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## Part-of-Speech Systems in Northern Europe

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In this paper, I want to relate three grammatical features that appear to increase in prominence in the languages of Northern Europe as we move from East to West: (i) Low nouniness of infinitives; (ii) Conflation of nominalizer and present participle; and (iii) No or reduced inflection of adjectives.

English displays all three of these features. English infinitives can neither occur with articles, nor govern the genitive; there is a single suffix, *-ing*, that forms both denominal verbs and present participles; and adjectives are never inflected for number and gender. In all these respects, English contrasts with German, for example. When we bring other languages, such as West Frisian, Dutch, the Scandinavian languages, Finnish, and Russian, into the picture as well, the Western orientation of the features become evident.

The link between these features can be found in the way part-of-speech systems are structured in the world's languages. As conjectured by Hockett (1958) and demonstrated in detail by Stassen (1997) for intransitive predication, there seem to be only three models for inflectional patterns in natural languages: **V Model**: the inflection of verbs in predicate function, **P Model**: the inflection of locationals in predicate function, and **N Model**: the inflection of nouns in identity statements. The same thing appears to hold for patterns of government (Koptjevskaja Tamm 1993). The inflectional and government patterns of other combinations of part of speech and syntactic function appear to be modelled on one or more of these reference sites.

The distribution of three features that I look at can then be subsumed under a general areal tendency, as we move from East to West in Northern Europe, for a decrease in the force of the N Model and an increase in the force of the P Model.

Other phenomena that fit into this picture are the split of the past participle into two verbal categories - past participle and supine - in Norwegian and Swedish and the fuzzy boundary between the categories of adverb and adjective, present participle and preposition, and adjective and preposition in a number of Northern European Languages.

I will also attempt to relate this areal tendency to other areal tendencies, with wider scope, such as the increased configurationality (Anward & Swedenmark 1997) and decreased B-type character (Stassen, this workshop) of (Western) European languages.

## I. European B-Leavers

1. Europe is on the Western periphery of the large Old World B-language area, and especially Western European languages ('Standard Average European') show developments away from the B-language type (Stassen, this workshop):

OV  
Tensed  
Cased  
AND  
Absolute

2. SAE languages retain the features Tensed and AND, have lost the feature Absolute, and drift toward VO and Non-Cased.

OV becomes grammatically conditioned [(+)OV]  
or is completely lost [-OV]

Case is reduced in nouns from  
a classical system of seven cases or more [+Case]  
to a four-case system [+Case]  
or a two-case system [(+)Case]  
or case is completely lost [-Case]

3. Along with reduced OV and reduced Case comes rise of Articles (Holmberg 1994, Anward & Swedenmark 1997).

Language	OV	Case N	Art
Finnish	+	+	-
Hungarian	+	+	+
Russian	+	+	-
Latin	+	+	-
Spanish	-	-	+
French	-	-	+
German	(+)	+	+
Dutch	(+)	-	+
Swedish	-	(+)	+
English	-	(+)	+
Icelandic	-	+	(+)

The core area where these three features co-occur coincides roughly with that of the Roman Empire, with a later spread into the Germanic area north of the Empire, though failing to reach Iceland with full force (for the Scandinavian development, see Holmberg & Platzack 1995).

4. In an area around the North Sea (comprising French, English, Frisian, Dutch, and Mainland Scandinavian), the tendency away from B-language features is further accentuated.

Subject becomes obligatory,  
 in the equivalent of ‘I conquered’, but not in the equivalent of  
 ‘it rains’ [(+)Subject],  
 or in both cases [+Subject].

Subject Agreement is reduced  
 from a system with at least one person distinction in singular  
 and at least one person distinction in plural [+ Subject Agr]  
 to a system with fewer distinctions [(+)Subject Agr]  
 or no distinctions at all [-Subj Agr]

VS becomes grammatically conditioned [(+)VS]  
 or is completely lost [-VS]

Language	OV	Case N	Art	Subj	Subj agr	VS
Latin	+	+	-	-	+	+
Spanish	-	-	+	-	+	+
German	(+)	+	+	+	+	(+)
Dutch	(+)	-	+	+	(+)	(+)
Swedish	-	(+)	+	+	-	(+)
French	-	-	+	+	(+)	(+)
English	-	(+)	+	+	(+)	-
Icelandic	-	+	(+)	(+)	+	+

## II. Part of Speech Connections

5. In the Germanic North Sea languages, adjectives and past participles lose nominal inflection, the more the further to the South and to the West we get.

