

After a long absence from the linguistics conference circuit, another *International Conference of Nordic and General Linguistics* (ICNGL) was organised in 2012.

1. Introduction

The conference, the main idea of which was to “revive a broken tradition” (p.1), was organised at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (April 18th-20th 2012)[\[1\]](#). The organisers were: Peter Auer, Janet Duke, Martin Hilpert, Christine Merztlufft, Jan-Ola Östman and Michael Rießler. The next conference (ICNGL 12) will take place in Helsinki in 2016.

A selection of the papers presented at the conference is now available in the volume #42 of the Publications of the School of Language and Literature at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS). The aim of the present review is to provide the reader with a useful synoptic view of the contents of the book (§2) together with a more general evaluation of the various research trends as they are presented in the book (§3).

2. The book and its contents

The book opens with a general introduction by the editors (pp.1-8), in which they present the conference, the tradition behind it, the structure of the book and its contents. The papers are thematically organised in five sections: (1) Language contact, (2) Phonology, (3) Morphosyntax, (4) Syntax and (5) Grammaticalization.

According to the editors’ own words (p.2) “the contents of the book mirror the diversity [...] experienced at the conference, and that characterizes Nordic linguistics in the early twenty-first century”. “Nordic” must here be understood in its original broad sense, with respect to Europe. In fact the languages about which research is presented in the book are not just the Scandinavian ones. Broad space is also given to the Finno-Ugric languages of the European North, such as Sámi and Mari, which, for obvious reasons, are of great interest even if one looks just at the geographical region of Scandinavia.

In the next following subsections a view of each section of the book (2.1-2.5) is given.

2.1 Language contact

This section, the topic of which was the main conference theme in Freiburg, is the largest of the entire book, as it contains four articles.

Kurt Braunmüller (“Competing tendencies in Germanic pronominal and deictic systems: The most general principle will prevail”, pp.11-27) discusses the interferences of the pronominal and deictic systems in Germanic, with a special focus on mainland Scandinavian. His main argument is that the L2 acquisition process by adults is of fundamental importance when doing research on language contact. This view gives in fact a viable method of explaining some more or less obscure linguistic phenomena. To illustrate this he quickly sketches four case studies about the replacement of personal pronouns by demonstratives in Germanic languages. In the conclusion he clearly states that it is important “to reconsider grammatical terminology [...], not only from a (monolingual) native perspective but also from a (bilingual) learner’s perspective”. “This idea” - he continues - “may lead to a *rethinking of grammar from an L2-perspective*, which is no longer based on a fossilised view of grammar [...]” (p.26).

Pavel Iosad (“‘Pitch accent’ and prosodic structure in Scottish Gaelic: Reassessing the role of contact”, pp.28-54) revisits the hypothesis that the “pitch accents” in Scottish Gaelic arose due to language contact with Norse, more specifically with the variety of Norse spoken in medieval Scotland. In his argumentation he claims that, albeit the possibility that the “pitch accents” had arisen due to language contact cannot be entirely refuted, there is the possibility that their emergence is due to an internal development. In order to corroborate his argument, he draws a parallel between the phenomenon in Scottish Gaelic and similar unrelated and independent phenomena in other branches of Celtic (Breton) and in Germanic.

Ari Páll Kristinsson and Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn (“Implications of language contact: Evaluating the appropriateness of borrowings in written Icelandic”, pp.55-67) present the results of one part of a research project carried out in 2011. The aim of the investigation was to research “how the purist Icelandic speech community evaluates lexical borrowings that do make up a part of its linguistic repertoire” (p.55). In doing this, the experiment was designed in order to see how two different generations of Icelanders (young students 18-21

y.o.; older adults (teachers)) evaluated different texts of different genres in relation to the loanwords and neologisms they contained. The results of the study show that both groups agree on the fact that loanwords are inappropriate in texts which are high on the diaphasic scale (such as TV and radio speech), whereas on the opposite pole of the diaphasic scale, when the participants were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of loanwords in texts e.g. from the social media, both groups generally agreed that loanwords were fully acceptable.

John Weinstock (“At the frontier: Sámi linguistics gets a boost from outside”, pp.68-88) deals with a very famous problem of Sámi linguistics, namely that of the origin of the Saami populations of Northern Scandinavian and Russia. In revisiting this problem, Weinstock uses as a basis the hypothesis put forward by Ante Aikio in a 2004 essay[2] and approaches it both with a classic linguistic perspective, as well as with one based on molecular biology and archaeology. His main conclusion is that Aikio’s hypothesis is valid, namely that “speakers of Proto-Sámi merged with and assimilated ancient hunter-gatherers who had long inhabited the interior of the Scandinavian peninsula” (p.68).

