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Introduction: perfectivity, telicity and the Nordic languages

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This volume contains articles by Kristín M. Jóhannsdóttir, Ingebjørg Tonne, Mai Tungseth and Anne Tamm on perfectivity and telicity in some of the Nordic languages. In this introduction, we summarise the main claims and conclusions of each paper, and briefly discuss the recurring themes and differences in the analyses proposed in the articles included in this special issue of the *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*.

Keywords adverbs, aspect, case, Estonian, Icelandic, Norwegian, perfectivity, progressive, telicity

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1. INTRODUCTION

This volume explores perfectivity, telicity and related aspectual phenomena in three of the Nordic languages: Icelandic (Insular Scandinavian), Norwegian (Mainland Scandinavian) and Estonian (Uralic). The papers included in this issue were originally presented at a workshop on Perfectivity and Telicity organised by Folli and Harley at the University of Cambridge in September 2005. Much literature on these two topics has long shown the crucial interaction of the aspectual and temporal domains (see Kamp & Rohrer 1983, Parsons 1990, de Swart 1998, Folli & Harley forthcoming, Ramchand forthcoming, Zagana forthcoming, among many others), and the main objective of this workshop was to bring together scholars working in these two areas to further our understanding of how these domains interact and influence each other.

On the first day of the workshop, a special session on Issues on Perfectivity and Telicity in Scandinavian Languages was held, and the four papers included in this journal were presented as part of this special session. Norwegian is the focus of two papers, Tonne's corpora examination of the progressive forms in this language and Tungseth's discussion of argument structure alternations involving particles, adjectival resultatives and benefactive arguments. Jóhannsdóttir's paper also discusses the properties of the progressive in Icelandic and in particular its interaction

with adverbs of quantification and frequency adverbs. Finally, Tamm's paper is on the event-structural consequences of the partitive/accusative case alternation in Estonian. One important methodological similarity between these papers is that cross-linguistic comparison is a common denominator to all contributions in this volume. Each paper focuses on a particular phenomenon in one language and then broadens its scope to include cross-linguistic comparison. Both articles on Norwegian (Tonne's and Tungseth's) relate aspectual phenomena to correlate constructions in English which have received a great deal of attention in the literature. Jóhannsdóttir's analysis of temporal adverbs in Icelandic, focusing on the distribution of *alltaf* 'always' and its various interpretations also includes some discussion of similar constructions in Norwegian and in English. Lastly, building from the well-known literature on the partitive/accusative alternation in Finnish, Tamm's article provides an interesting investigation of the relationship between telicity and object case in Estonian. Below we summarise in greater detail the main claims and conclusions reached by each individual paper and conclude with some thoughts on what contribution this collection makes to the field.

2. THE PAPERS

2.1 Jóhannsdóttir

In her focused investigation of Icelandic, Jóhannsdóttir's 'Temporal adverbs in Icelandic' reviews the different properties of Quantificational (Q-) adverbs and frequency adverbs as regards binding, truth conditions in sentences with focus operators, abstract entities, preposing, co-occurrence with *for*-clauses and co-occurrence with other adverbs. Considering these diagnostics, Q-adverbs and frequency adverbs are in complementary distribution. Icelandic *alltaf* is licit both in the contexts which license Q-adverbs and those which license frequency adverbs. *Alltaf* has the capacity to quantify over times (when it behaves like a frequency adverb) as well as over events and situations (when it behaves like a quantificational adverb). It remains an open question whether there are two lexical items *alltaf* or whether one can be derived from the other.

Particular attention is paid to this item in conjunction with progressive sentences. Icelandic has two strategies for forming the progressive – one for eventives (the infinitival progressive) and the other for positional verbs (the present particle progressive). Two interesting observations invite further work in this area. First, when frequency adverbs are present, eventives can be formed using the present particle progressive. Second, despite the fact that *alltaf* has both a Q-adverb reading and a frequency reading, when it co-occurs with a progressive main clause and a *when*-clause that is ambiguous between a durational and punctual reading, the

adverb *alltaf* seems to yield a quantificational reading with the infinitival progressive and the frequency reading with the present participle possessive.

The frequency reading of *alltaf* has a limited distribution in progressive sentences, and this reading is conditioned by the aspect of the sentence – in particular when it co-occurs with a durational *when*-clause. The frequency reading in this sentence type is not specific to Icelandic, but available under these conditions in English and Norwegian too, making it a candidate for a cross-linguistic generalization.

