

# Kari Kinn – Public defense for Ph.D. degree

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# KK's analysis (p. 163–166, 172)

- 1. and 2. person pronouns in Old Norwegian are DPs that *cannot* be deleted from the syntactic structure.
- 3. person pronouns are  $\phi$ Ps that *can* be deleted from the syntactic structure.

# Constructions allowed by the grammar

- In the assumed theoretical framework, there is a sharp division between those syntactic structures that are allowed by the grammar and those that are not (p. 36).
- The speaker's grammar is called the “I-language”.
- “My default hypothesis will be that the null arguments found in my corpora are [...] in line with the I-language of the scribes, unless there are independent reasons to classify them as errors” (p. 96).

# Constructions allowed by the grammar

- It follows from the analysis, then, that the I-language cannot allow deletion of 1. and 2. person pronouns, and that such examples therefore do not exist in the corpora.
- The problem is that such examples do exist.
- KK finds five examples of such deletions in her corpora, and most of them cannot be dismissed as errors (p. 127–130).
- KK concludes that the deletion of 1. and 2. person pronouns in Old Norwegian is a “marginal phenomenon” that is “extremely rare” with “very scarce occurrences” (p. 130, 153, 155).

# Constructions allowed by the grammar

- But what is the status of “marginal” and “extremely rare” phenomena in a non-probabilistic and non-usage based theory of grammar?
- As KK writes, what matters in this framework is not how *often* a structure is found, but whether or not the grammar allows it to occur at all (p. 96).
- The examples of 1. and 2. person pronoun deletion appear to falsify the analysis in this dissertation, as they cannot be shown to be errors.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- 1. and 2. person pronouns can have a noun complement in both Old Norwegian and Modern Norwegian (p. 163–164, 252–255):
  - (1) Vër dǫlir        (Old Norwegian (ON))  
Me dǫler        (Modern Norwegian (MN))  
We dalesmen  
‘We dalesmen’.
- The pronoun acts like a determiner  $\rightarrow$  DP.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- But this appears to be the case for 3. person pronouns as well (p. 165, 252–253):

(2) Þá kom hann dvergrinn (ON, constructed)  
Då kom han dvergen (MN)  
Then came he dwarf.DEF  
‘Then the dwarf came’.

- In Modern Norwegian the pronoun acts like a determiner (p. 252–255).
- Modern Norwegian *han dvergen* means ‘the dwarf’ or ‘that dwarf’.
- In Modern Norwegian these are DPs (p. 252–255).

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- Why is Old Norwegian *hann dvergrinn* not a DP then?
- KK writes that “*hann* does not seem to contribute semantically in terms of definiteness/demonstrativeness; [...] it does not seem to be ‘demonstrably definite’” (p. 165).
- No attempt is made to demonstrate how the pronoun does not contribute semantically or how it differs semantically from Modern Norwegian.



# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- Both Old and Modern Norwegian have 3. person pronouns with appositions:

(3) Hann kom inn í stofuna, dvergrinn (ON, constructed)  
Han kom inn i stova, dvergen (MN)  
He came into in room.DEF, dwarf.DEF  
‘The dwarf came into the room’.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- (4) Hann kom inn í stofuna, dvergrinn (ON, constructed)  
Han kom inn i stova, dvergen (MN)  
He came into in room.DEF, dwarf.DEF  
'The dwarf came into the room'.

- (5) Þá kom hann dvergrinn (ON, constructed)  
Då kom han dvergen (MN)  
Then came he dwarf.DEF  
'Then the dwarf came'.

- KK concludes that because Old Norwegian (4) is an apposition, then Old Norwegian (5) is as well (p. 166).
- So *hann dvergrinn* = *hann [...] dvergrinn*.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- But it does not follow that (5) is an apposition because (4) is.
- Both constructions are found in Modern Norwegian, and in this language, (4) is an apposition whereas (5) is not – it is a DP.
- No attempt is made to demonstrate that (5) is an apposition in Old Norwegian.
- In sum, there are no arguments provided that the structure in (5) is an apposition in Old Norwegian.
- The fact that the structure in (5) is *not* an apposition in Modern Norwegian should indicate that it is not in Old Norwegian either, unless evidence to the contrary is provided.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- Both Old and Modern Norwegian have 3. person pronouns before personal names (p. 165, 253–255):

(6) Í því kemr hann Ásbjörn í stofuna (ON)  
I di kjem han Ásbjørn i stova (MN)  
In that comes he Ásbjørn in room.DEF  
‘Then Ásbjørn came into the room’.