In Swedish and Danish, adjectives are inflected in predicative function. In German, Dutch, West Frisian, and English, adjectives are uninflected in predicative function.

In Swedish, Danish, and German, both strong and weak inflection of adjectives are found in attributive position. In West Frisian and Dutch, adjectives are inflected in attributive position, but only the weak inflection is preserved. In English, adjectives are uninflected in attributive position, as well.

In German, Dutch, and West Frisian, uninflected adjectives can be used in adverbial function. In English, a special suffix (-ly) is needed.

In Swedish and Danish, it is the neuter form of the adjective, with the suffix *t*, that is used in adverbial function. The neuter form can also be used as a non-agreeing form in predicative function:

Stövlar är förnuftiga  
(Boots are sensible)  
Stövlar är förnuftigt  
(Boots is sensible)

Language	Nominal inflection of adjectives		
	Attribute	Predicate	Adverbial
Swedish	+ strong/weak	+ / neuter	neuter
Danish	+ strong/weak	+ / neuter	neuter
German	+ strong/weak	-	-
Dutch	+ weak	-	-
W Frisian	+ weak	-	-
English	-	-	+ ly

6. Past participles follow the pattern of adjectives, except in Danish, where past participles are invariably neuter in predicative function.

In *have* perfect constructions past participles acquire verbal government, which of course also is an SAE phenomenon (Dahl 1995). Such past participles are invariably uninflected, even in Swedish.

It is interesting that the uninflected past participle, the supine, in Swedish has become a special form, with a fairly verby behavior (Hedlund 1992). The supine can occur with the suffixal s-passive

Det mesta av Lugnet har riv-it-s nu  
 (Most of Lugnet has been.torn.down now)

and in subordinate clauses, the supine need not be governed by *ha*

Att det mesta av Lugnet rivits nu är tråkigt  
 (That most of Lugnet been.torn.down now is sad)

Language	Passive	<i>Be</i> Perfect	<i>Have</i> Perfect
Swedish	n; -	( n; - )	-; v
Danish	-; -	-; -	-; v
English	-; -	( -; - )	-; v

7. A further change in the Germanic North Sea languages is that old nominalizing suffixes acquire verbal government, and are reduced, and sometimes disappear. The suffixes involved are the old infinitive *-an*, the present participle *-nd-*, and the nominalizer *-ing / -ung*.

”The Germanic infinitive is historically a neuter noun built on a verb stem: by earliest Germanic it had lost most of its nominal inflection, and consisted of a verbal stem + suffix: OE *ber-an* ‘to bear’ < \*/*ber-an-am*/ ... The other two players, the present participle and the verbal noun are respectively an old adjective and a derived noun. The present participle continues a verbal adjective in IE \*/ *-nt-* / (OE *ber-e-nd-e* = Lat. *fer-e-nt-* ‘bearing’); the *-ing* noun continues a Germanic type called a ‘feminine abstract’, which in early times had the suffix \*/*inȝa ~ unȝa* /.”  
(Lass 1994: 145)

In Swedish and English, the old infinitive 1) acquires verbal government, 2) is reduced (to *-a* and  $\emptyset$ ) and 3) loses nominal government. Moreover, the present participle is conflated with another nominalizer (*-ande* in Swedish, *-ing* in English).

In Dutch and German, only the first of these four changes occur: The old infinitive acquires verbal government, but is not reduced and keeps its possibility of nominal government as well. The present participle is not conflated with any nominalizer.

West Frisian is an interesting borderline case: The old infinitive is split into two forms: one reduced form with only verbal government and one unreduced form with both verbal and nominal government. The present participle is not conflated with any nominalizer.

In English, we also get the further development where the conflated present participle / nominalizer can be used as predicate.

