Morphology and Syntax
in the Letters of Anna Vasa.
An Overview and Some Theoretical Implications

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Artikeln har två huvudsyften: det ena är att presentera några morfologiska och syntaktiska drag som förekommer i Anna Vasas (1568–1625) brev till (huvudsakligen) familjen Gyllenstierna och därmed ge läsaren en liten inblick i prinsessans språk. Anna Vasas språk är tämligen typiskt för den äldre nysvenska perioden. I morfologin har det skett en markant förändring jämfört med den fornsvenska perioden. Kasuskategorin är borta och verbböjningen har reducerats till att endast gälla numerus. Inom syntaxen bevaras några typiskt fornsvenska drag i viss (liten) utsträckning – gammal bisatsordföld, kilkonstruktion, oblika subjekt, utelämning av formellt subjekt och OV-ordföljd, men dessa ger vika för den nysvenska syntaxen. Det andra syftet är att testa två äldre hypoteser om kopplingen mellan morfologi och syntax på brevmaterialet: den ena lagd fram av Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998) och den andra av Holmberg (2010). Det har visat sig att hypotesen som Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998) föreslagit inte kan korroboreras med utgångspunkt i våra data medan Holmbergs (2010) hypotes delvis falsifieras och delvis korroboreras av materialet. Dessa hypoteser har inte blivit testade på äldre nysvenska förr.

Keywords: history of Swedish language, morphology, syntax, Early Modern Swedish, House of Vasa

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, we give an overview of some syntactic and morphological features of the language used by the Swedish princess Anna Vasa (1568–1625) in her letters to the Gyllenstierna family published in Dumanowski *et al.* (2002) as well as one additional letter, published in the Swedish historical journal *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia* in 1817.[1] Second, we test an old hypothesis on a connection between morphology and syntax in Scandinavian languages based on the same material. The language of Anna Vasa has not been a subject of much published work – however, a short description of it (which does not focus on neither syntax nor morphology) is given in Dumanowski *et*

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[1] *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, fourth part, Stockholm, Elméns och Granbergs tryckeri, 1817, pp. 238–240 (http://runeberg.org/hrsh/4/ [accessed 15.09.2019]).

al. (2002). This paper will partially fill this gap and thereby shed some light on the more informal, written language of the Early Modern Swedish period. The material is especially interesting as the letters are written by a female member of royalty to her close friends and are as such the only surviving example of such letters in a Swedish context.[2]

2. Morphology and syntax in Anna Vasa's letters

Written in the late 16th and early 17th century, Anna Vasa's 25 letters are – as we mentioned above – exceptional in the context of early modern Swedish literary sources. The letters were exchanged between Swedish princess Anna Vasa and her close friends. Of the letters, all but two are written by Anna Vasa personally, while the last two letters are written by a clerk (or two different clerks). The language of Anna Vasa is a good example of the language used in the Early Swedish period. The orthography is not consistent in the sense that the spelling of the same word may differ (cf. *någedh*, *någed* and *noged* all meaning 'some', Swe. *något*), although the first attempts to create an orthographic norm in Swedish were made already in the translation of the New Testament (published 1526) and in Gustav Vasa's Bible (published 1541), which consists of the Old and the New Testament (Pamp 1971: 231). Still, Anna Vasa is quite consistent in her orthography, at least compared to other authors from the same time period.

2.1. Morphology

The morphology more closely resembles the modern Swedish morphology than of the Old Swedish one: case marking on noun phrases is lost and the verbal morphology is heavily reduced, retaining only a distinction between singular and plural in the present tense of all verbs and in the past tense of strong and some irregular verbs.