Jóhannsdóttir also provides interesting discussion of the truth conditions of frequency adverbs in Icelandic and invites further cross-linguistic research in this area.

2.2 Tonne

Tonne's 'Analyzing progressives in Norwegian' discusses in detail two different constructions which receive a progressive interpretation in Norwegian: PSEUDOCOORDINATIONS and PROSPEC forms. In the former, a positional verb is coordinated with the main verb of the sentence, in a structure such as *She sat and read*; the result is inevitably a progressive aspectual interpretation. In the latter, the main verb, an infinitive, is in the complement position of a word indicating continuity or movement, as in the following examples:

- (1) a. Barna satt og leste.
 the.children sit-PST and read
 'The children were reading.'
- b. Han var i ferd med å frakte materiale
 he was I FERD MED INF carry the.materials
 opp til balkongen ...
 up to the.balcony
 'He was carrying/was about to carry the materials up to the balcony ...'

Tonne shows, via a corpus analysis, that these two progressive constructions have essentially complementary distributions: the former composes almost exclusively with atelic predicates (states and activities) and the latter almost exclusively with telic ones. Importantly, when the *prospec* progressive composes with an atelic, activity predicate, the resulting interpretation is consistent with the *prospec*'s telicity requirement: rather than a true progressive 'in-progress' interpretation, it acquires an ingressive reading, in which the in-progress event is one of leading up to the inception of the activity denoted by the main predicate. A similar effect appears when the *prospec* form composes with achievement predicates; it is this effect which inspires the name. With accomplishment predicates, however, the *prospec* form is ambiguous between a prospective and a progressive reading.

These strong constraints on event type composition, as well as selectional restrictions imposed by the posture verb in the pseudocoordination cases, mean

that these Norwegian periphrastic progressives have quite a restricted distribution when compared to a fully grammaticalised aspectual construction like the English progressive. In a comparison of the percentage of occurrences of the various progressives in an English/Norwegian intertranslated corpus, the author finds that both Norwegian progressives are significantly less frequent than their English counterparts. While English progressives are only occasionally translated with one of the Norwegian periphrastic forms, however, the Norwegian periphrastic progressives are very often translated with the English progressive, an unsurprising result given the comparative absence of similar periphrastic alternatives in English.

Tonne proposes an analysis of the semantics of each construction that takes as its starting point Dowty's (1979) influential analysis of the English progressive. Since the pseudocoordination cases compose only with atelic predicates, producing a simple in-progress reading, the modal component in Dowty's analysis is unnecessary for those. The *prospec* forms, on the other hand, are discussed within the context of a semantics for telic predicates like that of Krifka (1998), in which telic events are decomposed into sub-events. The crucial factor for composition with the *prospec* is the presence of a defined end-point; the coercion effect with activity predicates producing the ingressive reading, described above, produces exactly this result.

2.3 Tungseth

Tungseth's paper also focuses on Norwegian and is entitled 'Interactions of particles, adjectival resultatives and benefactive double object constructions in Norwegian'. In it, examples are presented from English and Norwegian that contain both a resultative and a particle (e.g., (2)). These data present a challenge to Tenny's (1994) Single Delimiting Constraint (SDC), which restricts an event as described by a single sentence to having only one goal-defining delimiter.

- (2) a. They painted the barn up red.
 b. He polished the brass up bright.
 c. De malte ferdig låven rød. (Norwegian)
they painted finished the.barn red
 'They painted the barn up red.'

The only exceptions of this type are formed with English *up* and Norwegian *ferdig*. Tungseth maintains that the SDC can be upheld with a closer look at the internal syntax of the verb phrase – in particular, following Ramchand (2006), the structure of Result Phrase (ResP) – within a given language.

According to Ramchand (2006), an event's endpoint is licensed by the Result head and thus different types of endpoints (resultative predicates, beneficiary DPs and particles) should not be able to co-occur. This prediction is shown to be too strong, as particles can co-occur with either an adjectival resultative or with a beneficiary DP. (Note that AP resultative and beneficiary DP cannot co-occur.) Further, Tungseth

points out a restriction on relative position of particle and direct object in sentences with both particle and beneficiary DP (only particle–object word order is allowed, whereas both P–DP and DP–P word order is allowed in other Norwegian and English sentences).