	Argument; verbal government	Argument; nominal government	Attribute	Adverbial	Predicate
<b>Gothic</b>		an			
		in			
			and	and	
<b>German</b>	en	en			
		ung			
			end	end	
<b>Dutch</b>	en	en			
			end	end	
<b>W Frisian</b>	e				
	en	en			
			end	end	
<b>Swedish</b>	a				
		(n)ing			
		ande	ande	ande	
<b>English</b>	-				
	ing	ing	ing	ing	ing

## German

- a. Er wollte natürlich singen
- b. Sie hat ihn singen hören
- c. Rauchen irritiert uns gar nicht
- d. Das ewige Rauchen hat aufgehört
- e. Der singende Detektiv ist auch verschwunden
- f. Sie trat singend ins Zimmer
- g. \*Wir sind rauchend

## Dutch (Leon Stassen, pc)

- a. Hij wilde natuurlijk zingen
- b. Ze heeft hem horen zingen
- c. Roken irriteert ons helemaal niet
- d. Dat eeuwige roken / gerook is opgehouden
- e. De zingende detective is ook verdwenen
- f. Ze kwam zingend de kamer binnen
- g. \*Wij zijn rokend

## West Frisian (Jarich Hoekstra, pc)

- a. Hy woe sjonge
- b. Hja hat him sjongen heard
- c. Smoke / Smoken steurt ús hielendal net
- d. Dat ivige smoken is ophoden
- e. De sjongende detective is ek ferdwûn
- f. Hja kaam sjingend ta de keamer yn
- g. \*Wy binne smokend

## Swedish

- a. Han ville förstås sjunga
- b. Hon hörde honom sjunga
- c. Rökning irriterar oss inte alls
- d. Det ständiga rökandet upphörde
- e. Den sjungande detektiven försvann också
- f. Hon kom sjungande in i rummet
- g. \*Vi är rökande

## English

- a. He wanted to sing, of course
- b. She heard him sing
- c. Smoking doesn't annoy us at all
- d. The heavy smoking stopped
- e. The singing detective disappeared too
- f. She entered the room singing
- g. We are smoking

8. Askedal (1995) looks at the geographical distribution of 14 other features of verb morphology and syntax in Germanic languages. He found the following groupings, which confirm the geography we have seen so far: English - Swedish - Frisian - Dutch - German:

E	S	F	D	G
ES		F	D	G
ES		FD		G
E	S	FDG		
ES		FDG		
ESF			DG	
E	SFDG			
ESFDG				
	S	EFDG		

### III. Part of Speech Systems

9. There seem to be at most three models for inflectional patterns of words (Stassen 1997, ch. 14): the inflection of verbs in predicate function, the inflection of nouns in identity statements (and argument function), and the absence of inflection associated with locationals in predicate function (and adverbial function). The same thing appears to hold for patterns of government (see Koptjevskaja Tamm 1993 for an extensive demonstration in the case of action nominalizations). Thus, we can distinguish three models for inflection and government: the *V model*, with verbal inflection and verbal government (v; v), the *N model*, with nominal inflection and nominal government (n; n), and the *L model*, with no inflection and no government (-; -), situated in the following way in a category-function matrix, which is vertically organized by time-stability and horizontally organized by the predicate - argument distinction:

	<b>Predi cate</b>	<b>Adver bial</b>	<b>Attri bute</b>	<b>Argu ment</b>
<b>Verb</b>	<b>v; v</b>			
<b>Adposition</b>				
<b>Locational</b>	<b>-; -</b>	<b>-; -</b>		
<b>Numeral</b>				
<b>Adjective</b>				
<b>Noun</b>	<b>n; n</b>			<b>n; n</b>

Through a process of **take over** (Stassen 1997), patterns of inflection and government diffuse to adjacent slots.

Through a process of **extension** (Anward fc), predicate items, and predicate patterns of inflection and government, are recycled to serve other functions as well.

10. After extension and take-over, the Swedish model will look something like this, with, among other things, nominal inflection spreading to adjectives and participles, and verbal government spreading to adpositions.

