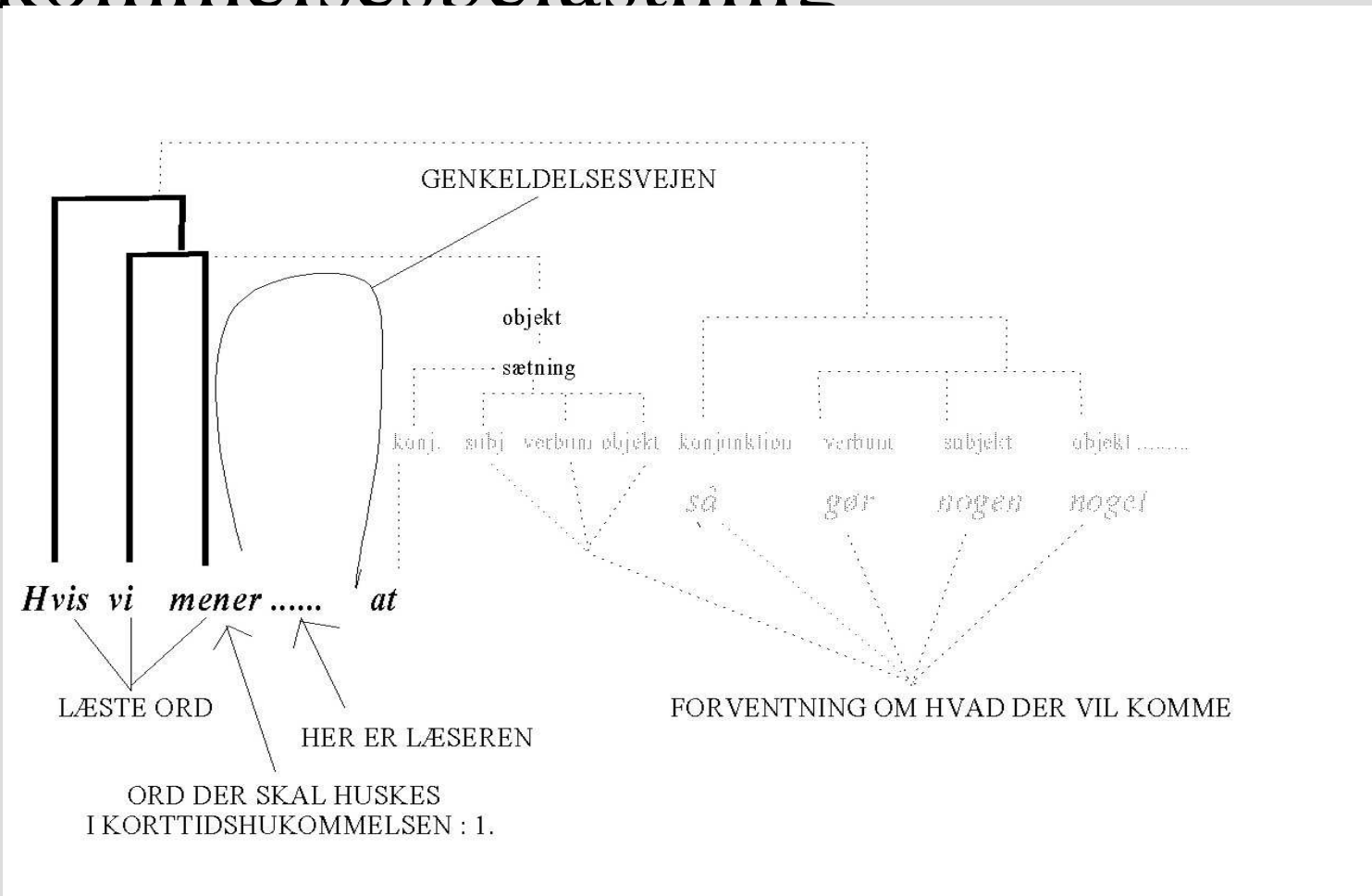
Syntax and memory load

- Here it i described the number of words the reader has to recall in order to understand the semantic relation between two adjacent words at three spots in the sentence:

- *Hvis [1] vi mener [2]at oplysningerne er nødvendige [3] så er det sandsynligt vi går rettens vej.*

- If [1] we find [2] that pieces of information-the are necessary [3] then is it probable we go court-the-s road (take legal action)

GENKALDELSESVEJEN

subjekt   verbum   objekt   konjunktion   verbum   subjekt   objekt

nogen   går   noget   så   går   nogen   noget

Hvis ...vi

LÆSTE   HER ER   FORVENTNING OM
ORD   LÆSEREN   HVAD DER VIL KOMME

ORD DER SKAL HUSKES: 1.

