

Placement and Scope of Mainland Scandinavian Modal Adverbs¹

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Abstract

This paper investigates the interplay between modal adverbs and other parts of the sentence, especially the grammatical subject, in the Mainland Scandinavian Languages, especially Danish. Two adverb positions are isolated and analyzed with respect to their status in sentence schemes (see examples 1-4 below). One of them is recognized as a normal sentence slot, whereas the other one must be treated as an adjunct to heads, rather than as an independent slot.

1. Introduction

1.1. The topic of the paper

The topic of this paper is an investigation into the interplay between sentence adverbs and other parts in the sentence, notably the grammatical subject, in Danish and to some extent in the other Mainland Scandinavian languages. My main concern is two adverb positions not hitherto treated by the Diderichsen system of field syntax. As I shall attempt to show in my paper, both these positions are concerned with irregular focus positions in the discourse structure. This influences their empirical whereabouts and imposes stylistical and pragmatic limitations to the possibility of showing their existence. It also raises the question of whether a scheme with fixed maximal positions is actually the most efficient way to investigate Danish syntax. A central problem is the necessity to account for discursive features which influence the syntax. The Diderichsen

scheme is conceived in such a way that a number of important observations are readily accounted for within the scheme, but the observations that I am dealing with here seem to resist this kind of “thinking in slots”. I shall return to these speculations at the end of my paper.

1.2. Some preliminaries

It is not strictly true that the two adverb positions dealt with here were ‘not hitherto treated by the Diderichsen system of field syntax’ as I suggested above. In fact, they have both been noted by Diderichsen, but never properly integrated into his scheme. But there is a methodological reservation about all this, too, and this pertains to the two problems: WHAT should be included in a sentence scheme and HOW to include it.

The traditional scheme looks like this²:

Figure 1:

Forbin- derfelt	Fundament- felt (> Forfelt)	Neksusfelt (> Centralfelt)			Indholdsfelt (> Slutfelt)		
k	F	v	n (subj.)	a 1, 2...	V	N (obj 1-2)	A 1, 2 ...
<i>og</i>	<i>saa</i>	<i>kunde</i>	<i>han</i>	<i>sikkert ikke alligevel</i>	<i>faa sagt</i>	<i>hende Besked</i>	<i>i Tide</i>
‘and’	‘then’	‘could’	‘he	‘surely not anyway’	‘have said’	‘her a word’	‘soon enough’

When Diderichsen started organizing his scheme in the late 1930s, he planned to organize it on a basis which is strongly reminiscent of modern dependency grammar, including notions of verbal valency etc.³ However, in the final version dating from 1946, the scheme which forms the basis of the current discussion, he replaced it with a more down-to-earth principle, distinguishing elements of the sentence on a morphological basis. First, he distinguishes the verb, taking into account its split position between finite and infinite position. Next, he distinguishes elements of the sentence with a nominal kernel and a nominal function. Everything else is supposed to be adverbs; Diderichsen did reach some interesting new classifications of adverbs on the basis of their linear possibilities, but this was not foreseen from the beginning. In spite of this rather primitive and reductionist way of organizing the scheme, it is nevertheless able to show some interesting relational links, such as the subject and object positions, the object-like character of the situationally unknown subject, the treatment of indirect objects and their semantic equivalents. Also certain discursive functions find interesting expressions in the scheme, notably in connection with front position, which Diderichsen in his various accounts of Danish syntax has described as an important discursive factor.

It is also important in this respect that the scheme on this first level only contains slots⁴ that are directly dependent on the verb. Elements of the sentence dependent on other elements below verb level have no slot in this scheme; they are accounted for according to their dependence on substantives (in the so-called ‘genstandshelhed’), on adjectives (‘beskriverhelhed’) and adverbs (‘adverbialhelhed’). This distinction between dependency levels of syntax is important, since it is an important factor when it comes to determining permutability.

