Nor Jnl Ling 29.1, 137–145 © 2006 Cambridge University Press
Printed in the United Kingdom

Reviews

Oskar Bandle (main editor), **Kurt Braunmüller, Ernst Håkon Jahr, Allan Karker, Hans-Peter Naumann & Ulf Teleman (eds.)**; consulting editors Lennart Elmevik & Gun Widmark. *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, vol. 2 (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft **22:2**). Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005, xxix + 1150 pp.
doi:10.1017/S0332586506211545

Reviewed by Staffan Hellberg

Staffan Hellberg, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Stockholm University, SE-106 91 Stockholm. E-mail: staffan.hellberg@nordiska.su.se

The major œuvre on Nordic language history is now complete, with the appearance of the second of the two volumes of *The Nordic Languages*. The volumes comprise 230 articles by not quite as many different authors and will of course be the standard reference work on the subject for some considerable time. Its usefulness is increased by an index of subjects for both volumes at the end of the second volume. I am happy to find, for instance, 41 references to *stød* spread out over the two volumes (surprisingly, they show only partial overlap with the 12 references to 'glottal stop'). There is also an index of names, to enable curious scholars to count their references and calculate their ranking in this scientific field today.

The aim has been to draw a broad picture of the history of the Nordic languages. According to the preface (which is identical in both volumes), the endeavour has been 'to understand language history as part of an extensively understood cultural history' (p. vii). Given the old and still prevalent tradition of looking at language history without taking notice of what happens in society in general, such an aim is particularly laudable. Traditionalists, on the other hand, can be satisfied with the preface's two-step designation of the 'central parts' of the handbook: it turns out that what is considered 'central' are articles on phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon, where the first three types are not so much related to general history. Somewhat astonishingly, not only articles on changes in these components are counted as central but also articles on the synchronic systems of the respective standard languages 'in the 20th century' (ch. XVI). These latter articles are written in the present tense and are obviously not intended to describe an obsolete situation, despite the fact that we have passed the millennium border.

More effort is spent in the preface on defending the structure and the organisation of the handbook than is actually needed: an insightful reader knows that there are different options with their respective advantages and drawbacks, and he or she also

knows that the choice often has to be made for practical reasons in the given situation. This latter circumstance is here and there readily acknowledged by the editors; for instance, they could not find a scholar who was willing to cover the translation history of the 19th century for the whole area and thus had to divide this subject into several articles, one for each language (p. x). (However, one of these articles, on translations into Swedish, by Lars Wollin, also covers the 20th century, while there are no articles on 20th-century translations into Danish, Norwegian, or Icelandic, for some reason not given in the preface.)

There is, thus, no point in discussing the general design of the handbook and arguing for another. Rather, I have tried to see whether I could find what I expected to find under the chapter headings and article headings as they are. It seemed reasonable to concentrate on the 'central parts' designated by the preface. Of course, I also concentrated on the second volume. Having been duly impressed by the wealth of information, there remained one question that I did not find answered satisfactorily. In brief, it can be stated as follows: Whose language? This is because – in most of those articles which present linguistic change in a systematic way or with numerous examples – the delimitation of the group of speakers affected was either ill-defined or misleading. Let me substantiate this accusation.

This second volume starts around the year 1350. It is a point in time when local Nordic dialects are still diverging and just entering the most rapid phase of such development. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether Danish and Swedish can be claimed to be separate languages and whether standard languages exist at all. A new and fairly radical split within the Nordic area has appeared instead between the island languages (Icelandic, Faroese, and perhaps Norn) and the rest. Finally, it is a point in time when the borders between the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden differ from those of today.

