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ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTICAL STYLISTIC ELEMENTS IN SWEDISH

Abstract

Sentence structure is one of the most important components of stylistic analysis since it primarily represents textual readability and comprehensibility. Languages with predominantly strict word order, such as Swedish, show various stylistic characteristics. Stylistic analysis is affected by numerous aspects e.g. parataxis, hypotaxis, topicalization, duplication, elliptical sentences, sentence structure in formal and informal texts combined with additional syntactic features. Stylistic variations of a given text can also improve language learning. The aim of this study is to examine the most frequent examples of syntactical stylistic analysis in Swedish and to emphasize their importance for advanced language learning and translating.

Key words: Swedish syntax, standard language, translation, advanced language learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Previous contrastive studies between the Scandinavian language communities and Serbian community do not contain any remarks on stylistic studies and the main tendencies in the stylistic research in Scandinavia. This is also the reason why it often is a great challenge in

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teaching and contrasting Swedish and Serbian to clarify the differences in stylistic traditions in these two linguistic and cultural communities. The tradition of stylistic studies in our language community has so far dealt mainly with special cases in literary texts, the Swedish and the Scandinavian stylistic traditions in general have been dealing also with non-literary functional styles in stylistic analysis for the past half century.

In relation to the type of stylistic studies, normative stylistics is the oldest stylistic discipline in Scandinavia. Thus, for example, in Swedish history of linguistic and stylistic studies during the 17th century, names and studies such as Bergbo's book on the importance of the Swedish language and challenges in improving its status in Europe at that time (Bergbo, 1658: *Thet Swenska Språketz Klagomål*) stand out. Further on, in studies on speeches in central Sweden (Stiernhjelm, 1643: *Gambla Swea- och Götha-Måles Fatebur*) or Columbus's handbook for the preservation of the Swedish language (Columbus, 1674–1678: *En Swensk Orde-Skötsel*) – all authors speak, in fact, about the excellence of the Swedish language (*svenskans förträfflighet*), but also about the methods that would help Swedish gain a well-deserved place among other languages in the world. Columbus, for example, points out that the power of the (Swedish) language is evident both in its originality and in its use in the modern age (Kovačević 2021: 22).

Somewhat later in the 17th century, the classicist approach became increasingly popular, relying not only on the thesis of a language originality factor that influences its strong position in the language community, but also on factors such as clearer communication of learned people of the time. Descriptive and functionalist approaches in stylistic studies have become very common in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden. They have, nonetheless, never excluded normative-rhetorical stylistics, but focused more on language use, situational factors, efficiency and less on systematized rhetoric (Enkvist 1973: 77–78). The approach to stylistic studies in the Scandinavian languages for the past fifty years has over time become predominantly functionalist, as best seen in Lagerholm's observation (2008: 23) that the answer to the question of what stylistic studies include is that they investigate

all types of texts, bearing in mind that each text is determined by a certain style (Kovačević 2021: 23).¹

In his comment about the natural connection between languages and linguistic approaches to stylistics Cassirer (1999: 21) uses examples from the history of Swedish and its stylistic studies specifically pointing out that *language* and *style* are two words that are often used together. The predecessor to an annual publication that dealt with stylistics issues, *Nysvenska studier* (New Swedish Studies), was called *Språk och stil* (Language and Style) until 1920 and again in 1990s. In stylistic surveys, Cassirer remarks that the authors often switch between the terms *language* and *style* without clearly stating whether they intend to mark the difference. It is also obvious that the terms are close to each other. Attempts have been made to distinguish between them by pointing out the difference between language errors and style aberrations (Askeberg in *Stilbegreppet* (1954) and his work on the definition of the concept *style*) or by naming linguistic phenomena that extend stylistically beyond units such as clause and sentence or by defining style as statistically significant (linguistic) deviation from a norm. Definitions like the latter one, however, in Cassirer's opinion make the term *style* unnecessary where one could settle for the term *language*. If the term *style* is to be retained at all, it should be used in situations where the term *language* is not sufficient. The description of the term style is often based on a linguistic analysis, but that is usually not enough. Stylistics also wants to investigate all possible correlations between a type of sentence and the content expressed in the sentence and, last but not least, the effect this relationship