Still, the question of what a slot in such a scheme represents remains open. I would suggest that a slot in the sentence scheme proper represents a discursively independent node in the dependency network directly dependent on the verb. This means that such a node is not represented by unstressed anaphors or by oversized constructions, since these last most often are subject to extraposition. A slot, then, has to contain at least one stress; and vice versa, that which has a stress and is a node directly dependent on the verb, should be admitted as having a distinct slot within the scheme to stand on. I have used a similar criterion (in Jørgensen 1991) to rule out the possibility that the landing site of the unstressed anaphors is a slot in any sense of the word. The criterion here is a refinement of similar, but less precise remarks in Jørgensen 1996.

There are three important reservations to be made in relation to this definition of 'slot'.

The first reservation pertains to the verb itself and is due to specific factors concerning the split verbal slot in Mainland Scandinavian, which is kept together as a syntactic and semantic entity by having only one stress:

* when an infinite verb is present, the finite verb has no stress, hence the *v* slot may be unstressed;

* in constructions with a verbal particle, the stress is on the particle in Danish and in many spoken versions of Swedish and Norwegian; hence the *V* slot may also be unstressed.⁵

The consequence is that this definition of 'slot' is only relevant to non-verbal elements of the sentence. The unificational stress of the discontinuous verbal chain through the sentence, uniting at most three different slots, operates with a different slot concept. Since this concept only works within the central depen-

dependency node, the definition of slot as given above is not affected in any crucial way.

The second reservation concerns with many sentence adverbs; adverbs like *nu*, *da*, *jo* and *sgu* (so-called modals) are inherently unstressed,⁶ and hence would fall beyond the stress criterion suggested here. Nevertheless, in order to account for the kind of regularity that can be observed around such words, they will have to have a slot of their own. The most important argument is that they belong to paradigms containing adverbial constructions with an inherent stress and important semantic features closely related to those of the nonstressed adverbs mentioned above. Thus, the non-stressed character of these adverbs must count as an anomaly outside the scope of the greater lines of prosodic syntax.

The third reservation deals with the front position (forfelt), which may equally well be unstressed when filled with an anaphoric pronoun. Since I have claimed that such pronouns are clitic when they follow a stressed element of the sentence, it is possible to make a parallel claim concerning the front position, and suppose that such pronouns are proclitic. This, then, would be an instance of a general rule saying that slots determined by the valency of the verb may be filled with clitics following their own cliticization rules.

My conclusion is thus that these three reservations modify the concept of slots, but they do not fundamentally alter it.

1.3. Thesis

The two slots to be discussed here are the following:

a. an adverb slot between the finite verb and the subject slot, as illustrated in these examples:

- (1) Først vil altså maskinerne fylde op, og når så pludselig (...)⁷
 'At first the machines will fill up, and when then suddenly (...)'
- (2) I Rumle Hammerichs 'regeringstid' har således 39 instruktører og 46
 forfattere været involveret i produktionen i afdelingen, (...) {Politiken
 sect. II, Aug. 19th 1998.}
 'During the 'reign' of Rumle Hammerich have thus 39 directors and
 46 authors been involved in the production of the department'

A traditional scheme is unable to account for this until an extra a slot is added:

Figure 2:

F		v	extra a	n	a	V	N	A
Først		vil	altså	maskinerne	-	fylde	-	op
I Rumle Hammerichs 'regeringstid'		har	således	39 instruktører og 64 forfattere	-	været involveret	-	i produk- tionen i afdelingen (...)

The issue here is whether other solutions can be found, or whether there is good reason to extend the scheme, in spite of doubt one could have. My thesis is that such good reasons do exist and hence that such a slot has to be recognized.

b. Adverbs in the front position ('forfelt') together with subjects, other adverbs or other kinds of directly dependent sentence members, as in:

- (3) Først kelterne lærte romerne at gå i bukser. {constr.}
 'First the Celts taught the Romans to wear trousers.'
- (4) Især Budapest er en spændende by. {constr.}
 'Especially Budapest is a fascinating city.'