- This construction is common in spoken Modern Norwegian, but only found sporadically in Old Norwegian texts (p. 165).
- In Modern Norwegian these constructions are DPs, and the pronoun is called a “preproprial article” (p. 253–255).

# Pronouns as DPs and $\varphi$ Ps

- Why is Old Norwegian *hann Ásbjorn* not a DP then?
- KK writes that “If Old Norwegian had optional preproprial articles, we would expect the presence of the article to have some semantic or pragmatic effect [...], but this does not seem to be the case” (p. 165).
- When discussing the optional preproprial article in Modern Norwegian, KK writes: “I hypothesize that presence or absence of the preproprial article is associated with some semantic, pragmatic or sociolinguistic effect” (p. 254).

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- But if it is not known what the semantic or pragmatic effect of the preproprial article in Modern Norwegian is (p. 254),
- then how can the possibility that the pronoun is a preproprial article in Old Norwegian be dismissed on the basis that it “does not seem to be the case” that the pronoun has a semantic or pragmatic effect (p. 165)?
- Because dismissing this possibility entails that the semantic effect *is* known.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\varphi$ Ps

- KK assumes also here that the construction *hann Ásbjörn* is an apposition (p. 165–166).
- This is unlikely given the broader context of the example, which is not provided in the dissertation.
- What is not reported here is that the sentence with *hann Ásbjörn* is immediately followed by another sentence with the exact same construction.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\varphi$ Ps

- (7) Í því kemr hann Ásbjörn í stofuna. Snarask **pro**  
In that comes he Ásbjörn in room.DEF. Turns [he]  
þegar at honum Þóri.  
immediately at him Tore.

‘Then Ásbjörn came into the room. He turns immediately towards Tore’ (Johnsen 1922: 45).

- Note that this following sentence has *both* a referential null subject (**pro**) and a preproprial article.
- This cooccurrence is predicted to be impossible by  $\kappa\kappa$ ’s analysis (p. 258).



# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- Multiple instances of this construction in succession are unlikely to be cases of apposition, for the simple reason that it is weird discourse:

“Then he – Åsbjørn – came into the room. He turns immediately towards him – Tore –.”

- People do not talk or write like that.
- When multiple instances of this construction in succession are found in a 15th century charter, KK concludes that these are preproprial articles (p. 257–258).
- There is no reason to conclude differently when the same is found in an Old Norwegian text.

# Pronouns as DPs and $\phi$ Ps

- Preproprial articles are also found in Old Icelandic:
- “The pers[on] pron[oun] is often prefixed to a pr[oper] name, as a sign of familiarity [...]” (Vigfusson 1874: 239).

(8) Egils saga, ca. 1320–1350 (Einarsson 2001: xxv):

[...] eigi minni en ek veitta honum Þórólfi, bróður þínum  
[...] not smaller than I gave him Torolv, brother yours

‘[...] not smaller than what I gave Torolv, your brother’ (2001: 36).

# Pronouns as DPs and $\varphi$ Ps

- The name *Þórólfi* is unlikely to be the appositive to the pronoun *honum* here, because the following phrase *bróður þínum* is itself the appositive to *Þórólfi*.
- We would otherwise have an unlikely structure of an apposition embedded under another apposition.
- The fact that preproprial articles exist in both Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic suggests that this construction dates back to the 12th century or earlier.

# Conclusions

- Old Norwegian allows referential null subjects in all persons, not just 3. person.
- Old Norwegian 3. person pronouns are DPs, not  $\phi$ Ps.
- The data do not support the analysis that deletion targets only 3. person pronouns because they are  $\phi$ Ps.

# References

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