2.2 Phonology

This section is rather small and it contains just two contributions: one by Natalia Kuznetsova on Ingrian dialects (Finno-Ugric) and the other by Kristján Árnason on Faroese.

Natalia Kuznetsova (“Two phonological rarities in Ingrian dialects”, pp.91-117) presents two phonological rarities in two distinct Ingrian dialects: the Soikkola dialect and the Lower Luga dialect, both spoken in North-Western Russia. Kuznetsova’s analysis starts with a phonetic, phonological and typological analysis of these two phenomena and continues by investigating their probable future evolution against the typological background of similar phenomena in other languages.

Kristján Árnason (“Analysing phonological variation in Faroese”, pp.118-137) deals with the analysis of phonological variation in Faroese from a phonological perspective enriched with observation of a sociolinguistic and historical nature on the language under discussion. Although the sociolinguistic situation in the Faroese Islands is different from that of Iceland,

the author argues that it is nevertheless possible to investigate the phonological variation in Faroese by using the same methodology used in Iceland in 1980, i.e. by defining linguistic variables of various kinds and by subsequently mapping them onto external varieties of a diatopical or diastratical nature (location, age, sex, social class) (cf. pp.134-135).

2.3 Morphosyntax

Section 3, Morphosyntax, contains three articles. The first one, by Jeremy Bradley, is about Mari, a Finno-Ugric language spoken in the Volga basin (alternative name: Cheremisian). The second, by Ulla Stroh-Wollin, deals with Early Scandinavian third-person singular masculine and feminine pronouns; while the third, by Margrét Jónsdóttir, analyses linguistic change from accusative to dative subjects in Icelandic, also called “dative sickness” (Icel. *þágufallssýki*).

Jeremy Bradley (“Mari converb constructions - Interpretation and translation”, pp.141-161) investigates converb constructions in Mari (Finno-Ugric). In this language some verbs can be used jointly with other verbs to which they transfer either an aspectual or a directional sense. The converb used in the construction therefore loses its semantic content. After a review of the label “converb” in different linguistic schools, Bradley goes on by defining precisely the object of his investigation. Subsequently he analyses the interpretation and translation of this peculiar morphosyntactic structure. In the conclusions he addresses some lines of research and suggests what the most important ones would be in relation to his specific research problem.

Ulla Stroh-Wollin (“*Han* and *hon* - Anaphoric pronouns in Early Scandinavia”, pp.162-180) reassesses the validity of two etymologies for the third singular masculine and feminine pronouns in the Scandinavian languages. The author criticises an old etymology by the Swedish scholar Axel Kock^[3], which had been surprisingly well received by the academic community in the first half of the twentieth century, despite displaying some rather controversial points. Stroh-Wollin goes on to discuss some other options and etymologies and arrives at a more viable solution, which is, however, not a novelty, namely that OSc. *hānaz* is not a North Germanic innovation (as claimed by Kock) but an Indo-European

inherited stem, viz. **kēnos* (cf. AGr. (Aeolian) *kēnos*).

Margrét Jónsdóttir (“From accusative to dative (via nominative): The case of *ffölga* ‘increase’ and *fækka* ‘decrease’ in Icelandic”, pp.181-201) addresses a never-aging topic in Icelandic linguistics and language planning and policy studies, namely the so-called “dative sickness”. As an intriguing puzzle, she brings up the problem of explaining the case change of two Icelandic verbs, namely *ffölga* ‘increase (in number)’ and *fækka* ‘decrease (in number)’. The historical development of these verbs, shortly but precisely shown by the author, shows that, when used as anticausatives, their grammatical subject was assigned different cases during the centuries, namely accusative, nominative and dative. Margrét Jónsdóttir also analyses this development by contrasting the anticausatives with their corresponding causatives as well as the middle voice, which is semantically near, if not identical, to the anticausative meaning. In the conclusion she hypothesises a connection between the anticausative verb and its counterpart.

2.4 Syntax

This section contains three contributions. The first one, by Karl Erland Gadelii, deals with Diderichsen’s positional grammar, of which he proposes a generative reading; the second article, by Henrik Rosenkvist, investigates syntax in Elfdalian, while Ida Larsson and Janne Bondi Johannessen focus on word order in American varieties of Swedish and Norwegian.