¹ Cassirer (1999: 60) also agrees that stylistic analysis should be applied throughout language and content and not only in connection with literary genres. It has undeniably been to the detriment of the stylistics that experts have devoted themselves so much to the unique (literary) texts instead to the ordinary and trivial. Therefore, almost all stylistic analysis has been about unique cases of combinations where an ingenious author has achieved certain effects in an unprecedented way. Stylistics has therefore faced great difficulties in formulating its general rules.

produces. Style thus becomes a term that denotes one's experience of the language and stylistics a method for a thorough text description.

2. WORD ORDER AND THE FORMAL FUNDAMENT IN SWEDISH

In a historical overview, the Old Norse language was mainly stable.² It consisted of somewhat free word order like other older Germanic languages, but certain basic principles were already present, such as the first or the second position of a finite verb, and the object following the verb. Strict word order was apparent already during the second half of 8th and the first half of 11th centuries and also present at the beginning of the administrative style of the Scandinavian provincial laws. Strictly speaking, the word order was very early close to the one in the Scandinavian languages today, i.e. the F/v1/n/a/V2/N/A structure.³

The formal fundament field in Swedish (Swe. *fundamentfältet*) is crucial for information structuring. This is the part of the independent clause that precedes the main finite verb (v1) becoming its presentational focus:

- (1) *Sven* (F) läser (v1) en bok. (*Sven* is reading a book.)
- (2) *Sven, klassens bästa elev, som tänker ägna sig åt att studera språkvetenskap* (F) läser (v1) en bok. (*Sven, the best pupil in the class, who intends to study linguistics* is reading a book.)

This field usually contains all types of constructions, from nominal phrases to complete clauses. This in return affects the length of the Swedish fundament or the quantity of the whole sentence, in Swedish often described as its “weight” (Swe. *tyngd*), respectively “left

² Old Norse lasted from about 8th to 14th centuries in Scandinavia and coincided with the Viking Age.

³ The F/v1/n/a/V2/N/A sentence structure consists of the following features: F – the formal fundament field (Swe. *fundament* and/or *fundamentfältet*); v1 – finite verb; n – pronominal phrase/subject; a – adverbial phrase/sentence adverb; V2 – infinite verb; N – pronominal phrase/object; A – adjective.

sided weight” (vänstertyngd) for sentences that consist of a massive fundament field and “right sided weight” (högertyngd) for the ones that contain a relatively light fundament field compared to the rest of the sentence. Therefore, there is more information in the beginning of the sentence if the fundament contains more elements. Lagerholm comments that much attention should be given to the length and the number of words the fundament contains and gives two specific examples (constructions that belong to the fundament fields are here purposely written in italic):

- (3) *Även om Pär Lagerkvist (1891–1974) i sin utveckling visar stor konsekvens och enhetlighet – till exempel i sin medvetna stilvilja och sitt ständiga återvändande till livsåskådningsmässiga, religiösa grundproblem – kan det för översiktens skull vara lämpligt att urskilja fyra perioder i hans diktning [...].* (Lagerholm 2008: 131)⁴
- (4) *Varför firar vi våren med eld på Valborgsmässoafton? Någon entydig förklaring finns inte. Men det är troligt att elden tillsammans med oväsen från grytlock och annat, använts för att skrämma rovdjur på flykten i samband med att kreaturen släppts på vårbeta. Seden är vanlig på många håll i nordliga länder. I Sverige känner vi den sedan 1600-talet.* (Lagerholm 2008: 132)⁵

Example (3) is excerpted from a book about literary history at university level and shows the length of the clauses used in the formal fundament field. The purpose here is to explain and investigate the

⁴ “Although Pär Lagerkvist (1891–1974) in his development shows great consistency and uniformity – for example in his conscious will to style and his constant return to basic philosophical, religious views – it may be appropriate for the sake of overview to distinguish four periods in his poetry [...].”