All the same, for the period 1350–1550 we find one article on West Scandinavian phonology (i.e. Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese, and Norn), one on Danish phonology, and one on Swedish phonology. This might be so out of practical reasons, as mentioned, but the drawbacks caused by this division have not been really tackled. Thus, the article on West Scandinavian (by Michael Schulte) consists, after an introduction on general Nordic development, of separate accounts of the four languages concerned, which is of course an effect of the split just mentioned. The separation of Danish and Swedish into different articles (by Allan Karker and Tomas Riad) leads, in the first place, to uncertainty as to which article accounts for the dialects of the Scanian provinces (then under Danish rule, now under Swedish). Next, some changes that occur both in Danish dialects and in the dialects of southern Sweden appear to be unrelated. This concerns at least the lowering of short high vowels and general vowel lengthening in short syllables. In addition, lowering is called so in one article but opening in the other. The situation is partly saved by a subsequent 'typological and contrastive survey' (by Stig Eliasson), N.B. for the

reader who proceeds that far, but this article concentrates on what is typologically interesting and for that reason dismisses vowel lowering in Danish in half a sentence, for example. For morphology, syntax, and lexicon, there is only one article each for the period (by Endre Mørck, Jan Terje Faarlund, and Erik Simensen, respectively). In this way, some of the problems are avoided and the common Nordic perspective is better maintained, but distinct borders are drawn only between Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish, whereas other borders are diffuse ('some Sw. dialects', etc.) as if the political borders were the only important dialect borders (in the case of syntax, there are very few differences at all between the Mainland Scandinavian dialects).

In the next period, 1550–1800, standard languages do emerge, and the articles on Swedish (by Kent Larsson) and Danish (by Hanne Ruus) are very much occupied with the respective standard languages, not least in their written form. Although the article on Swedish gives some information on regional variation, it is as if only Norway had real dialects in the period: the article on Norwegian (by Oddvar Nes) is to a great extent devoted to dialectal differences. The common Nordic perspective is wonderfully kept in the article on lexicon (by Lena Ekberg), but there is no discussion about which loanwords reached local dialects and which of them stayed in varieties closer to the standard. A subsequent article on sociolinguistic aspects (by Gun Widmark, Inge Lise Pedersen and Helge Sandøy), which is in practice a juxtaposition of three separate articles and does not hold a common Nordic perspective, shows great interest in stylistic and social differences but indicates the existence of dialects only in passing.

The same goes for the articles on the 19th century. The fact that the overwhelming majority of inhabitants of the Nordic countries still spoke local dialects never becomes clear to the ignorant reader within the 'central' articles. (There are other articles that do point out this fact but, as mentioned, they do not offer any descriptions.) When it comes to the 20th century, when local dialects are gradually dying out at least in Denmark and Sweden, there are three articles on dialects (five, if we include the articles on 'forms of speech' in Icelandic and Faroese). Whereas the article on Norwegian dialects (by Gunnstein Akselberg) actually presents recent changes in the dialects, the articles on Swedish and Danish dialects (by Göran Hallberg and Inger Ejskjær) give synchronic descriptions of the situation in the former half of the century, with some hints about how old the various dialect differences are. This is not exactly what one expects from a handbook in language history. True, Göran Hallberg touches, in his introduction, on the question of who spoke dialect and who ceased to do so, and Inger Ejskjær devotes no little space to levelled dialect, i.e. which features tended to disappear early and late, respectively, when local dialects turned into regional varieties. But dialect levelling could have been the major topic of the articles.

The criticism expressed here affects, in the first place, the articles as positioned in the overall design of the handbook and to a much lesser degree the articles in isolation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586506221541 Published online by Cambridge University Press

What should be said about them when seen in their own right is mainly that they are very informative and in most cases well-organised and clearly written. Michael Schulte, writing on Middle West Scandinavian phonology, deserves special credit for including in his account Norn, the extinct language of the Orkney and Shetland Islands. Hanne Ruus, writing on the development of Early Modern Danish, should be particularly credited for carefully putting her account into a framework of general history. Also Kent Larsson, writing on the development of Early Modern Swedish, gives a concise description of the historical background to the standard language. Finally, Sven-Göran Malmgren, writing on the lexicon of the 19th century, should be complimented for presenting quantitative data on loanwords from different sources (mainly German, French, and English). There is no doubt that 'an international readership with a scientific interest in the topic' (p. vi in the preface) will have much to gain by reading the articles. Which type of account best serves these readers is not easy to tell. Magnús Pétursson, for instance, accounts for the development of Early Modern Icelandic in a traditional, theoretically eclectic way, relying very much on tables, some of them in huge format. Allan Karker, on Middle Danish phonology, and Kent Larsson, on the development of Early Modern Swedish, could also be said to be traditional and eclectic, but without tables. On the other hand, Tomas Riad, on Middle Swedish phonology, and Stig Eliasson, on the typology of Middle Nordic phonology, clearly filter their data through their respective up-to-date theories. A middle course is taken by Hans-Olav Enger, on 19th Nordic morphology, who embeds some theoretical confessions in a mainly traditional account. In all probability, different readers will have different predilections.