Karl Erland Gadelii (“A generative interpretation of Diderichsen’s positional grammar”, pp.205-223) focuses on Diderichsen’s positional grammar and is chiefly concerned with giving a generative reading of it. He claims in fact that Diderichsen’s model has a generative potential, in Chomskian terms. In his article he tests the theory against several Scandinavian language structures and proposes a solution for some problems encountered in his experiment. He stresses that his solution does not involve an *ad hoc* creation of slots in the model, but rather the exploitation of an already extant one, namely the *forbinderfelt* “linking field” (cf. p.218). In his conclusion he admits and critically reviews the limits of Diderichsen’s model, which had initially been theorised for Mainland Scandinavian (Danish).

Henrik Rosenkvist (“Evidence for a syntactic Parameter at work in Övdalian”, pp.224-238) investigates the syntax of Elfdalian, an eastern Scandinavian language spoken in the

Älvdalen, Sweden (alternative names: Övdalian). In particular, he focuses on null referential subjects in this language by arguing that, since they require both distinct verb agreement and verb raising, these two features are likely to be somehow related to each other – he posits – by means of a Parameter. A critical review of earlier approaches to the main research problem of the paper is pursued, especially with regard to Holmberg and Platzack’s 1995 book[4], whose theoretical core is deemed still valid.

Ida Larsson and Janne Bondi Johannessen (“Embedded word order in Heritage Scandinavian”, pp.239-264) present an analysis of the syntax of embedded clauses in heritage Scandinavian, i.e. Norwegian and Swedish, as heritage languages in America. Their main claim is that unusual word order (from a European perspective) should not be explained as direct linguistic interference from English, but as something indirect, chiefly triggered in the language acquisition process, which is considered incomplete, viz. more or less abruptly interrupted at schooling age.

2.5 Grammaticalization

The book’s last section is dedicated to grammaticalization. On this topic two papers have been selected by the editors, both concerned with the Baltic area. The first paper, by Andres Karjus, deals with the grammaticalization of the sense of ‘out, outdoors’ in four Circum-Baltic languages, namely Estonian, Võro, Latvian and Lithuanian. The second paper, by Helle Metslang, Karl Pajusalu and Külli Habicht, is devoted to a particular typology of question markers in Estonian.

Andres Karjus (“Through the spyglass of synchrony: Grammaticalization of the exterior space in the Eastern Circum-Baltic”, pp.267-282) investigates the grammaticalization of a number of spatial grams which semantically denote movement towards the exterior. In his survey, he collected and analysed data with multidimensional scaling from four different languages of the Circum-Baltic area, namely two Finno-Ugric languages, Estonian and Võro, and two neighbouring Indo-European languages, Latvian and Lithuanian. The article demonstrates that the predictions of the grammaticalization theory are valid, since the results achieved in the investigations are in accordance with it.

Helle Metslang, Karl Pajusalu and Külli Habicht ("Conjunctive markers of polar questions in Estonian", pp.283-306) analyze a particular kind of question markers in Estonian, namely those that derive from a grammaticalization of conjunctive coordinators (additive, contrastive, adversative). Their main proposal is that such particles emerge because of the interplay of their function in coordinative clauses and the presupposition of polar questions in a process where the speaker reanalyzes the basic function of the coordinators (inter-sentence link marking) as a question marker.

3. Evaluation of the book

The selection of papers delivered at the 11th ICNGL testifies well to the current trends in Nordic linguistics. Various fields of linguistic scholarship were represented at the conference, with both diachronic and synchronic approaches. Unfortunately, the selection of papers in the book is quite small, compared to the amount of lectures held at the conference. Nevertheless, the quality of the articles in the book is high and it could be said that they are representative of the most important current lines of research in the field. Moreover, they give a useful glimpse of where there is space for further research and they are all quite encouraging for scholars, who want to put their efforts towards helping to develop (and perhaps solve) the research questions that each article addresses.

Endnotes

[1] An overview of the conference and its programme is available at the conference's website: <http://icngl11.uni-freiburg.de/> and also at the conference's web-page on the FRIAS website:

<https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/de/das-institut/archiv-frias/school-of-lili/veranstaltungen/international-conference-of-nordic-and-general-linguistics>.

[2] Aikio, Ante. 2004. An essay on substrate studies and the origin of Saami. In: Irma Hyvärinen, Petri Kallio, Jarmo Korhonen (eds.), *Etymologie, Entlehnungen und*

Entwicklungen: Festschrift für Jorma Koivulehto zum 70. Geburtstag, 5-34. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.

[3] Kock, Axel. 1908. Etymologiska anmärkningar. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 24: 179-198.

[4] Holmberg, Anders and Christer Platzack. 1995. *The Role of Inflection in Scandinavian Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.