

Topic doubling

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1. Introduction

Just like the vast majority of the Germanic languages, the Scandinavian languages are verb second (V2) languages where the finite verb occupies the second position in declarative clauses allowing just one constituent to precede it (on exceptions from the V2-rule see e.g. [Vangsnes 2014](#)). A Norwegian example of a declarative V2 clause is given in (1). In this example the temporal adjunct *i går* ('yesterday') is topicalized and the subject follows the finite verb.

- (1) I går leste Jon boka (Nor.)
yesterday read.PAST John book.DEF
 'Yesterday, John read the book'

However, the initial phrase may be doubled in second position by an anaphoric or non-anaphoric element causing V3 declaratives (cf. Eide 2011). Anaphoric doubling is shown in (2). Typical anaphoric doubling elements are proadverbs and pronouns. In (2a) a temporal adjunct is doubled by the proadverb *da* ('then'), and in (2b) a (definite) subject is doubled by the pronoun *han* ('he').

- (2) a. I går da leste Jon boka (Nor.)
yesterday then read John book.DEF
 'Yesterday, John read the book'
- b. Jon han leste boka i går (Nor.)
John he read book.DEF yesterday
 'Yesterday, John read the book'

Non-anaphoric doubling is shown in (3). In this example the initial temporal adjunct *i går* ('yesterday') is doubled by the non-anaphoric element *så*.

- (3) I går så leste Jon boka (Nor.)
yesterday Så read John book.DEF
 'Yesterday, John read the book'

Whereas anaphoric doubling of the kinds in (2a,b) probably is possible in most varieties of North Germanic, non-anaphoric as in (3) is not. The so-called *så*-construction (Ekerot 1988) exemplified in (3) is investigated in detail for Swedish in Ekerot (1988). See also Teleman et al (1999/4:694ff) and

Nordström (2010). According to Ekerot this construction exists in Mainland Scandinavian (Norwegian, Swedish, Finland-Swedish and Danish) and in Faroese, but not in Icelandic, which only has anaphoric doubling (Ekerot 1988: 237ff).

The construction varies with respect to which elements that can be doubled by *så*. In Finland-Swedish both arguments and adjuncts may be doubled by *så* (Ekerot 1988: 248f). Doubling of an argument is shown in (4) (example taken from Ivars 1993: 236). In this example the subject is doubled by the non-anaphoric element *så*.

- (4) föräldrarna så tycker nog det är svårt (Fi.Swe.)
parents.DEF SÅ think MOD.PRT it is difficult
 ‘The parents probably find it difficult’

2. Results

2.1 Nordic Syntax Database (NSD)

In the ScanDiaSyn survey, the *så*-construction is tested with four different topic phrases, a temporal adjunct, a locative adjunct, an object and a subject (the sentences 5-9 below). The sentences (5)-(7) were tested in Norway, Sweden and Finland, and sentence (8) was tested in Sweden and Finland. In the Faroe Islands anaphoric doubling of a temporal adjunct was tested (sentence 9). The sentences and their scores are presented in conjunction in the following, starting with the examples with doubled adjuncts. According to the literature presented above, such sentences should be judged as acceptable in all the countries.

In (5) below the topicalized element is the temporal adjunct *i fjor* (‘last year’), which is doubled by the non-anaphoric element *så*. This sentence was tested in Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the result is shown in Map 1 below.

- (5) I fjor så leste vi denne boka mange ganger (#260) (Nor.)
last year SÅ read we this book.DEF may times
 ‘Last year we read this book many times’



Map 1: *temporal adjunct* > *SÅ*.

(#260: *I fjor så leste vi denne boka mange ganger. 'Last year we read this book many times.'*)

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

The test sentence in (5) (#260) is by and large accepted in Norway, Sweden and Finland. There are a few grey spots scattered across Norway and Sweden. In Norway these grey pins come from single informants that have judged the sentence as unacceptable (the score 1 or 2). In Sweden there are locations where all informants judged the sentence as bad or degraded (the black spots). Some of the grey pins reflect that a few informants judged it as bad.

In (6) the *så*-construction with a topicalized locative adjunct is shown, and the result is shown in the following Map 2.

(6) I [stedsnavn] så kjenner vi mange mennesker (#261) (Nor.)

in [placename] SÅ know we many people

'In [placename] we know a lot of people'

We see that this sentence (6) get in general a lower score in Norway and Sweden than the one above (5), but this is particularly evident in Norway. Especially in inner parts of Southern Norway there are some black spots indicating that (6) is rejected.



Map 2: locative adjunct > SÅ.

