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# On recursivity

## Clauses in a Dialogical Grammar of Swedish

Jan Anward

### 1. Background

In my basic training in linguistics, in the late Sixties, I was taught that the main generalization about the distribution of clauses in natural languages could be formulated as a partial recursive definition of the notion of sentence (S):

- (1) If  $\alpha$  is an S and  $\beta$ -NP- $\gamma$  is an S,  
then  $\beta$ - $\alpha$ - $\gamma$  is an S

At the time, the definition was formalized as the phrase structure rule  $NP \rightarrow S$  (Ross 1967). This rule, however, always created more problems than it solved. It does not fit into a restrictive theory of phrase structure, such as X-bar theory (Jackendoff 1977), and it both undergenerates and overgenerates.

In order to avoid this combination of undergeneration and overgeneration, the rule was complemented by an optional transformational rule of Extraposition (Rosenbaum 1967), which moves an S from subject position, leaving a pronominal copy behind, and adjoins it to VP, and by a (surface structure) condition which rules out sentences with phrase-internal clauses (Kuno 1973).

An alternative solution by Emonds (1976) had the phrase structure rules introduce S only in extraposed position and an optional root transformation of Subject Replacement substitute S for a pronominal subject in main clauses. In Swedish, as I noted in Anward 1981, such a transformation would be restricted to substituting S for a pronominal subject in foundation (Spec, CP) position in independent main clauses.

Emonds' solution is a valiant attempt to save the phrase structure way of capturing generalization (1), but what it does is actually just emulating within a phrase structure framework another kind of solution, which has been around since the very advent of generative grammar: the use of generalized transformations to embed clauses within clauses (Harris 1957, 1988, Chomsky 1957, 1995, Joshi et al. 1975, Bach 1979). In that kind of framework, phrase structure rules only generate simplex clauses, and (1) is implemented mainly by means of generalized transformations. In a classical Harris-style grammar, we might get by with the following two generalized transformations:

- (2) a.  $X \text{ det } Y + S \Rightarrow X (\text{det}) Y S$   
b.  $\text{det } Y + S \Rightarrow S Y$

## 2. Foreground

In frameworks such as the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, Platzack 1998), Montague Grammar (Bach 1979), and Tree Adjoining Grammar (Joshi et al. 1975), which have generalized the classical Harris-Chomsky model to a grammar comprising only elementary expressions/trees and general operations on elementary and derived expressions/trees, the implementation of (1) as (2) is not as straightforward as in the classical model, since (2a) and (2b) are, in essence, only applicable to derived trees, on which further operations must be disallowed.

In this article, I show, in contrast, that a straightforward implementation of (1) along the lines of (2) is available within the framework of Dialogical Grammar (DuBois 1996, Linell 2002) – hoping thereby to prepare some ground for further inter-paradigmatic dialogue.

## 3. Turn construction

The aim of a dialogical grammar is to describe how participants in a conversation construct turns at talk online. Turn shape is sequentially constrained, co-constructed, and activity oriented (Linell 1998: ch. 5, 2002: section 5). Each step of turn construction connects to what has just been done and sets up constraints and expectancies of what will be done in response to it.

Technically, a turn is constructed from smaller units, Turn Constructional Units (TCU.s), which are bounded by points where speaker change would be possible, and which typically are associated with a separate and complete intonation contour. In (3), an extract from a conversation among three female friends over coffee, lines 1-5 make up a TCU. Line 6 is also concluded by a falling contour, but is prosodically linked to the preceding TCU and constitutes an increment (Schegloff 1996) of that TCU, rather than a TCU of its own.

### (3) USAMGRAM 5:1 “Bränt barn” 1-5

1. M: (>ja sku-<) apopå kaffe som >(ja höll på å)< spilla här (0.2)  
I was going to- a propos coffee which I was about to spill here
2. som (0.8)  
which
3. vi hade en sån dä:r pt .hhh  
we had a such
4. information om (0.2)  
information about
5. >olycksfall. (0.6)  
accidents
6. på (.) barnavårdscentralen.  
at the child care center
7. H: mm?

(Transcription conventions are found at the end of the article.)