The plural ending of masculine and feminine nouns which in Old Swedish are *-ar* (*andar* 'spirits/ghosts'), *-ir* (*synir* 'sons'), and *-ur* (*vikur* 'weeks') in indefinite form all end on *-er* in Anna Vasa's language (e.g. *ander* 'spirits', *söner* 'sons', *wecker* 'weeks'). Disyllabic neutrals continuing the older *ija*-stems ending on *-e* get the plural ending *-r* (Modern Swedish *-n*), e.g. *kongericker* 'kingdoms' (Swe. *kungariken*). The adjective is no longer case inflected and has

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[2] The majority of the letters of Anna Vasa (fifteen letters) are written to one of her closest friends, Sigrid Gyllenstierna (1568–1608, daughter of Per Brahe senior), seven letters are addressed to the husband of Sigrid, Johan Gyllenstierna (1569–1617, son of Nils Gyllenstierna, baron of Lundholm), and the two last to a *Kaise*, who is either Karin Gyllenstierna (d. 1685) or Katarina Strucke (d. 1621), the princess' maid. The most personal letters are written to Sigrid Gyllenstierna. The language in these is more colloquial and the form of address alternates between *I* 'you.pl' and *du* 'you.sg', while the princess writes about herself analogically both *vi* 'we' and *jag* 'I'. In the letters to Johan Gyllenstierna the address form is always *I* 'you.pl' and Anna Vasa is always a *vi* 'we'.

the ending *-e* when it is a part of a definite noun phrase, e.g. *dene bedröwede werden* 'this desolate world'. The adverbs ending in *-lika* in Old Swedish (*ävinnelika* 'eternally') has the ending *-lige* (*ewinerllige* 'eternally'). These are the most frequent adverb formation in the letters, although the formations on *-lig* (*tämellig* 'fairly') and *-ligen* (*inerlligen* 'fervent') are attested too. The comparative forms of adverbs (*-er*) and adjectives (*-re*) differ, as they did in Old Swedish, but this difference is not always kept. Personal pronouns are inflected in base form and oblique form (but no longer in case), and this distinction is present for all the pronouns, including the pronoun *di* 'they' which in Modern Swedish does not differ in pronounciation between the base and the oblique form (*de* / dɔm/ 'they' vs. *dem* /dɔm/ 'them'). The second person plural pronoun is *I* 'ye', not yet the younger *ni* 'you.pl' (first attestation 1615). The verbs are, as already mentioned, inflected in tense (present/past), *taller* 'talk.sg' – *tallede* 'talk.pl' and number (singular/plural), *kåmer* 'come.sg' – *kåme* 'come.pl'. The verb ending in present singular is *-er* for weak verbs, strong verbs, and the previously reduplicated verbs (in Old Swedish both *-ar*, *-er*, and *-ir*): *taller* 'talk.sg', *hiällper* 'help.sg', *håller* 'hold.sg'. A distinct ending for plural imperative, *-(e)r*, is present, e.g. *görer* 'do/make.pl.imp'. This particular form is well known from the Gustav Vasa's Bible (Wessén 1968: 261). Finally, one should mention the past conjunctive forms (contrafactives), e.g. *finge* 'would have got', double supine *han hade welledh haft* lit. HE HAVE.PAST WILL.SUP HAVE.SUP 'he would have liked to have' and the strong inflections of verbs like **löpe* 'run' och *hiellpe* 'help', which later got weak inflection.

2.2. Syntax

Anna Vasa's syntax represents a transition between the Old Swedish and the Modern Swedish period, but is closer to the latter one than to the preceding stage.

In noun phrases, double definiteness is not fully developed yet and when preceded by a demonstrative pronoun, the noun may either appear in definite form (by the suffixed definite article), *dedh winedh* 'this wine.def', *dene gången* 'this time.def', or stay in its basic form, *dedh giftermåll* 'this marriage', *dene såmer* 'this summer'.

Null expletive subjects, which were common in Old Swedish, are still attested in the letters, although sparsely (1). An overt expletive, *ded(h)* 'it', is quite common, see (2).

(1) …*efter   i   tÿslad   er så osäckert*
     because in Germany is so unsafe
     'Because [it] is so unsafe in Germany.'

(2) *Hade **ded** waredh så då   hade lwter   inted bestått…*
     had   it been   so then had Luther not endured
     'Had it been so, then Luther had not endured.'