Irrespective of the mode of presentation chosen, phonology, morphology and syntax are not easy subjects and require concentration even from the reader who is a trained linguist. Lexicon may be easier, but as linguists we are proud of our tradition of presenting a host of examples, thereby inhibiting really smooth reading. The reader who wants articles to read through at an even speed and with great immediate retention has to turn to the 'peripheral' parts of the handbook. There are some authors that have succeeded particularly well in delivering such articles. I will mention a few of them while omitting others that could just as well have deserved mention. Patrik Åström writes about manuscripts and book printing in Late Medieval and Early Modern times, and combines deep erudition and remarkable clarity in his exposition. Lars Lönnroth presents the development of types of text in the period ca. 1350–1550 in a fluent and easily-readable style, managing to keep a bird's eye view and give a fair amount of detail at the same time. Jørgen Fafner follows the development of metrics from Late Medieval times to the end of the 19th century, in three different articles, giving his presentation a personal stamp from an eminent reader of poetry. Inge Lise Pedersen narrates the sociolinguistic history of Danish, or rather of Denmark, through the centuries, in a distinct manner and in close connection to social and economic history in general. Ernst Håkon Jahr (with a selected literature

list of 21 items, 12 of which by the same Jahr) makes the rise and fall of the Samnorsk movement in 20th-century Norway a really thrilling story to follow.

Robert Zola Christensen & Lisa Christensen. *Dansk Grammatik*. Odense: Syddansk universitetsforlag, 2005, 304 pp.
doi:10.1017/S0332586506221541

Reviewed by Ulla Stroh-Wollin

Ulla Stroh-Wollin, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Box 527, SE-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: ulla.stroh-wollin@nordiska.uu.se

Dansk Grammatik [Danish grammar] is primarily an introduction to Danish grammar for university students, to be read chapter by chapter during basic courses in language structure. It is pointed out on the back cover, as is customary, that the book can also serve for reference purposes and is useful to anyone interested in the structure of the Danish language. To a certain extent, the book does have this capacity, but it is obvious that its main aim is to serve as a textbook. This is not criticism, just a piece of information. In fact, the concept is fine. *Dansk Grammatik* is indeed an excellent resource for students and teachers.

The adaptation of the book for educational use can be discerned in different ways. First, the book is not entirely devoted to grammar in its most restricted meaning but treats elementary semantics as well. Naturally, some semantics is justified in a book on grammar, since no clear-cut border can be drawn between grammar and semantics. On the other hand, semantics is also a linguistic discipline in its own right, which in fact the authors use as an explicit argument in setting aside a separate part of the book entitled 'Semantics'. I am rather convinced that there is an implicit argument as well, namely that in this way the content of the book fits the course design better. Elementary semantics is often taught during the same course as grammar (at least at departments of Scandinavian languages in Scandinavia), so one book encompassing both subjects is very practical. One can perhaps question whether the title of the book is the most appropriate, as some 50 pages out of about 300 are devoted to more or less pure semantics. However this is not a major criticism in this review.

The book's character of a textbook is obvious in some of the chapters, which are clearly not encyclopaedic in nature. This is most noticeable in the introductory chapter to the book as a whole and in the separate introductions to the morphological and semantic sections. Here the authors show a most praiseworthy ambition to provide an overview and convey an understanding of distinctions and connections in linguistics. The students are not only ensured access to many of the basic concepts of general linguistic knowledge, but their attention is also drawn to the fact that there are different ways of viewing concepts like language, grammar, word, meaning and more.