However, TCU:s may also be constructed from smaller units. In (3), each line shows a unit which is separated by a pause (lines 1, 2, 4, 5), nonverbal sounds (a smacking sound and an inbreath at the end of line 3), feedback (line 6), and/or a completed intonation contour (lines 5 and 6). To begin with, we may take such units to be our elementary expressions. They are of two kinds. There are open expressions, such as the units in lines 2, 3, and 4, which project a following unit of a certain kind. They may be represented as *som VP*, *vi hade en sån där NP*, and *information om DP*, respectively. Then, there are closed expressions, which do not project, such as the units in lines 1, 5, 6, and 7.

As the unit in line 3 of example (4), a further extract from the same conversation, shows, open expressions may also be open with respect to a preceding unit. Thus, the unit in line 3 combines with a DP to form a CP, and may be represented as DP *kan nå dubbelt så långt som sin arm*. If we also respect the micropause in line 3, we can see it as constructed from DP *kan nå QP* and *dubbelt så långt som sin arm*. Similarly, if we return to example (3), the unit in line 2 is of course also a unit which is open in both directions: NP *som VP*.

(4) USAMGRAM 5:1 “Bränt barn” 18-21

1. M: >å dom sa att< en (0.4)  
and they said that a
2. ↑baby↑ som va åtta månader: (0.6)  
baby who was eight months
3. kan nå: (.) dubbelt så långt som sin arm. (0.4)  
can reach twice the length of her arm

The simplest general operation on such elementary expressions is ADD  $\beta$ . Thus, a unit may be followed by another unit within the same intonation contour, or by another unit which starts its own intonation contour. This operation is then further interpretable in the two dimensions used, at least since the Modistae (Covington 1979: 471-479), to differentiate constructions: a dependent – terminant, predicate – argument, or operator – operand distinction, here generalized to a said – said-about relation, on the one hand, and a primum constructibile – secundum constructibile, or head – modifier distinction, on the other hand. The head – modifier interpretation is somewhat complex, but the said-about relation is straightforward: if  $\beta$  is added to  $\alpha$  within the same intonation contour, then  $\beta$  is said about  $\alpha$ , unless  $\alpha$  projects a  $\beta$ , in which case  $\alpha$  is said about  $\beta$ . Thus, in (3), 3 is said about 1-2, and then about 4, which is said about 5. The increment in 6 is said about some segment of the preceding TCU, most plausibly 3-5.

Addition of a separate unit is enough to satisfy a slot in an open expression. However, nothing prevents us from assuming that single units may

also be composed from smaller units which have been merged. Line 1 in (4):  $\langle \text{å dom sa att} \rangle \text{ en}$ , for example, can be argued to result from a successive merger of  $\text{å dom sa CP}$ ,  $\text{att TP}$ , and  $\text{en NP T}$ . MERGE  $\alpha$  AND  $\beta$  is then an alternative to the simple operation of ADD  $\beta$ . Through MERGE, a unit substitutes for a slot in an open expression, or is simply added to another unit, within the same intonation contour, and without an intervening boundary.

#### 4. Swedish clauses

In the standard analysis of Swedish clauses (Anward 1983: 89-90, Platzack 1987b, 1998)<sup>1</sup>, one set of positions is used for both main and subordinate clauses. In constituent structure terms, clauses are Complementizer Phrases (CP.s), with either a finite verb or a complementizer (*att, om, som*; that, whether, relative that) as head. The specifier of that head is the so-called foundation of the clause, and its complement is a Tense Phrase (TP), containing a subject position, another verb position, and a VP complement. In (5a, b), I have used the following quotation from Platzack (1987a: 82): "Nu kan man emellertid inte vara säker på att en sats är en bisats bara för att satsadverbialet står före finitet." (Now you can't be sure that a clause is a subordinate clause just because the sentence adverbial precedes the finite verb) to exemplify this structure. As Platzack (1987a) notes, two further variations on these positions are also possible. A clause with a finite verb in C may be preceded by a complementizer, as in (5c), and a clause may simply lack a constituent in C position, as in (5d).

Platzack also notes that clauses of types (5a) and (5b) can be used both as independent and as embedded clauses. The same is true of clauses of type (5c), although Platzack did not recognize it at the time. Turns such as (6) are not that hard to come by in conversational Swedish (see also Lehti-Eklund 2001).