(#261: *I [stedsnavn] kjenner vi mange mennesker. 'In [placename] we know a lot of people.'*)

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

In the sentences presented in (7) and (8) below, the fronted element is an argument. Recall from the introduction that the literature claims that such sentences are only possible in the Swedish spoken areas in Finland.

In (7) the first constituent is the object *denne boka* 'this book'. The result of the judgments is given in Map 3 below. Observe that (7) is rejected in practically all of Norway. The picture is not as clear for Sweden, where there are several grey pins.

(7) Denne boka så leste vi mange ganger (#262) (Nor.)

this book.DEF SÅ read we many times

'Last year we read this book many times'



Map 3: The result for object > SÅ.

(#262: *Denne boka så leste vi mange ganger.* 'We read this book many times.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

This sentence is accepted in all the Finnish locations, and in two Norwegian and two Swedish locations, namely Brekkom and Gauldal in Norway and Fjällsjö and Lillhärdal in Sweden. In Norway the sentence get a medium score in three other places: Fusa, Inderøy and Trondheim. In Sweden there are 16 grey dots, and 22 black dots. These are spread across the whole country, and there are no geographical patterns for the distribution.

Sentence (8) with a topicalised subject (#1392) was only tested in Sweden and Finland. In this sentence the clause-initial subject is followed by *så*. The test result is shown in Map 4 below.

(8) Den här boken så finns nog på biblioteket (#1392) (Swe.)

this here book.DEF SÅ exists probably on library.DEF

'This book is probably in library'



Map 4: *subject > så*

(#1392: *Den här boken så finns nog på biblioteket.* 'This book is probably in the library.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

Sentence (8) is not fully accepted anywhere in Sweden. It is, as the previous one, accepted in all the Finnish locations. There are however eight grey pins in Sweden. In the places Fjällsjö and Lillhärdal, in which sentence (7) above is accepted, there are black pins.

The following example in (9) (#260) below was tested only in the Faroe Islands.

(9) Bindiskeið er hvørt summar á Háskúlanum. (#260) (Far.)
knittingcourse er each summer on university.DEF

Síðsta summar tá at vóru fleiri útlendingar á skeiðinum
last summer then that.C was more foreigners on course.DEF.DAT

'There is a knitting course at the university each summer. Last summer there were many foreigners on the course'

This sentence is different from the other test sentences considered so far in the way that the doubling element is not the equivalent of the MSc. non-anaphoric element *så*, but a proadverb *tá* ('then') that most saliently must be interpreted as anaphoric. The most important difference, however, is that the doubling element is followed by the complementizer *at* ('that') and not the finite verb. As in (5) above the topicalized constituent is a temporal adjunct, namely *síðsta summar* ('last summer'). The result is given in Map 5:



Map 5: Temporal adjunct > tá in Faroese.

(#260: *Bindiskeiðer hvørt summar á Háskúlanum. Síðsta summar tá at vóru fleiri útlendingar á skeiðinum. 'There is a knitting course at the university each summer. Last summer there were many foreigners on the course.'*)

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

The map shows that anaphoric doubling of the temporal adjunct *sísta summar* ('last summer') followed by what seems to be an embedded clause is not fully accepted in Faroese. I will in the following not consider this test result or Faroese.

2.2 Nordic Dialect Corpus (NDC)

In the NDC there are data from Norway, Sweden and Denmark, but the transcripts from Finland were not available at the time of writing. The data on the *så*-construction presented here show that there are some discrepancies between the judgments and spontaneous speech, indicating that for some of the sentences informants seem to have under-reported their usage of the *så*-construction. This will be elaborated on in the following. Searches in NDC also give attested examples of the *så*-construction in Denmark, which we return to at the end of this section.

For Norwegian, there are lots of examples of the *så*-construction in NDC, especially with an initial conditional clause and temporal adverbials, but also with a clause-initial locative adjunct. Searches in NDC yields examples of the *så*-construction with a locative adjunct in more than 100 locations in Norway, including the places where the informants rejected this sentence (cf. Map 2 above). Some of these examples from the locations that rejected the equivalent test sentence, are shown in (10). In these sentences, all the locative adjuncts denote a topographical or geographical place.