⁵ “Why do we celebrate spring with fire on Walpurgis Night? There is no unambiguous explanation. But it is probable that the fire, together with noise from pot lids and other things, was used to scare predators on the run, in connection with the cattle being released out for spring. The custom is common in many places in northern countries. In Sweden we have known it since the 17th century.”

significant features of the writer's poetics before naming the main periods in his work. Example (4) is cited from a tourist brochure, its style is less complex and the fundament field in each sentence consists of relatively small constructions (a question word, a nominal phrase, a prepositional phrase etc.).

In general, depending on whether the fundament is extensive or not, the left/right weight of the sentences does affect textual complexity and readability. Informal texts tend to contain fundament fields that consist of fewer words. Such texts are easier to read and understand and they often correspond to spoken language. On the other hand, formal texts consist mostly of sentences with predominantly left side weight. Such texts are very difficult to read and understand. Lagerholm comments that, according to Margareta Westman (1974), less formal Swedish texts have an average of 3.1 words per fundament field. The material in Westman's research consisted of newspaper articles, brochures, textbooks and debate texts. The field of fundament is more extensive in very formal writing which is confirmed by Landqvist's (2000) study of legal Swedish. According to this, the average fundament length is 6.0 words in the Swedish state regulations (2008: 132).⁶

3. STYLISTIC FEATURES AND TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

In text linguistics, the first place in the sentence is usually called a *theme* and the field closer to the end of a sentence is called a *rheme*. In

⁶ Lagerholm refers to two studies, Margareta Westman's 1974 doctoral thesis *Brukprosa* (Utility prose) and Hans Landqvist's book from 2000 *Författningssvenska. Strukturer i nutida svensk lagtext i Sverige och Finland* (Legal Swedish. Structures in modern Swedish legal texts in Sweden and Finland.). Original in Swedish: "Enligt Westman (1974) har bruksprosatexter i genomsnitt 3,1 ord per fundament. Brukprosa i hennes undersökning bestod av tidningstext, broschyrer, läroböcker och debattexter. Att fundamenten är längre i mycket formell skrift bekräftas av Landqvists (2000) undersökning av författningssvenska. Enligt denna är den genomsnittliga fundamentlängden 6,0 ord i svenska författningar" (Lagerholm 2008: 132).

most cases, already known information is on the theme side and new information on the rheme side (the topic of the sentence). If a new information cannot be provided, different linguistic means are used in Swedish to avoid starting the sentence with a new information. In other words, various constructions can be used to avoid putting the new information in the first place in a sentence:

- (5) “En springande pojke kommer. (A running boy is coming.)
- (5.a) *Det kommer* en springande pojke. (*There comes* a running boy.)
- (5.b) *Det är* en springande pojke som kommer. (*It is* a running boy coming.)
- (5.c) *Nu är det så att det kommer* en springande pojke. (*Now it's so that there comes* a running boy.)

In addition, in Swedish formal texts long fundament field carries the theme of the sentence, e.g.:

- (6) *Från utrikes ort infört gods, som är avsett till proviantiering och utrustning av fartyg eller luftfartyg eller, enligt vad där- om särskilt stadgas, till försäljning till flygpassagerare på tullflygplats och som tillika är belagd med tull eller annan in- förselavgift, må efter verkställd tulltaxering, utan att dylika avgifter erläggas men, såvitt avser andra varor än rusdrycker och tobaksvaror, mot ställande av säkerhet för belopp som mot- svarar avgifterna, uppläggas i särskilt magasin under vård av godsets ägare. (Lagerholm 2008: 208)⁷*