(5)

	C	CP					
		XP	C	TP			
				DP	AdvP	T	VP
a		Nu	kan	man	emellertid inte		vara säker på
(		now	can	you	however not		be sure )
b			att	en sats		är	en bisats
(			that	a clause		is	a subordinate clause)
c	att	dom	måste	man	ju		se
(	that	them	must	one	of course		see)
d				han	inte	var	så stor
(				he	not	was	that big)

<sup>1</sup> Curiously, this analysis is not adopted by SAG, the Swedish Academy Grammar. For pertinent remarks on that, see Engdahl (2000).

(6) "Wallenberg" 461-463

1. (0.6)
2. V: ja att då ska ja'nte: välja henne i ↓skulptur.  
(ok that then will I not choose her in sculpture)
3. (2.1)

I have not (yet) found any instances of independent use of clauses of type (5d).

In addition to the clause types in (5), open CP:s, CP:s with missing (or empty) foundation are also used as units in Conversational Swedish. There is an example, as we have seen, in line 3 of example (4) (see also Mörnsjö 2002).

## 5. Distribution of clauses in conversational Swedish

The distribution of clauses in the conversational data is quite straightforward. Closed clauses can be used as independent units (as in example 6) and they can be added to open expressions, as in (7), or merged or partially merged with open expressions, as in (8). What we do not find are sentential subjects.

(7) "Bränt barn" 897-898

1. M: å då skrev a- ALla varenda en skrev på (0.2)  
and then wrote all everyone signed
2. att man skulle få VÄlja (0.8)  
that one should be able to choose
3. vicket rum man ville häj  
which room you wanted

(8) "Bvc" 431-434

1. V: men de kunde ja ju'nte säga men, .h men hon sa i alla fall att: öh  
but that I could not say but she said anyway that eh
2. >dom brukar se till att man< in:te gör de, om man bor i närheten;  
they usually see to it that you don't if you live nearby

Open clauses are used as independent units (Mörnsjö 2002), and can be added to closed expressions, as parentheticals (9) and as final parts of apo koinou constructions (10), and to open expressions, as agreeing complements (Anward 1988).

(9) "Bvc" 604-605

- G: han har blivi rätt stor nu överhuvudtaget tycker ja,  
he has become rather big overall I think

- (10) H: å sen e andra foten e hav å delfiner å valar  
and then is the other foot is sea and dolphins and whales  
(Arnstad 2002)

In other words, clauses are added in a rather strict right-branching fashion, in fact, in such a way that something,  $\beta$ , added to a clause,  $\kappa$ , is never (part of) the head of a unit involving  $\kappa$  and  $\beta$ .

The research underlying this article was carried out within the project "Grammar in Conversation: A study of Swedish" (Samtalsspråkets grammatik), funded by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. For a description of the project, as well as its publications, visit <http://www.tema.liu.se/tema-k/gris/>. The examples in (3), (4), and (6) – (9) are culled from conversations in the core corpus of the project.

### Transcription conventions

- (0.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, approximately represented in tenths of a second. Silences may be marked within an utterance or between utterances.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a "micropause," hearable but not readily measurable.
- . ? , ; The punctuation marks are not used grammatically, but to indicate intonation. The period indicates a falling, or final, intonation contour, a question mark indicates rising intonation, a comma indicates "continuing" intonation, and the inverted question mark indicates a rise stronger than a comma but weaker than a question mark.
- :: Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of sound just preceding them. The more colons the longer the stretching.
- A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self interruption, often done with a glottal or dental stop.
- nej Underlining is used to indicate stress.
- NEj Especially loud talk may be indicated by upper case.
- °kom° Talk between degree signs is markedly softer than the talk around it.
- ↑↓ The up and down arrows mark sharper rises or falls in pitch, or a whole shift, or resetting, of the pitch register at which the talk is reproduced.
- > < < > < The combination of "more than" and "less than" symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed. Used in the reversed order, they indicate that a stretch of talk is markedly slower or drawn out. The "less than" symbol by itself indicates that the immediately following talk is "jump started," i.e. sounds like it starts with a rush.
- hh Hearable aspiration is shown where it occurs in the talk by the letter "h" – the more h's, the more the aspiration. If the aspiration is an inhalation, it is shown with a (raised) dot before it.
- pt A smacking sound.
- (på't över) When all or part of an utterance is in parentheses, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber's part, but represents a likely possibility.
- () Empty parenthesis indicate that something is being said, but no hearing can be achieved.

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