Referential subjects may, as in Modern Swedish, only be omitted from the clause-initial position and are thus to be seen as so-called topic drop (Mörnsjö 2002), rather than an instance of null referential subjects, cf. (3):

(3) **Later** *er   och förnime ath per gråben och*
     let   you also know   that Per Gråben and
     hanß   hwstrw hawe både skrewedh dråningen till...
     his   wife   have both written   queen.the to
     'I also let you know that Per Gråben and his wife have both written to the queen...'

In the letters, there are some remnants of oblique subjects. While these were common in Old Swedish (cf. Falk 1997: 183–190), Anna Vasa retains oblique subjects only with two verbs: **sÿneß* 'seem' (_{Swe.} *synas*) and **tÿckeß* 'seem' (_{Swe.} *tyckas*), see the examples in (4) and (5):

(4) *Men **oß sÿneß** ded beste ware ath...*
     but   us thinks the best be   to...
     'We think the best thing would be to...'

(5) *Hwadh ere   söner till kåmer **tÿcker åß** best ath...*
     what   your sons concern think us   best that...
     'As for what concerns your sons, we think it best to...'

The object normally follows the verbs (VO-word order as in Modern Swedish), but there are instances of **objects preceding the verb** (OV-word order as often in Old Swedish, cf. Delsing 1999). The OV-instances in the letter are mostly connected to a syntactic loan from German, that is the construction *icke förhålle någen at(h)...* (_{Ger.}*jemanden nicht vorhalten, dass...*) 'to inform somebody that', as in (6), but there are instances of a pronominal object preceding the verb too, (7).

(6) *Wÿ **kwne** er   kere her iahan gÿllenstiärne icke **förhålle***
     we could your dear sir Johan Gyllenstierna not inform
     'We could not let your dear sir Johan Gyllenstierna know.'

(7) *...håpeß   wÿ ath i   hawe **oß** änthskÿlledh*
     ...hope.PASS we that you have **us** excused
     'We hope that you excuse us.'

Verbal particles are often placed after the object, cf. (8), in contrast to Modern Swedish, where particles are obligatorily placed before the object. The syntactic behavior in (8) shares similarities with Danish and Norwegian.

(8) *Di   hawe **skrewed åß till***
     they hawe written   us to
     'They have written to us.'

In declarative clauses starting with the conjunction *och* 'and' the finite verb is often placed before the subject (9), a phenomenon well known from Old Swedish (Pettersson 1996: 118).

(9) *Och **har** **iagh** waredh så mÿckedh bedröwedh och frwchtedh...*
    also have I   been   so much   sad   and feared...
    'I have also been so very sad and feared...'

There is one example of the finite verb being placed as the fourth constituent in a main clause (10). The verb is put in conjunctive present tense and possibly this is an instance of an embedded clause with no conjunction, if it is not an anacoluthic.

(10) *Hanß allzmegtihet heneß maiestedh och mith lille grÿn enw widere*
    his   almightiness her majesty and my little grain furthermore
    hiellpe och stÿrcke *sith namn till ere   och oß alle till hwgnedh*
    help   and strengthen his name to honour and us all to   peace
    'May his almightiness furthermore help her majesty and my little darling and may he strengthen his name to honor and, for us all, to peace.'

In **embedded clauses** one finds both **remnants of** the so-called *wedge construction* (**Stylistic Fronting**), exemplified in (11) and instances of **verb movement** to the middle field across sentential adverbs (the so called *old embedded word order*), see (12), together with examples of no such verb movement (the so called *new embedded word order*), see (13).

(11) *...såm **hene** har stöt   wr   tiänsten*
    ...that her   has pushed from position.DEF
    '...that has fired her from [her] position.'

(12) *...såm magen   kan **intedh** lide*
    ...that stomach.DEF kan not   suffer
    '...that the stomach cannot suffer.'

(13) *...ath den swenske kronen   **intedh** trÿcker hanß hwfedh*
    ...that the Swedish crown.DEF not   presses his head
    '...that the Swedish crown not emburden his head.'