Contrary to the cases where new pieces of information are being presented closer to the end of a sentence, the cases of *topicalization* (Swe. *topikalisering*; *fundamentering*) contain the main semantic

⁷ “Goods imported from abroad intended for the provision and equipment of ships or aircrafts or, as specifically provided, for sale to passengers at airport’s customs and which are also subject to customs duties or other import duties, without additional fees, in the case of goods other than alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, in accordance with provision of security for amounts corresponding to the fees, are placed in a special storage under the supervision of the owner of the goods.”

theme already at the beginning of a sentence. Topicalization in Swedish is implemented directly by placing the needed segment in the fundamental field with the finite verb (v1) following.

- (7) Jag gick på bio för två dagar sedan. (I went to the cinema two days ago.)
- (7.a) På bio gick jag för två dagar sedan. (It was to the cinema I went two days ago.)
- (7.b) För två dagar sedan gick jag på bio. (Two days ago, I went to the cinema.)

The cases of topicalization in Swedish reflect differently on written and spoken Serbian and in specific situations it is very challenging to convey the fact that certain segments of a sentence are of greater importance than the others, e.g.:

- (8) Jag tycker om honom. (I like him.)⁸
- (9) *Honom* tycker jag om. (It is him I like.)⁹
- (10) *Honom* vet jag att du inte kan stå ut med.¹⁰ (Him I know you can't stand.)
- (11) *Skicka bort pojken till internatskola* ville de inte.¹¹ (To send the boy away to boarding school is something they didn't want.)

In all of the abovementioned examples it is possible to produce an adequate translation by using additional words or different word order so that the same effect can be provided in the target language. Nevertheless, oral translation of the examples could also rely on verbal features (stress, tone etc.) in order to convey the exact meaning from the source language often without changing the word order

⁸ In Serbian, in a rather neutral meaning: On mi se dopada.

⁹ In Serbian, in a specific meaning: *On* mi se dopada. / *Upravo on* mi se dopada.

¹⁰ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 547); in Serbian: (*Upravo*) *njega* ne podnosiš, to znam. / Znam da (*upravo*) *njega* ne podnosiš.

¹¹ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 546); in Serbian: Nisu hteli da pošalju dečaka u internat. / (?) *Poslati dečaka u internat* je nešto što nisu hteli. The latter example seems to be slightly less common.

(see example (10)). In many cases there are even two or several other solutions in translation, yet not all of them can be equally appropriate (see example (12)).

Lagerholm emphasises that the notion *parataxis* denotes sentences dominated by coordination (Swe. *samordning*) and that the style is then paratactic. When a language is instead dominated by subordination (Swe. *underordning*), this is called *hypotaxis*, and the style is then hypotactic. Parataxis and hypotaxis are a purely quantitative phenomena determined by the frequency of subordinate clauses. This can be specified, for example, by the number of clauses per 1,000 words, clauses per graphic sentence or clauses per syntactic sentence. Lagerholm also comments that it has been argued that parataxis is typical of spoken Swedish language and more comprehensible texts, while hypotaxis is typical of formal writing in Swedish (2008: 126).¹² Translation exercises often include the cases of parataxis with identical expressions, such as:

- (12) Han blev *tröttare och tröttare*.¹³ (He was getting *more and more* tired.)
- (13) Det finns *folk och folk*. (There are people *of all kinds*.)¹⁴
- (14) Frisk och sund. (Safe and sound.)¹⁵

Examples (12) and (13) show that in some languages paratactic segments can include different parts of speech (e.g. adverbs instead of verbs) or that they even can be avoided. Example (14) consists of

¹² In our comment this is the citation we have used in its Swedish original: "När meningar domineras av samordning kallas den tendensen för paratax, och stilen är då parataktisk. När språket i stället domineras av underordning kallas detta för hypotax, och stilen är då hypotaktisk. Paratax och hypotax är ett rent kvantitativt fenomen och avgörs av bisatsfrekvensen. Denna kan till exempel anges i antal bisatser per 1 000 ord, bisatser per grafisk mening eller bisatser per syntaktisk mening. [...] Traditionellt har det hävdats att paratax är typiskt för talspråk och ledig, enkel prosa medan hypotax är typiskt för formell skrift."