Diderichsen (1962 §76-2 mentioned the existence of these adverbs, and also modified the conventional dogma on the front position being able to contain only one element of the sentence in order to account for these examples (Diderichsen 1962 p. 190). My task here will be to investigate the conditions of this interesting exemption from the principles of the front position and at the same time to discuss whether there are any implications for the analysis of such sentences. Unlike the first subject of discussion (point a. above), my claim will be that separate slots are not needed here.

2. Sentence adverbs before the (inverted) sentence subject

In spite of the fact that this slot never found a place in the elementary University grammar books on Danish, it has nevertheless been noted by many observers⁸. Lars Heltoft (1989 p. 141) has fully integrated it into his recent revisions of the sentence scheme. My own previous treatment of the subject (Jørgensen 1996) was an attempt to clarify stylistic and empirical issues in relation to this slot. In this discussion, I want to focus on its prosodic and discursive functions.

The Swedish and Norwegian presentations of this slot are more comprehensive, since it seems to play a more important role in these two languages.⁹ One reason for this is the fact that you often find the negation in this position in Swedish and Norwegian, contrary to Standard Danish, where the negation occurs

only marginally in this position. However, it is possible to argue that the Swedish and Norwegian negation - contrary to the Standard Danish - is enclitic to the *v* slot. This can be observed from its phonetic form alone, and hence raises the question of whether the behavior of the Swedish and Norwegian negation is not better accounted for through syntactic cliticization.

The same question could be raised in connection with the Danish examples, since many of the adverbs found in the actual examples are unstressed. However, enough examples with obviously stressed filling of the slot remain to allow us to claim that the slot is actually relevant to the criterion:

- (5) Men det måtte naturligvis tiden vise. {government paper}
 'But this had of course time to show.'
- (6) Mangler Subjektet, eller vilde dets Foranstilling medføre en falsk
 Pointering, kan undertiden Sætningsadverbialet staa paa Indleder-
 plads, vistnok uden særlig Emfase. {Diderichsen}
 'If the subject is missing, or if its front position would induce a false
 emphasis, can sometimes the sentence adverb stand in front position,
 possibly without particular weight.'

All these examples are obvious cases of a proper subject in the subject slot, immediately preceded by a stressed adverbial construction. If we allow the unstressed, non-clitic adverbs to use the same slot, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that there is actually such a slot satisfying the criteria set up in the introduction.

It is important to note, though, that the examples found with this slot filled out are usually quite simple in their construction. Usually the *V* slot is empty and quite often the verb is also intransitive so the *N* slot as well is, therefore,

typically empty. In general there is a strong tendency for the Danish examples to show up in sentences whose semantic content would designate subjects being in certain places, showing up or disappearing from certain contexts. Thus they often constitute a semantic parallel to existential sentences where the (semantic) subject is also the focused element. However there is a slight difference here since the subject in the adverb-before-subject construction is very often a name or a well-known entity in some other sense. To state the existence of such an entity with an existential sentence proper seems inappropriate: since the existence of the subject is well known, the only new effect is to put it into a new context (which may be the center of the focus in the actual sentence).

Although similar from a formal point of view, a special group of examples seems to call for a different explanation, namely *a*-slots before subjects in *wh*-questions:

- (7) Men hvor kommer egentlig dette dyr fra?
 'But where comes in fact this animal from?'
- (8) (...) hvordan skulle så politikerne i et lille frynseland som Danmark
 kunne bestemme noget som helst?
 '(...) how should then the politicians in a small fringe country like
 Denmark be able to decide anything at all?'
- (9) Hvis Robert Healey havde druknet sig, hvor var så hans kone og
 steddatter?
 'If Robert Healey had drowned himself, where were then his wife
 and stepdaughter?'

Even the negation may be found in questions, in spite of the fact that this is otherwise not possible:

- (10) Kan ikke dette forhold indvirke på løsningen? {constr.}
 'Can not this matter influence [on] the solution?'