Tungseth points out that AP resultatives and beneficiary DPs require different classes of predicates, making it impossible for them to co-occur. Particles co-occur with benefactive DPs, but only with one possible word order (particle–object). Particles also precede resultative APs when these two items co-occur. Analyses of the latter two types of structures are given building on analyses of verb-particle constructions (Ramchand & Svenonius 2002) and of the internal structure of the VP (Ramchand 2006, Tungseth 2006).

2.4 Tamm

Tamm's 'Perfectivity, telicity and Estonian verbs' focuses on the connection between object case and telicity in Estonian. Case-related aspectual effects are familiar from the extensive literature on Finnish aspect and Aktionsart, but there has been very little consideration of the patterns in related languages. The discussion and data in this paper suggest that the effect in Estonian has interesting differences from its Finnish counterpart.

Tamm first shows that the 'total object' (TO) case/partitive case alternation does not correspond to a semantic difference between quantized and non-quantized NP interpretations. In particular, certain predicates take partitive objects no matter what quantization those NPs exhibit. She also argues that certain TO objects are not quantized, in particular, the objects of verbs of creation and the verb *choose* can be TO but not specify any particular quantity. The related hypotheses that TO objects might entail specificity or definiteness are quickly shown to be untenable.

She then asks whether the case alternation might be driven by a perfective/imperfective viewpoint aspect distinction, but again is able to dismiss this possibility. Using narrative-sequencing tests, she shows that partitive objects of alternating verbs can behave as perfective-marked predicates do in other languages (namely, they allow narrative sequencing, unlike imperfectives). The possibility that the case alternation correlates with a telic/atelic distinction is not as easily discarded, but results from judgment tasks appear to be somewhat indecisive.

Tamm describes the empirical results as showing a cline of telicity/perfectivity effects, and proposes an analysis in the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) framework, according to which either the object or the verb can contribute a boundedness-related feature to the final f-structure of the clause; verbs may also be unspecified for boundedness. A pair of bivalent features, \pm MIN and \pm MAX, allows Tamm to account for many kinds of cases: ones in which the clause is interpreted as 'maximally bounded' – both telic and perfective – and ones in which

the clause is bounded to some lesser degree, e.g. as telic but not necessarily specified for perfectivity, or unspecified for boundedness. Maximally bounded sentences have TO case, while unspecified and minimally bounded sentences have partitive objects. If the verb and object contribute conflicting boundedness features, the sentence is uninterpretable and ungrammatical. In this way, the puzzlingly variable relationship of verb type, object case and aspectual interpretation in Estonian is given a comprehensive account.

3. DISCUSSION

The question of the interaction of progressive aspect and Aktionsart/event structure is a recurring theme in the papers of this volume. The availability of a straightforward progressive interpretation has been used as a reliable test for distinguishing events from states, on the one hand, and durative events from Achievements, on the other. However, the two distinct periphrastic progressives of Norwegian identified by Tonne reveal a different pattern of interaction with the Aktionsart of the main predicate, distinguishing telic from atelic. In Icelandic, two distinct progressive forms (the particle and the infinitival) interact differently with eventive vs. stative, positional main predicates, not unexpectedly. However, Jóhannsdóttir's investigation reveals a peculiar interaction between adverbial modification and type of progressive: when frequency adverbs are present, the particle progressive, which usually only occurs with positional verbs, can occur with regular eventive predicates as well.

Tungseth and Tamm examine the question of 'measuring-out' – event delimitation – from different perspectives. Tamm investigates the possibility that Estonian total-object case entails a delimiting effect, and does find such effects in some domains, but also finds effects which seem to depend more on the event characteristics of the verb rather than on object case. She proposes that delimitation information can percolate from either the verb or the object, but in cases of conflicting specifications, the verb's specification in a sense 'trumps' that of the object. Tungseth also investigates apparently differing sources of measuring-out effects, but comes to the conclusion that in fact a given predicate can contain only a single source of delimitation, at least when constructions with 'excess' particles are correctly understood. In this sense, Tungseth's and Tamm's papers reach quite distinct conclusions concerning the potential sources of delimitation within the predicate, and these results thus suggest a clear line of investigation for future work, contrasting the two approaches and data sets.

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