Another feature is **final placement of the finite verb** in embedded clauses, considered to be syntactic loan from German, cf. (14).

(14) *...som Gud Alzmechtig honom med sin elskelige*
    ...that God almighty   him   with his lovely
    *käre hwsfru **gifuit** och **förlänt hafuer***
    dear wife   given and lent   has
    '...that God almighty has granted and lent him and his lovely dear wife.'

Generally, the language of the letters is a quite typical example of the less formal language from the Early Modern Swedish period. The orthography is still inconsequent, yet shows some similarities to the one known from the first Swedish translation of the Gospels (1526 and 1541) and the Old Testament (1541). Furthermore, nominal and verbal morphology are heavily reduced compared to Old Swedish, although they are richer than the Modern Swedish system. In syntax, one finds some remains of the Old Swedish pattern (Stylistic Fronting, null

expletives, verb movement, OV word order), but the syntax has started to resemble the syntax of Modern Swedish. Finally, one finds some syntactic loans from German, a phenomenon quite typical for the time period.

Having presented the morphological and syntactic features of the language attested in the letters of Anna Vasa, we would like to draw the reader's attention to five of these features: verbal inflection on the one hand and V-to-T movement, oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, and null expletives on the other. Many different hypotheses on an alleged correlation between these five phenomena have been proposed since the 1980's and we would like to test some of these hypotheses on our material.

3. A between morphology and syntax?

Within linguistics, there is a long tradition of connecting morphology with syntax, in a more or less direct way, at least since the 14th century (Håkansson 2008: 34). In the last 30–40 years, some of these attempts have been formalized within the framework of generative grammar. Subsequently, much of the diachronic and synchronic variation within the syntax of Scandinavian languages has been explained by a assuming a number of parameters. This explanation has its roots in a parametric approach to syntax, as developed in the Principles & Parameters theory (Chomsky 1981). The parametric approach presupposes that Universal Grammar contains principles determining the frames of language. Some of the principles are parametric – that is, they can have more than one value, and the differences between languages are seen as an effect of different values of such parameters. Further, it has been assumed that each syntactic parameter must be related to a morphological factor (Borer 1984; Chomsky 1981). Although the parametric approach has also been criticized, several works assuming a connection between morphology and syntax have become very influential. In the following sections, we will focus on two hypotheses connecting verbal morphology with a clustering of syntactic phenomena in the Scandinavian languages. Both Bobaljik and Thráinsson (1998) and Holmberg (2010) maintain the hypothesis that morphological evidence – in the form of 'rich' verbal agreement – signifies a positive setting of a parameter that in turn makes certain syntactic patterns possible. Although they differ in the description of rich verbal morphology and in the exact syntactic phenomena related to the parameter, the relation between morphology and syntax is evident in both studies. The unidirectional generalization in both studies (Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998 and Holmberg 2010) is that the syntactic patterns in question are not expected to appear when the morphological evidence is absent, whereas they may appear when the morphological evidence is present. The relevant syntactic patterns are (1) V-to-T movement, (2) oblique subjects, (3) Stylistic Fronting, and (4) null expletives. The morphology and syntax present in Anna Vasa's letters form an interesting testing ground for this hypothesis because of number agreement on the verb, but not person agreement.

3.1. V-to-T movement

The language of Anna Vasa's letters displays two different word orders of verb and adverb in embedded clauses: the sentential adverb(s) can precede the verb (15) or follow it (16). In the first case, it is often assumed that the finite verb is in situ (no verb movement), whereas in the second case one can reckon with the movement of finite verb to T.

(15) ...*ath den swenske kronen* **intedh trÿcker** *hanß hwfedh*
      ...that the Swedish crown.DEF not   presses his   head
      '[make so] that the Swedish crown does not push down on his head.'

(16) ...*såm magen*   *kan* **intedh** *lide*
      ...that the.stomach can not   suffer
      '...that the stomach cannot suffer.'