¹³ *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*, Vol.4 (1999: 901); in Serbian: Umarao se *sve više*.

¹⁴ In Serbian: Ljudi ima *i ovakvih i onakvih*.

¹⁵ In Serbian: Živ i zdrav.

rather fixed paratactic expressions that in different languages have different form, but correspond semantically.

The *duplication* or the *doubling* (Swe. dubblering) of a clause element by means of pronominal word is common in spoken Swedish. Most frequently duplicated in this way are indefinite or article-less forms. The effect of duplication is to emphasise the free element placed in the extra position outside the clause. Duplication in Swedish sentences can occur in different parts of a sentence, but most often in its final part. Final duplication is one of the most prominent features in Swedish used mainly in dialects and colloquial style which is something that should be pointed out in translation exercises. Here are some examples of duplication in Swedish:

- (15) I Uppsala, *där* trivdes jag under min studietid. (In Uppsala, *there* I enjoyed my life as a student.)¹⁶
- (16) Att tala ryska, *det* är ju inte lätt, *det inte!* (Speaking Russian, *that* isn't easy, *that!*)¹⁷
- (17) Han är rolig, *Olof*. (He is funny, *Olof*)¹⁸
- (18) Jag kan inte göra det, *jag* heller. (Me? *I* can't do that either.)¹⁹

In the first two examples (15) and (16) one or more cases of duplication can be observed both in the middle and in the end of the sentence. Examples (17) and (18) represent the cases of final duplication. An important point in teaching translation of the abovementioned and other similar examples of duplication in Swedish is the fact that most examples are impossible to translate literally, because of the contextual variants that need to be transferred to the target language in a different way. Repetition of constructions in translation in places

¹⁶ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 549); in Serbian: (*Upravo*) u Upsali sam uživala u studentskim danima.

¹⁷ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 549); in Serbian: (*Pa i*) nije tako lako govoriti ruski!

¹⁸ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 548); in Serbian: (*Onaj*) Ulof, (*taj vam*) je baš zabavan.

¹⁹ *Swedish. A Comprehensive Grammar* (2013: 548); in Serbian: To čak ni ja ne mogu da uradim.

where they are found in Swedish examples often appears as unnatural, sometimes even incomprehensible, which is an important information in language and translation teaching and learning.

Exceptionally small part of teaching and learning material contains information that the final duplication in Swedish is a phenomenon related to the spoken language and most often a feature that is present in dialectal speech and rarely in written Swedish. Lindström (2011: 211) points out that the pronominal duplication is more established in the Finnish-Swedish dialects around Helsinki, but the final duplication in different forms is characterized by, if not all Swedish dialects, then a majority of them. This means that in teaching translation from Swedish, in addition to introducing future translators to the concept of final duplication and its forms, it is necessary to make a note regarding the domains of how these constructions are used. Consequently, translation of these constructions includes various non-linguistic factors, specifically cultural, historical, social and other factors in the translation process. Having in mind that other languages may also contain constructions with final repetition, but almost never in the same sense and in the same speech situations as in Swedish, a new question may occur: what kind of translation is acceptable in order to achieve intelligibility, grammatical accuracy of translation and communicativeness in relation to the audience of the target language (Kovačević 2020: 246).

Certain types of constructions can etymologically or logically be seen as ellipses of more extensive expressions, but should simultaneously still represent complete constructions.