If the focus in a wh-question is the question marker, then the adverb obviously has a different function here, namely to point to the subject of the sentence as an important presuppositional factor to the answer. I suppose that this is the basis for these examples, but I have not yet investigated this matter in any detail.

3. Incorporated sentence adverbs

My attention was drawn to this group while investigating the independent sentence adverbs. Occasionally one would find examples looking very much like independent adverbs in front of sentence subjects, which would then have to be discarded because they would move with the sentence subject when this was moved e.g. to front position (forfelt). Since it is a useful dogma that the front position can contain only one element of the sentence belonging to the primary level, such examples were obviously irrelevant to the discussion raised in section 2.

Nevertheless, these adverbs presented a difficulty in yet another sense, since they were obviously found in positions where they acted as modifiers to NPs and in fact were integrated into NPs, obviously being permutable with the NP. This is not easily brought into harmony with the traditional notion of adverbs being modifiers to verbs or to whole sentences. Of course no one would deduce weighty conclusions from traditional grammatical dogmas, but the clash between

the observation and the traditional theory in this case is strong enough to arouse suspicion.

The Diderichsen tradition has done very little work on structures below the primary level of classical sentence elements, and the fact that certain adverbs usually regarded as 'sentence adverbs', may appear in these positions has never been closely investigated. Diderichsen has noted the phenomenon in § 65-1 and § 76-2, both times only briefly stating facts without entering into any kind of deeper description. In his description of NPs ('nominalhelheder'), he does not acknowledge the possibility of having adverbs in front of such constructions; therefore, the two short remarks are obviously intended to suspend the dogma of 'only one phrase in front position'. This is, admittedly, only one possible interpretation, but on the other hand, the joint permutability remains as an obscuring fact. One short remark from Diderichsen seems to be an important clue: he states that the adverbs in this construction are unstressed. This is proved by the examples I have given, and there is therefore an important point of syntactic prosody here. I shall return to it later.

A brainstorm¹⁰ yielded the following list of Danish adverbs and adverb phrases; it is expanded here with examples from a Danish text corpus illustrating their function in relation to subjects, time- and place-adverbs and other types of sentence-elements:

Figure 3:

- akkurat	- heller ikke	- lige præcis
- alene	- i det mindste	- navnlig
- allerede	- i høj grad	- netop
- blandt andet/andre (bl. a)	- ikke alene	- nøjagtig

- blot	- ikke kun	- også
- derimod	- ikke engang	- præcis
- endnu	- ikke mindste	- selv
- ene og alene	- ikke så meget som	- sidst men ikke mindst
- f. eks.	- indtil videre	- specielt
- frem for nogen/noget	- især	- sågar
- frem for alt	- kun	- under alle omstændigheder
- først og fremmest	- lige	
- først	-lige netop	

Actually, the variety of sentence-elements to which such adverbs could be attached is quite large. This is illustrated here by 'alone':

- *subject*:

- (11) (...) og da byrådet har besluttet at afskaffe ventelisterne over et kort åremål, vil alene denne konto kræve store investeringer i anlæg og drift fremover.
 '... and since the town council has decided to get rid of the waiting lists over a short span of time, will alone this account demand great investments in material and service in the years to come.'

- *subject with adverb attached*

- (12) Eksporten alene er næsten 190 milliarder kroner, (...)
 'The export alone is almost 190 bill. kr., (...).'

- *different scenic adverbs*:

- (13) Alene i London var flere hundrede veje spærret af væltede træer.
 'Alone in London were several hundred roads blocked by fallen trees.'
- (14) Alene siden påske sidste år er 735 mennesker dræbt og over 12.000 kvæstet ved trafikulykker.
 'Alone since Easter last year have 735 people been killed and more than 12,000 injured in traffic accidents.'