Bobaljik and Thráinsson (1998) use a cartographic approach to syntax, in which agreement morphemes project the functional agreements phrases (AgrPs) in the syntactic hierarchy. This so-called Split-IP Parameter (hereafter SIP) is triggered by the "possibility of multiple inflectional morphemes on the verb stem, specifi-cally the co-occurrence of discrete tense and agreement morphemes" (Bobaljik & Thráinsson 1998: 67). A richer syntactic structure with inflectional AgrPs en-larges the IP (nowadays labelled as TP), adding specifier and head positions that were previously inaccessible slots. The prediction for the verb is the following: when morphological evidence does set the parameter for SIP, the language will exhibit verb raising from the VP in order to formally check the functional ele-ments in the AgrPs. This will overtly result in the finite verb preceding sentential adverbs in ALL TYPES of embedded clauses, that is V-to-T movement. While languages that do not trigger the SIP may contain the same structures, these must be independently motivated. Bobaljik and Thráinsson (1998: 61) therefore allow for syntactic evidence being the clue for determining the positive value of the STP.

The ordering of verb and adverb thus serves as a diagnostic for whether ver-bal movement has occurred or not.[3] When the verb surfaces in a position before the adverb, we assume that it has raised from its base-generated position in the verb phrase domain. This way, it is possible to evaluate whether the verb has moved or not. One core prediction made in Bobaljik & Thráinsson's (1998) ap-proach is that languages with a positive parameter for the SIP must obligatorily raise the verb from V to T. This means that the verb must always precede the sentential adverb, since it must formally agree with the inflectional content of the AgrP. Anna Vasa's letters show both orderings of verb and adverb: (1) *ad-verb – verb* word order, seemingly lacking V-to-T movement, cf. (1) above, and (2) *verb – adverb* word order in certain types of embedded clauses that is

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[3] As the embedded clauses introduced by the subjunction *at(h)* 'that' may in some cases exhibit the structure of a main clause (allowing for example for topicalization), we keep them in a separate category and these cannot necessarily be seen as diagnostics for verb movement to T.

demonstrably a result of V-to-T movement, cf. (2) above. As the verbal morphology of Anna Vasa is not sufficient to trigger the STP given the approach of Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998), one needs to establish whether there are other (syntactic) clues to set the positive value of the Split IP. Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998: 61) claim that it could be verb movement to T (sic!) or Transitive Expletive Constructions. The first syntactic evidence must be excluded, as the V-to-T movement cannot be both the trigger and the result of the SIP. As for Transitive Expletive Constructions, we do not find any instances of these in the letters. It is impossible to determine if these are simply absent from the material or if they are not allowed. If the IP in Anna Vasa's language is not split, there is a problem, because there are obvious examples of V-to-T movement, but there is no structural possibility to account for this movement under the approach of Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998). A solution to that could be the one proposed in Koeneman & Zeijlstra (2014: 581–582) for Övdalian, namely assuming that sentential adverbs are base generated in one of three syntactic positions, one of them being above the final position of the verb, T. While this solution gives the desired result, no independent evidence for such a position exists. Hence, this alternative must be rejected too (cf. also Garbacz 2019: 19).

3.2. Oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, and null expletives

The three syntactic constructions oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, and null expletives are all attested in the language of the letters. Under the approach of Holmberg (2010), all of them are connected to inflectional morphology. The study is another, more recent attempt to link morphological and syntactic features within the branch of Scandinavian languages by tracing them back to abstract φ-features in T. Whereas Insular Scandinavian (which in Holmberg's 2010 paper is represented solely by Icelandic) exhibits (i) rich subject-verb agreement, (ii) oblique subjects, (iii) Stylistic Fronting, (iv) null expletives, and (v) null generic subject pronoun, Mainland Scandinavian (represented in the paper by standard varieties of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian) does not exhibit any of these phenomena. The prediction is that the five above-mentioned properties should cluster in the Scandinavian languages and in their non-standard varieties. In short, subject-verb agreement in number and person (so called *rich agreement*) should correlate with *the possibility for* oblique subjects and Stylistic Fronting, and with *obligatory* null expletives and null generic subject pronoun.