(19) Att han inte ger sig! ((It is so wonderful that) he is not giving up!)²⁰

(20) Prat! (Tittle-tattle!)²¹

(21) Får ej övertäckas. (Do not cover.)²²

²⁰ *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*, Vol. 4 (2010: 975); in Serbian: (*Izvršno je to što*) *on ne odustaje!*

²¹ *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*, Vol. 4 (2010: 977); in Serbian: *Prazne priče!*

²² *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*, Vol. 4 (2010: 966); in Serbian: *Ne prekrivati.*

Here too it is important to understand that expressions of this kind are not translated word for word, because they often contain subtle semantic differences or represent fixed phrases in a language. In one of the referential Swedish grammars, *Svenska Akademiens grammatik, Vol. 4*, some of the examples are presented as particular expressions which merely resemble elliptical constructions but are particularly interesting and challenging for conveying into Serbian for example, as the target language as seen in the examples (19), (20) and (21).

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to Cassirer, stylistic analysis is certainly not something that we learn merely because of itself; it is a tool to better understand life and a way to master it. “As soon as we get to know the technology of how we are affected by manipulation, we are able to expose it and rule with the help of languages (1999: 14)”.²³ Communicative translation – in the sense of the exact contextual meaning of the original which is readily accepted and comprehended by the target language readership (Newmark 1988: 41) – requires not only operational knowledge of the translator or interpreter, but also the ability to convey the most appropriate stylistic features in the process of interlinguistic mediation between two languages.

Analysis of syntactical stylistic elements in Swedish proves the initial assumption that they should also, at a communicative level, be interpreted as cultural linguistic structures: the Swedish formal fundament field indicates not only the level of comprehensibility and readability of a text, but also its functional style (administrative, colloquial, literary etc.). In Swedish, the position of a new information in a sentence can affect its capacity to be transferred into another language. Concurrently, in sentences dominated by coordination some parts of the information can even be omitted in translation. The cases

²³ “Endast om vi känner tekniken för hur vi blir påverkade med språkens hjälp kan vi avslöja manipulationen och göra oss själva dess herrar.”

of duplication, even if they are established more dialectally, represent an important feature because of their unique nature that in many aspects does not correspond with the nature of similar constructions in other languages. Elliptical constructions also often require cultural analysis and adaptation in a target language.

In conclusion, a course in stylistics at advanced levels of language proficiency is of great importance for future translators and interpreters. The course in the Scandinavian (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish) stylistics at University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology starts as a review of the basics of grammatical and lexical structures and writing rules in general, as well as the review of dictionaries and other reference books. This is followed by an in-depth overview of the Danish/ Norwegian/ Swedish written language and syntactic registers in a translation perspective. Within the framework of descriptive stylistics, the relationships between speech and writing and between free and formal written language and stylistic means are then examined. The course also investigates the development of the standard Scandinavian languages during the 20th century while the discussion also includes the topics of language standardization and democratization in the modern Scandinavian societies.

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Зорица Ковачевић

АНАЛИЗА СИНТАКТИЧКОСТИЛСКИХ ЕЛЕМЕНАТА У ШВЕДСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ

Резиме

Структура реченице је једна од најважнијих компоненти стилске анализе, због тога што се односи пре свега на читљивост и разумљивост текста. Језици са строго устаљеним редом речи, попут шведског и осталих скандинавских језика, испољавају и специфичне стилске особености. На стилску анализу могу утицати бројни аспекти у говорном и писаном шведском језику, нпр. паратакса и хипотакса, топиализација, удвајање, елиптичне реченичне конструкције, као и структура реченице у формалним и неформалним текстовима у комбинацији са додатним синтаксичким карактеристикама. Стилске варијације датог текста такође могу унапредити учење језика и стицање знања о различитим језичким функцијама у специфичним језичким ситуацијама. Циљ овог рада је да се испитају најчешћи примери који се јављају у вежбама синтаксичке стилске анализе у шведском језику на напредном нивоу учења и у превођењу, као и то да се додатно образложи и истакне њихов значај.

Кључне речи: синтакса шведског језика, стандардни језик, превођење, учење језика на напредном нивоу