

Hans-Olav Enger (Oslo)

When friends and teachers become hybrids

In texts written in Norwegian Bokmål, we can find examples as 1–2:

1) *ei lærer*

INDF.ART.SG.F teacher

2) *ei venn*

INDF.ART.SG.F friend

At first sight, 1–2 seem simply wrong to most Norwegians; the norm is as follows:

3) *en lærer*

INDF.ART. SG.M teacher

4) *en venn*

INDF.ART.SG.M friend

However, examples such as 1–2 are so robustly attested on the web that they cannot be dismissed, though they have been overlooked until recently (and challenge well-founded generalisations in Faarlund et al.'s reference grammar, 1997: 152). The first to mention such examples is Korsæth (2010), who calls them semantic agreement. I'll flesh out her idea.

In the invitation for this workshop, the organisers ask whether changes in agreement systems are structured by the Agreement Hierarchy, and whether they can be accounted for by referring to concepts well-known from synchronic research? At least for my data, the answer is 'yes', but grammaticalisation theory is also relevant.

Consider another construction that presumably also is of relatively recent origin, so-called 'pancake sentences' as 5:

5) *pannekaker er godt*

Pancakes-INDF.PL is good-NEUT.SG

Pancake sentences have been analysed as semantic agreement (Enger 2004). If so, 1–2 show that the possibility for semantic agreement has proceeded from the predicative position (in 5) and entered the leftmost (attributive) position in Corbett's (1979, 2006) Agreement Hierarchy. Thus, the development shown by 1–2 fits the Agreement Hierarchy perfectly, *if* pancake sentences are analysed as semantic agreement. If, however, 5 is analysed as 'syntactic' agreement (e.g. Josefsson 2009, Faarlund 1977) or as 'default' agreement (e.g. Corbett 2006), it is not equally clear how 1–2 fit.

Hans-Olav Enger (Oslo)

Examples as 1–2 are not found with any arbitrary masculine noun. They are restricted to nouns on top of the Animacy Hierarchy, nouns compatible with either the feminine or the masculine pronoun in Bokmål, and they are used only when reference is made to a female. Thus, 1–2 resemble well-known ‘hybrid nouns’ such as Russian *vrač* ‘doctor’ (Corbett 1991, Dahl 1999), even if 1–2 relate to the leftmost (attributive) position in the hierarchy, *vrač* to the rightmost (pronoun).

I suggest that the change to 1–2 should be seen as renewal, resemanticisation. Gender is re-inforced ‘where it matters the most’, as is often the case in diachronic change (Nesset & Enger 2011). At the same time, 1–2 deviate from de Vogelaer & de Sutter’s (2011) observation that in English and Dutch, “the dominant tendency in resemanticization processes appears to be the increasing usage of neuter pronouns to refer to non-neuter nouns, especially when these nouns are mass nouns”. (5, by contrast, conforms perfectly.) In 1–2, gender is resemanticised on the basis of sex; in English and Dutch, on the basis of mass-count, animacy. Indeed, sex and animacy are basic to gender distinctions (Dahl 1999).

If time allows, I’ll also discuss why 1–2 are found in Bokmål, and not (to my knowledge) in Nynorsk or spoken language (yet).

Corbett, G. 1979. The Agreement Hierarchy. *JL* 15, 203–224.

Corbett, G. 1991. *Gender*. Cambridge.

Corbett, G. 2006. *Agreement*. Cambridge.

Dahl, Ö. 1999. Animacy and the notion of semantic gender. Unterbeck, B. et al (eds): *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*. Berlin, 99 – 115.

Enger, H-O. 2004. Scandinavian pancake sentences as semantic agreement. *NJL* 27, 5–34.

Faarlund, J.T. 1977. 1977. Embedded clause reduction and Scandinavian gender agreement. *JL* 13, 239–57.

Faarlund, J.T., S. Lie & K.I.Vannebo. 1997. *Norsk referansegrammatikk*. Oslo.

Josefsson, G. 2009. Peas and pancakes. *NJL* 32, 35–72.

Korsæth, E.M. 2010. En velskapt og våken lita jente. Unpublished paper, Univ. of Oslo.

Nesset, T. & H-O. Enger. 2011. Constraints on diachronic development. *STUF* 64, 193–212.

De Vogelaer, G. & G. de Sutter. 2011. The geography of gender change. *Lg.Sci.*33, 192–205.