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Danish: A comprehensive grammar. By Robin Allan, Philip Holmes, and Tom Lundskaer-Nielsen. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. Pp. 628.

Reviewed by OLE TOGEBY, *Aarhus Universitet*

This grammar is meant to be a traditional pedagogical grammar. It describes in nine chapters the Danish morphological forms and their use, ordered according to word class: (1) nouns, (2) adjectives, (3) numerals, (4) pronouns, (5) verbs, (6) adverbs, (7) prepositions, (8) interjections, and (9) conjunctions. Then follow four chapters about (10) sentence structure and word order, (11) word formation, (12) punctuation, and (13) orthography.

The book is printed with large letters. It has generous margins and translations along with many repetitions. On its 628 pages it contains only fifty percent more words than the tiny teach-yourself-Danish book by Kofoed (1958). The text is not as comprehensive as its title and size suggest.

Every chapter starts with a listing of morphological forms, and then their meanings are explained with special emphasis on the differences between English and Danish usage. As a native speaker of Danish, I am not the best person to evaluate the morphological descriptions, such as those of noun gender and verb conjugations. The quality of such descriptions depends primarily on their usefulness for English-speaking people in the learning process. There are no apparent errors, so they may be satisfactory.

I find it inefficient, though, when many rules are repeated several times, once for each member of a cross-classification. For example, in 1305 (a) (p. 577) in the chapter on orthography, the following rule is stated: "The consonant is doubled between vowels if the first vowel is short and stressed ('VCCV')," and examples like *læse* 'read' versus *læsse* 'load' are provided. In the section on plural noun forms, 113 (c) (p. 21), this rule is stated again, with reference to 1305, to explain the plural forms of the noun *bus* 'bus' (*busser* 'buses', *busserne* 'the buses'), and under 136 (f) to explain the definite form *bussen* 'the bus' (p. 57). In 502 in the chapter on verbs (p. 240), the same rule is stated, with no reference to 1305, under (a) the infinitive form (*hop* 'hop', *hoppe* 'to hop'), but it is not mentioned under (b) present tense, nor under (c) past tense, although it applies here as well; then it

is repeated under (d) the past participle (p. 242), and (f) the present participle (p. 243).

The frequent repetition of information is not only unnecessary and a waste of space, it is also a failure to capture a generalization. The rule in 1305 (a) is correctly formulated as a statement on the relationship between sounds and letters; it has nothing to do with either plural noun forms or past participles of verbs as such.

The learner would be well served by a reference when a rule is associated with the paragraph in which it is formulated in detail. But then it should be done consistently, and that is not at all the case here. These lapses are not friendly to the reader. It is difficult to see what the main rule is when it is mixed up with so many irrelevant sub-categorizations.

All over the book, rules are formulated in a very vague and cautious way, modified by words such as *usually*, *generally*, *tends to*, and *may*. Rules of this type are either uninformative, or they guide the learner in the wrong direction. In 1005 (d), for example (p. 485), the following is said about the placement of objects: "Objects, whether direct or indirect, usually come directly after the finite and non-finite verb(s)" (*Jeg ryger for mange cigaretter* 'I smoke too many cigars'). "A direct or an indirect object may, however, introduce the clause" (*Den slags cigaretter har jeg aldrig røget* 'I've never smoked that type of cigar'; *Mig gav de ingenting* 'They gave nothing to me'). "Object clauses generally come at the end of the sentence" (*Han har ikke spurgt, om vi har tid til det* 'He hasn't asked whether we've got the time for it'). The first part of this rule is positively wrong; a subject or an adverbial quite often occurs between verb and object: *Derfor ryger jeg for mange cigaretter* 'That's why I smoke too many cigars'. *Jeg ryger altid for mange cigaretter* 'I always smoke too many cigars'. The third part of the rule must be modified to include a structure such as *At vi har tid til det, har jeg altid taget for givet* 'That we have time for that, I have always taken for granted'.

Rules of word order and rules of the order of sentence constituents are best formulated with the positional schema developed by the Danish grammarian Paul Diderichsen, a schema that is mentioned in the book in 1009. The schema says that the order of the sentence constituents in a Danish main clause is as follows: Front position (F) - finite verb (v) - subject (n) - clausal adverbial (a) - non-finite verb (V) - object/complement/real subject (N) - other adverbials (A):

F | v n a || V N A

The front position is occupied by one and only one of the other sentence constituents (except for the finite verb), and in that case the position vacated by the fronted constituent is left empty.