The crux of these syntactic phenomena is that the adverbs obviously retain their normal semantic content while at the same time functioning below the normal element-of-sentence level. In fact they may show up at any border line in the syntax and start the scope of their modification from almost any break:

- (15) (...) for hvordan skulle de høje herrer på slottet dernede ellers have fundet frem til akkurat ham.
 '(...) since how should the sires in the castle down there otherwise have found forth to precisely him.'
- (16) (...) en del af denne forøgelse skyldes dog opskrivning af ejendommene i København og Århus, som på blot to år er opvurderet fra 16 til 26 mill. kr.
 '(...) a part of this growth is due, however, to the reassessment of the houses in Copenhagen and Århus, that in only two years have been written up from 16 to 26 mio. kr.'
- (17) (...) han gør det også muligt for publikum at komme ind i en situation med bare et par replikker.

‘(...) he makes it also possible for the audience to enter into a situation with only a couple of lines.

- (18) Dvs. med et venligtsindet eller i det mindste neutralt styre [i] Kabul,
(...)

‘That is, with a friendly or at least neutral government in Kabul (...)

It is worth noting that the scope of these adverbs is limited to the constituent in which they occur; e.g. the limitation of quantity in *blot* in (16) pertains only to ‘two’, but certainly not to the figures later in the same sentence. In such cases, a change or a levelling of the meaning would normally be expected, but quite clearly such a change or levelling does not occur. However this is not quite as odd as one might think. There seems to be little reason to assume regular slots for such adverb positions; the most sensible thing to do would be to add the possibility of adverbs entering as adjuncts in front of any slot on any level to exercise their scope from the point in question. It is worth noting that the technical solution here is foreign to any kind of thinking based on slots.; This is in keeping with the author’s fundamental assumption concerning slot systems like Diderichsen’s, i.e., that they have no independent existence, but are merely a convenient way of circumscribing more complicated dependency structures.

In fact, all these adverbs are normally considered to be sentence adverbs and they, therefore, belong to a group of words whose inclusion in the group of adverbs proper is, in any case, doubtful. Hans Götzsche (forthcoming) calls this group of adverbs ‘quasi-adverbs’, separating them from the traditional syntactic-semantic groups of adverbs. He points out that the semantic status of these quasi-adverbs is often that they reflect another sentence which acts as a presupposition (in a non-formal sense) to the actual statement being uttered. This would seem to be the semantic impact of these adverbs in all these constructions and, from a semantic point of view, the syntactic integration seems rather misleading.

Diderichsen seems to have opted against any theory of incorporation and, in fact, the behavior of such adverbs seems to escape traditional slot conceptions of syntax.

An important question is what kind of semantic impact these adverbs have. A majority of those that can be observed in these constructions obviously have a focusing sense, but a special one relating them to cleft sentences. They mark a contrastive focus, highlighting the focussed element against a group of elements relevant to the statement that is made, but not actually included in it. A statement like:

- (19) Kun Olsen har set løsningen. {const.}
‘Only Olsen has seen the solution.’

assumes that the solution might have been found by several (unmentioned) individuals somehow engaged in the search - as opposed to another group outside this action, - but highlights Olsen as the one to whom the statement really applies. In fact this highlighting effect is present in all cases, even though it may show up in a somewhat tricky form, like this:

- (20) Selv borgerskabets bedste børn er rendt hjemmefra, blot for at se på
{C.V.Jørgensen}
‘Even the upper ten’s best children have left home, only to look on.’

In this case, the group nominated is a group of individuals to whom the relevance of the statement seems unlikely - as opposed to a group that would be prone to leave home in any case - and the element highlighted is the most unlikely member of the nominated group.

All these content structures are closely related to a semantic mechanism first described by Carl Vikner (1970) in connection with French cleft sentences. Vikner, in fact, uses the same kind of set theory description as I do. The fact that the semantic description is identical indicates that all these phenomena are instances of a much larger discursive structure, namely the array of means to modify focusing structure within a normal sentence string.