		<b>Predi cate</b>	<b>Adver bial</b>	<b>Attri bute</b>	<b>Argu ment</b>
<b>Verb</b>		<b>v; v</b>			
	<b>supine</b>	<b>-; v</b>			
	<b>infinitive</b>				<b>-; v</b>
	<b>pres ptc</b>		<b>-; v</b>	<b>-; -</b>	<b>n; n</b>
	<b>past ptc</b>	<b>n; -</b>	<b>-; -</b>	<b>n; -</b>	
<b>Adposition</b>		<b>-; v</b>	<b>-; v</b>	<b>-; v</b>	
<b>Locational</b>		<b>-; -</b>	<b>-; -</b>		
<b>Numeral</b>				<b>-; -</b>	
<b>Adjective</b>		<b>n; -</b>	<b>-; -</b>	<b>n; -</b>	
<b>Noun</b>		<b>n; n</b>			<b>n; n</b>

11. In this way, the two aspects of Cappell's typology of 'concept domination' (Cappell 1965) are captured.

First, a language can 'choose' verbal inflection, and it can also 'choose' nominal inflection, in addition to no inflection, which always seem to be used. And it can 'choose' a special nominal government, in addition to verbal government and no government.

Secondly, a language can 'choose' which of the three models of inflection and government, the V model, the L model, and the N model, will dominate the processes of take-over and extension.

## IV. Bringing It All Back Home

And therefore and I say it again more and more one does not use nouns.

Gertrude Stein: Poetry and Grammar

12. As we move from East to West in Northern Europe, languages become less B-y. At the same time, they also become less nouny. There is a decrease in the force of the N model and an increase in the force of the L model.

<b>Finnish</b>		<b>Predicate</b>	<b>Adverbial</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Argument</b>
<b>Verb</b>		v; v			
	<b>infinitive</b>	-; v	n; v		-; v
	<b>infinitive</b>		n; n		n; n
	<b>pres ptc</b>		n; n	n; v	n; n
	<b>past ptc</b>	n; v	n; n	n; v	n; n
<b>Adposition</b>		-; v	-; v	-; v	
		n; n	n; n	n; n	
<b>Locational</b>		-; -	-; -		
<b>Numeral</b>		n; -		n; -	
<b>Adjective</b>		n; -	-; -	n; -	
<b>Noun</b>		n; n		n; -	n; n

Swedish		Predicate	Adverbial	Attribute	Argument
Verb		v; v			
	infinitive				-; v
	pres ptc		-; v	-; -	
					n; n
	supine	-; v			
	past ptc	n; -	-; -	n; -	
Adposition		-; v	-; v	-; v	
Locational		-; -	-; -		
Numeral				-; -	
Adjective		n; -	-; -	n; -	
Noun		n; n			n; n

English		Predicate	Adverbial	Attribute	Argument
Verb		v; v			-; v
	pres ptc	-; v	-; v	-; -	-; v
					n; n
	past ptc	-; -	-; -	-; -	
Adposition		-; v	-; v	-; v	
Locational		-; -	-; -		
Numeral				-; -	
Adjective		-; -	-; -	-; -	
Noun		n; n			n; n

n

-

v

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<b>Finnish</b>	<b>30 (53%)</b>	<b>16 (28%)</b>	<b>11 (19%)</b>
<b>Swedish</b>	<b>10 (25%)</b>	<b>22 (55%)</b>	<b>8 (20%)</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>6 (14%)</b>	<b>27 (64%)</b>	<b>9 (21%)</b>

**13.** There arises a mid-field where non-finite verb forms, adpositions, adverbs, numerals and adjectives (and proper nouns, and sometimes mass nouns and abstract nouns) come to be fairly similar to each other.

A consequence are fuzzy boundaries between adverb and adjective, present participle and preposition, and adjective and preposition in a number of Northern European Languages.

Maybe conversion of locationals and nouns to verbs in English, and the inability of attributes to head noun phrases in English, are further consequences.

Verbs and adverbs and articles and conjunctions and prepositions are lively because they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive.

Gertrude Stein: Poetry and Grammar

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