When this is a fact about word order in Danish, it is nonsense to formulate a rule like 1005 (d), because you cannot state that the object (N) comes directly after the verb (v or V) without stating also that the word order of subject and verb is subject followed by verb, not reversed (subject in n), and that there is no clausal adverbial present in the a position. The rule as stated in 1005 (d) is wrong. The problem arises because of the lack of generalization. The rules are formulated on too superficial a level, a level on which it is not possible to state rules about Danish word order.

These deficiencies in formulation originate in the work's weak theoretical foundation. The authors do not base their grammar on one coherent grammatical tradition, but use terminologies from many traditions, terminologies that cannot coexist.

For example, adverbials are classified in this book in several ways: 1) adjuncts, conjuncts, and disjuncts; 2) adverbials consisting of adverbs and adverbials consisting of other elements: adverb phrase, prepositional phrase, noun phrase, subordinate clause; 3) clausal adverbials and other (content) adverbials (p. 488); 4) clausal adverbials are divided into modal adverbs, conjunctive adverbs, prepositional phrases, and negations; 5) other (content) adverbials are subclassified into manner adverbial, place adverbial, time adverbial, condition adverbial, cause adverbial, instrument, comparison (p. 489); 6) final adverbial, central adverbial, and free adverbial (fixed or loose) (p. 498–99); 7) adverbial expression of manner, of place (directional or locational), of time (time when, duration, frequency (definite or indefinite)), and the word *aldrig* (p. 499–503).

Many of these seven classifications of adverbials are badly defined. The classes are not exclusive (e.g., 1). The classes are not defined by the same criteria throughout the classification (e.g., 4). Some of the classifications are not exhaustive (e.g., 4, 5, and especially 7). The classifications cannot coexist; they are not only cross-classifications, but also alternative classifications on the same dimension. It is necessary to choose among them. None of the

classifications are fit, let alone sufficient, for explaining the positions and order of the adverbials in the sentence.

This inconsistent theoretical foundation leads to a lot of inaccurate analyses and imprecise, if not wrong, descriptions. One example is in 1014 (b) (p. 500): "If an adjunct functions as an *adverbial expression of place* (and especially if it is a prepositional phrase), it can always be placed in the 'A' position if it is *directional*, but it may be placed in either the 'F' or 'A' position if it is *locational*" (*Jeg rejser ikke til Mexico* 'I'm not going to Mexico'; *Der er mange biler i London* 'There are a lot of cars in London'). This is incorrect. It is perfectly possible to put a prepositional place adverbial in the a position: *Der er i London mange biler uden nummerplade* 'There are a lot of cars without a license plate in London'. It is also possible to have directional adverbs in the F position: *Til Mexico tager vi nu nok aldrig mere* 'We will probably never again go to Mexico'.

Another example is in 1014 (c) (p. 502): "*Indefinite frequency* adverbials normally occur in the 'a' position" (*Hans har ofte været i London* 'Hans has often been in London'). This rule is wrong. It is perfectly possible to say *Hans har været i London ofte*. The point is that the different word order patterns have different meanings and are used in different contexts. Adverbial positions in Danish can only be described if you have a much more sophisticated, sensible, and consistent theory about sentence constituents, word order, and the semantics of grammatical forms than the present grammar has.

These few examples of incorrect rules resulting from a weak theoretical foundation are not exceptions. They are typical for the entire book. The authors do not use the concept of aktionsart (perfective and imperfective), although they mention telic and atelic verbs, and consequently, many of the rules about the meaning of the tense forms are insufficient and wrong. The authors do not use the concepts of generic and general meaning, nor do they use the theory of unit accentuation, and consequently, most of the rules about the use of bare forms (nouns without any article), indefinite article, and definite form are insufficient and wrong.

This hefty book will not satisfy a linguist's or advanced student's need for a detailed, reliable exposition of the full spectrum of normal sentence structure in Danish. Nevertheless, it provides for nonlinguists and beginning and intermediate students a highly readable and well-arranged treatment of morphology and basic word-order patterns.

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