Selecting material for course literature is a delicate matter. *Dansk Grammatik* is explicitly focused on the core of grammar, and rightly so when addressed to beginners. However, in order not to detract too much from its encyclopaedic value, it should also be pointed out that the book nevertheless contains a great deal more than what is usually included at a beginners' level. The general index, for example, with its more than 800 terms, bears witness to this.

The content of the book is organised in 25 chapters, grouped into four main sections: 1) morphology, 2) word classes, 3) syntax and 4) semantics. Part 1 includes a short introduction to the subject of morphology and two chapters outlining the basic principles of word formation and word inflection. Each word class is then presented in greater detail in separate chapters in part 2. The syntax section is devoted to the structure of syntagms and clauses. It is noteworthy that it also contains a relatively extensive chapter on 'clause schemes', i.e. models used to describe and analyse the topological constituent order of different clause types. These schemes are widely appreciated throughout Scandinavia, but the extremely detailed account in this work may be due to a particular Danish tradition, with models originating from the Danish scholar Paul Diderichsen. Part 4 is an introduction to elementary, traditional semantics.

The overall impression is that of very clear and very well-balanced descriptions throughout the book. That said, I will restrict my remarks to certain aspects of sections 2 and 3, which constitute the main bulk of the book. Being a Swedish linguist, I could not resist the temptation to look for influences from the comprehensive grammar recently published by the Swedish Academy (Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson 1999). Such influences would not be surprising, especially considering the fact that one of the authors of *Dansk Grammatik*, the native Swedish scholar Lisa Christensen, was an assistant member of the editorial staff of the Swedish Academy Grammar for several years. I did find evidence of such an influence, but, as will be clear in what follows, it was not always as apparent as one might have expected.

According to the authors, their grouping of words into word classes follows the Danish tradition, with the trifling exception that onomatopoetic words do not constitute a class of their own but are regarded as interjections. The word class grouping is by and large well-justified, but I would have preferred one deviation from the tradition, namely that of the word class conjunctions. I believe that the functions of co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions are so diverse that a division (as is usually the custom in Swedish grammars nowadays) is an advantage. As it now stands, the term conjunction encompasses both types, as well as the infinitive marker (*at*). The joint labelling may have been a way to avoid word classes with very few members. However, the indefinite and definite articles constitute one – very small – word class, and it would have been possible to regard those words as pronouns, given the Scandinavian view of certain determiners as pronouns. Retaining the traditional view of conjunctions is thus probably a question of mere tradition.

Each word class chapter is outlined in a logical and consistent order: short introductory comments on morphological structure, syntactic function and meaning are followed by comments on possible sub-groups and inflection. These presentations are simultaneously accurate and pedagogically sound. The reader is provided with the essentials, including remarks on problematic categorisations, without confusion from peripheral details.

Perhaps the most remarkable contribution is the unusually extensive section on tense, reflecting the specialism of Lisa Christensen's. In this section, the temporal interpretations of different tenses are discussed with the help of schematic models, where the verbal action is temporally related to the moment of speech and to a moment of 'registration'. This intriguing presentation may be beyond the capacity of some beginners, but others may well find it captivating. I also very much appreciate the fact that the chapter on verbs includes short sections on semantic roles and on the semantic and syntactic aspects on valence.

As it is particularly interesting to me personally, I will now take a closer look at the sub-division of pronouns and, to some extent, adverbs.

It is well-known that pronouns can be characterised according to many different principles. Some characterisations are unproblematic, like the distinction between anaphoric and deictic pronouns, and grammars show substantial consensus in this respect. My particular interest concerns the far less unanimous grouping of pronouns with regard to their meaning. Some sub-classes tend to recur in different grammars, e.g. definite and interrogative pronouns, but in my experience, there are no two grammars that identify exactly the same set of sub-classes. Thus, when faced with a new grammar, I always look to see whether the pronouns are grouped in yet another way.

First, however, a brief remark before I develop the subject further. I am talking about pronouns from a Scandinavian perspective, which means that even determiners are included in this group. It is usually the case in Anglo-Saxon linguistics, as far as I understand, that determiners constitute a word class of their own, whereas the word class pronouns contains only 'independent' pronouns, i.e. words that can function as noun phrases on their own. From the Anglo-Saxon point of view the word *who* is, thus, a pronoun and the word *which* a determiner. From a Scandinavian standpoint, both words are pronouns.