Contrasting focuses are complex discursive matters. They relate to statements to which the speaker cannot be said to have the full copyright, so to speak. Rather, these statements are 'in the air' and must be seen as echoes of statements (actually uttered or presupposed) by other speakers. This is why their linear order may require a modification of the focusing which interferes with the original organization of the semantic material, even down to tearing up structures knit below normal sentence level structure. Such considerations may explain why these structures have semantic qualities on the discourse level of the sentence, while at the same time having surface syntactic structures which set them on the same footing as elements below sentence level.

4. Concluding remarks

In the light of the conclusion to the last section one could ask a more general question: do sentence adverbs have slots at all? Do our results with the contrasting adverbs not suggest that no sentence adverb has a slot under any circumstance?

I think that the non-contrasting adverbs do have a slot, and the reason is that their linear behavior at normal sentence level is regular enough to justify this slot. 'Slotlessness' is only a characteristic of the contrasting adverbs due to their specific scope of operation, simply because their scope may highlight very

specific sections of a sentence string. The adverbs in non-contrasting sentences have more conventional effects, and hence also slots to exercise them from.

The most important point to be made is that slot systems, like the sentence scheme - in spite of all the reservations one can have about the generality of such an apparatus - may have their virtues in actually forcing the syntactician to reflect semantic, discursive and pragmatic problems at the same time as he is trying to piece his slot machine together. A slot system per se is not what I would like to put into force; I think rather that the slot system should be organized in such a way that the discursive considerations immediately force themselves upon the reader of the textbook.

The main task, in my opinion, seems to be incorporating the topic-and-focus structure into the sentence scheme. In itself, topic-and-focus is an important syntactic parameter, which the Diderichsen tradition has noticed as well, especially in connection with the front position. The problem rises when other focusing structures occur, such as cleft sentences or the focusing adverbs treated here in section 3. Such structures quite often break the linear order imposed by the normal sentence scheme. The best way to account for such regularities seems to be to introduce in a very simple way a parallel linearity underlying the sentence scheme, joining its elements on a line. In the simplest case, this line moves from topic to focus and, under conditions to be specified as precisely as possible, it may be modified to suit the discursive means.

The ultimate goal of this line of re-structuring the sentence scheme is to see the slots recognized in the Diderichsen tradition as an output of exact semantic and discursive factors yet to be described. But this is a vision, not a fact, and I think that this little glimpse of a Danish syntax to come is a suitable place to stop.

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Notes

1. I am grateful to Sten Vikner for comments on the final version of this paper and to Patricia Lunddahl, Faculty of Humanities, Translator Service, Århus, for her revision of the English text. Of course, any remaining inaccuracies are my own responsibility.
2. Diderichsen 1962, p. 186, slightly modified and with the present field terminology added, cp. Diderichsen 1964, Hansen 1984.
3. Diderichsen 1936 (=1966 p. 21-24), and Jørgensen (forthcoming) chap. 1
4. *Slot* is used in this paper as a translation of the Diderichsen term *plads*. In other English presentations the term *place* is used as a translation, but this term is used here in a non-technical sense, as opposed to the technical definition of slot.
5. Since the particles in Swedish and present-day Norwegian are between the infinite verbs and normally-stressed objects ('ta på mössen', 'kjøre ut bilen'), it is an open question whether the particles are actually in a **V** slot or in an independent **P** slot, such as the one suggested for Danish by Heltoft (1992 p. 75 et passim).
6. Of course the homonyms belonging to other word-classes do not apply in connection with this statement.
7. Unless otherwise stated (in {}), examples are from Henning Bergenholz' corpus DK87-90.
8. Hansen 1970 p. 132; Basbøll 1986 p. 71; Vive Larsen 1986 p. 142, Heltoft 1986 p. 129.
9. Bruås 1971 s. 54, Bleken 1971 s. 50f, Thoréll 2nd. ed. 1982 § 746
10. I am grateful to Birgitte Skovby Rasmussen for her many contributions to this brainstorm and also for her suggesting many of the points later brought up in connection with the semantic interpretation of the adverbs in the list and the construction of which they are a part.