IV.C. Syntaks og hukommelsesbelastning

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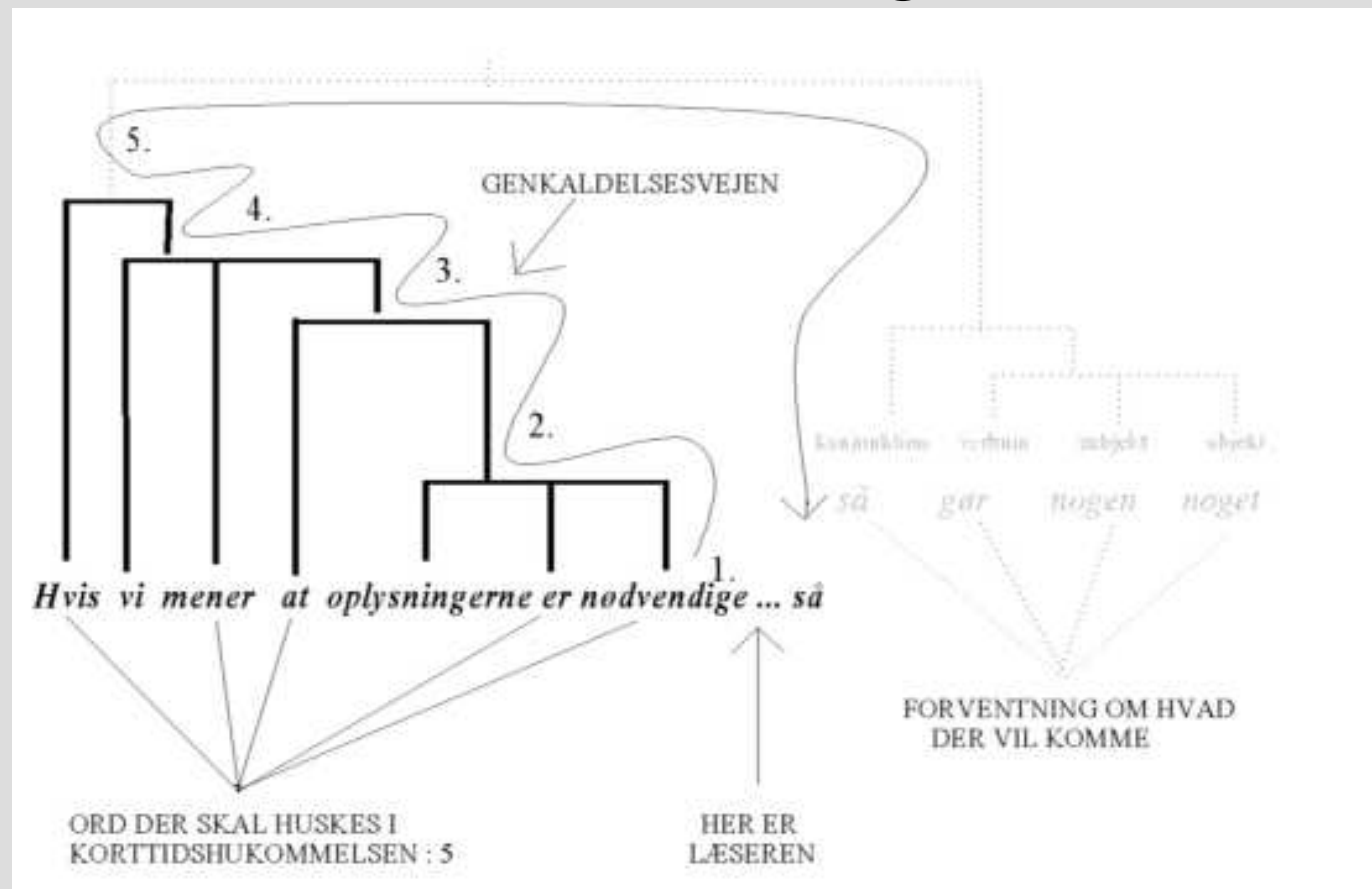# IV.C. Syntaks og hukommelsesbelastning

IV.C. Syntaks og hukommelsesbelastning

- Et komma mellem *nødvendige* og *så* fungerer som et hovedvejsskilt hvor læseren kan stoppe op og så at sige orientere sig på sit mentale kort over sætningen, inden det næste ord på sætningens hovedvej læses. Her skal meningen med *Hvis*-sætningen sammenfattes, før *så er det sandsynligt* overhovedet kan give mening.

- Mellem *at* og det foregående ord er der derimod aldrig behov for at stoppe op og sammenfatte, for den meningsmæssige forbindelse er umiddelbar og direkte. Hvis man, fordi der står et traditionelt komma, laver en pause i læsningen (eller i oplæsningen) på dette sted, vil det være en hindring for forståelse af sammenhængen. Et komma foran et *at* er som et falsk hovedvejsskilt på en motorvej; det får folk til at holde inde hvor de netop skal have fuld fart på.

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IV.C. Syntaks og hukommelsesbelastning

- Derfor er hovedreglen for det anbefalede komma: komma efter en ledsætning, ikke komma før en ledsætning. Kommaet signalerer til læseren: nu kommer du fra bivejen ind på hovedvejen (eller i togkupemetaforen: nu går du fra kupeen ud i vogngangen), nu bør du sammenfatte meningen med det ledsætningsformede led, før du går over til næste led i helsætningen.

- I vejmetaforen kan komma før og efter parentetiske ledsætninger, beskrives som hhv. et skilt med blind vej, når man kører fra hovedvejen ind på bivejen, og et hovedvejsskilt når man efter at være vendt om på den blinde vej igen kører ud på hovedvejen.

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