The pronouns in *Dansk Grammatik* are presented under four main headings: personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns and other pronouns. The group of 'other pronouns' includes indefinite pronouns, quantitative pronouns and relational pronouns. This is indeed a classification I have never met before. I recognise, however, the less common terms QUANTITATIVE and RELATIONAL from the Swedish Academy Grammar, where pronouns are classified firstly as definite, interrogative, quantitative or relational, with the definite pronouns then sub-divided into personal, demonstrative and relative.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586506221541 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A closer look at the two classifications shows that the differences are partly superficial and of little significance. I find it a little surprising that only personal pronouns in *Dansk Grammatik*, not demonstratives, are explicitly described as definite as well, but in my opinion it is a matter of taste as to whether the two categories are presented under the same heading ('definite') or not. *Dansk Grammatik* makes a slight deviation from the Swedish Academy Grammar in describing relative pronouns as interrogatives in a certain use, a deviation I am in favour of. Both works use the label 'relational pronoun' for words such as (*the*) *same* (*one*), *such*, *the first/last* (*one*), *the former/latter* and *the next* (*one*).

There is, however, one difference between the two grammars that is difficult to understand, namely what sense there is in making a differentiation between indefinite and quantitative pronouns, as is done in *Dansk Grammatik*. (Both types are labelled QUANTITATIVE in the Swedish Academy Grammar.) This simply means that many words, e.g. *nogen* 'some, somebody', are regarded as indefinite pronouns in independent use (cf. *somebody*) and as quantitative pronouns if used as determiners (cf. *some* x). I would have preferred a single label, and either 'indefinite' or 'quantitative' would have been fine.

Even the sub-division of adverbs is of a certain interest in this context, because the Swedish Academy Grammar not only distinguishes definite, interrogative, quantitative and relational pronouns, but definite, interrogative, quantitative and relational adverbs as well. The same kind of parallel between pronouns and (pronominal) adverbs is not made in *Dansk Grammatik*. The authors adhere strictly to the traditional labels, such as adverbs of place, time and manner, negation, etc. Perhaps they felt further sophistication would have muddled the presentation?

My interest in part 3, syntax, primarily concerned the overall structure, with the most important question being whether the hierarchical nature of the clause was emphasised in the same way as in the Swedish Academy Grammar. Just looking at the number of pages assigned to the clause schemes in *Dansk Grammatik* gives one an indication that the topological structure of the clause plays a greater role in this book. Objects and adverbials are thus regarded as constituents of the clause, on the same level as the subject. A hierarchical standpoint (as in the Swedish Academy Grammar) makes objects and adverbials constituents in verb phrases, whereas subjects and (finite) verb phrases are the primary constituents of clauses.

Personally, I cannot judge which mode of presentation is the most suitable in a grammar for beginners. The topological structure may be an easier starting point, but in my experience, the hierarchical structure has to be explained nevertheless. The authors do not argue for their choice, but they do draw the reader's attention to the alternative possibility (p. 177), which I appreciate.

Fortunately, the authors use Latin terminology throughout the book. Danish terms, hitherto widely used in traditional Danish school grammar, occur only when

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586506221541 Published online by Cambridge University Press

new terms are used for the first time: the Latin term is then followed by the Danish counterpart in brackets. I think this is a reasonable arrangement.

To conclude, I hope that it is clear that I found *Dansk Grammatik* to be an excellent resource on grammar. The authors' approach is rather traditional (sometimes surprisingly so), but linguistically, the book is very up-to-date. It is possible to raise objections to a few details (including some that I have not commented upon), but they are of secondary importance. The book is extremely well written and the authors do their best to make complicated matters as clear as possible. Danish students and their teachers are to be congratulated.

REFERENCE

Teleman, Ulf, Staffan Hellberg & Erik Andersson. 1999. *Svenska Akademiens Grammatik* [Swedish Academy Grammar] (vols. 1–4). Stockholm: Svenska Akademien.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586506221541 Published online by Cambridge University Press