The letters lack rich subject-verb agreement, as the verb is only inflected in number,[4] but feature (traces of) oblique subjects (17) and Stylistic Fronting (18).

(17) *Men **oß sÿneß** ded beste ware ath...*
      but   us   thinks the best be   to...
      'We think the best thing would be to...'

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4 Holmberg does not define "rich", but says that two examples of it is subject-verb agreement in Icelandic and Old Swedish.

(18) …såm **hene** har stöt   wr   tiänsten
      …that her   has pushed from position.DEF
      '…that has fired her from [her] position.'

Stylistic Fronting in (18) is a case of fronting of the indirect object. After the approach by Holmberg (2010), this constituent would move to the specifier of TP to satisfy the EPP. The same syntactic operations result in the oblique subject in (17), where the constituent that fills Spec, TP is the accusative form of the semantic agent: *oß* 'us', instead of *wÿ* 'we'. Still, the agreement is too poor to license the possibility for oblique subjects and Stylistic Fronting, so how these are possible under the approach of Holmberg (2010) remains and open question.

Null expletive subjects and null generic subjects are expected in the varieties that have an uninterpretable person feature ([uPn]) and an uninterpretable number feature ([uNr]) in T (such as in Icelandic with its rich subject-verb agreement). This is expected because Agree makes the uninterpretable features interpretable, and thus renders the features of T and a covert subject identical, not forcing a spell-out. In Holmberg's (2010) view, the syntactic configuration and D-structure predict the obligatoriness of null expletive subjects and null generic subjects. While Stylistic Fronting and oblique subjects are all features of Anna Vasa's letters in spite of poor subject-verb agreement, the proposal of non-obligatory null expletives and null generic subjects does align with our data.

The null expletive subjects are, as predicted by Holmberg (2010) non-obligatory in Anna Vasa's language, although they are occasionally found, cf. (19) and (20).

(19) *Samtligen*   så er ø och twiwellß måll om
      At the same time so is   also   doubt about
      'At the same time, [there] is also doubt about…'

(20) *Hwrw* ø widere will gå ger tiden   medh
      How   further will go gives time.DEF with
      'Time will show how [it] will go.'

At the same time, we find overt expletive subjects as shown in (21) and (22):

(21) **Dedh** är bätre kåme långsamt än   drage snart
      It   is   better come slowly   than leave fast
      'It is better to come slowly than to leave quickly.'

(22) *så är **dedh** och taff andre sagt och*
      So is   it   too   by   others said too
      ath   hon skulle hawe haft dedh ene hoß seg
      that she would   have had   the   one at   SELF
      'Then it is said by others too that she would have had the one by her.'

As for null generic subject pronouns, the character of the material does not allow us to establish whether these were obligatory, possible, or absent in Anna Vasa's language. Therefore we will not be able to test Holmberg's (2010) prediction on this point.

4. Summary and conclusion

In this article, we have presented some morphological and syntactic features of the language found in Anna Vasa's letters. The language is a fairly typical example of Early Modern Swedish – that is, a language in which many of the Old Swedish characteristics are lost, whereas some of them are still alive (at least to some extent). The verbal morphology is heavily reduced and the category of case is absent, at least if we disregard the oblique marking of all personal pronouns. In syntax some older patterns are partially retained (verb *preceding* the sentential adverbs in all embedded clause types, Stylistic Fronting, oblique subjects, null expletives, and OV word order and the final placement of finite verb in embedded clauses). The new patterns are emergent: verb *following* the sentential adverbs in all embedded clause types, loss of Stylistic Fronting, only nominative subjects, overt expletives, and VO word order. Further, we have tested two hypotheses that connect morphology and syntax (Bobaljik & Thráinsson 1998 and Holmberg 2010) and found out that the hypothesis of Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998) is not corroborated by the data in our material, while the hypothesis of Holmberg (2010) is partially falsified and partially corroborated. An alternative hypothesis (or hypotheses) on a correlation between morphology and syntax in the history of Swedish lie(s) beyond the scope of this paper.

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