- (10) a. Her i Kvam så er stort sett bare kvamværingene (Nor.)
here in Kvam SÅ is mostly just kvam.inhabitants
 ‘In Kvam, there is mostly only people from Kvam’ (Kvam)
- b. På toppen så har vi et vann (Nor.)
on top.DEF SÅ have we a water
 ‘On the top there is a pond’ (Time)
- c. I Aust-Agder så er det ikke noe (Nor.)
in Aust-Agder SÅ is it not anything
 ‘In Aust-Agder there is nothing’ (Evje)
- d. men her inni Hjelmeland så snakker stort sett alle likt (Nor.)
but here in Hjelmeland SÅ speak mostly all similar
 ‘In Hjelmeland mostly all speaks similar’ (Hjelmeland)
- e. Her nedpå Tonstad så er det jo mest fotball de holder på med (Nor.)
here down.on Tonstad SÅ is it .MOD.PRT mostly football they keep on with
 ‘In Tonstad it is mostly football they are doing’ (Sirdal)

In the Swedish part of NDC there are fewer examples of the *så*-construction compared with the Norwegian part. Looking at *så*-constructions with a fronted locative adjunct in NDC, this structure is approximately three times as frequent in Norwegian than in Swedish (adjusted for the size of the corpora). In searches for the *så*-construction with a fronted locative containing the prepositions *i* (‘in’) and *på* (‘on’) there is a frequency of 15,7 such *så*-constructions per 100 000 words in Norwegian, and a frequency of 4,9 per 100 000 words in Swedish. Two of these examples from Swedish are given in (11).

- (11) a. I Ankarsrum så finns det två sporter (Swe.)
in Ankarsrum SÅ exists it two sports
 ‘There are two types of sports in Ankarsrum’ (Ankarsrum)
- b. här i trakten så åker du då och tittar på ... (Swe.)
her in area.DEF SÅ go you then and look on
 ‘In this area you go and look at...’ (Ankarsrum)

In the NSD survey, the informants from the Swedish villages Indal, Piteå, Delsbo and Bara rejected the *så*-construction with a fronted locative (cf. Map 2 above), and the informants from Indal also did not accept the *så*-construction with a fronted temporal adjunct. In NDC there are only data from Indal and Bara of the Swedish locations just mentioned. In the data from these two places, we find several examples of fronted temporal adjuncts in *så*-constructions, of which two are exemplified in (12ab), but only one with a locative adjunct. In (12ab) below the temporal adjuncts *idag* ('today') and *nu* ('now') respectively, precede *så*. The example with the locative adjunct is given in (12c). It contains a locative adjunct *å andra sidan* ('on the other side') that is used in the figurative sense. Thus, there are no examples of a concrete locative adjunct in the *så*-construction from these villages.

- (12) a. *Idag så bryr de sig väl inte om det* (Swe.)
today SÅ care they REFL MOD.PRT not about that
 'Today, they probably don't care' (Indal)
- b. *nu så äter han ju aldrig på förmiddagen* (Swe.)
now SÅ eats he MOD.PRT never on noon
så det er vel därför han är tyst
so it is MOD.PRT therefore he is silent
 'Nowadays he never eats at noon, so that's probably why he is silent' (Bara)
- c. *men å andra sidan så är det ju riktigt som många* (Swe.)
but on other side.DEF SÅ is it MOD.PRT right as many
sager att passa på och teckna ner detta
say to look.after on and write down this
 'But on the other side it is important, as many says, to be aware and write it down' (Bara)

The *så*-construction was not tested in Denmark, but examples of it are found in NDC. The number of examples is relatively small compared to the ones found in Norway and Sweden, and the frequency of *så*-constructions with a fronted locative as described above for Norwegian and Swedish, is 1,4 per 100 000 words. Most of the examples of the structure involved a fronted conditional clause. One of these is given in (13a). In (13b) the topicalized element is a temporal clause subordinated by *da* ('when').

- (13) a. hvis der er noget af mit elektronik der går i stykker (Dan.)
if there is something of my electronics that goes in pieces
 så ordner jeg det selv
SÅ fix I it REFL
 ‘If some part of my electronic stuff breaks down, I fix it myself’ (Århus)
- b. da far og mor døde (Dan.)
when father and mother died
 så gik vi da herop og ordnede lidt
SÅ went we then here.up and organized little
 ‘When father and mother died, we went up here and organized a little bit.’ (Ærø)

3 Discussion

3.1 Other datasources

Ivars (1993) provides many examples from Finland of the specific *så*-construction type considered here, namely where the *så*-element induces V3 and is immediately followed by the finite verb. Ivars (1993: 232ff) provides many examples of the *så*-construction in which the fronted constituent is a nominal phrase. In addition to example (4) above where the subject is doubled by the element *så*, example (14) shows doubling of the object:

- (14) Det här huset så påstod de att vi måste spara (Fi.Swe.)
it here house.DEF SÅ claimed they that we must save
 ‘This house they claimed that we should save’

In Finland-Swedish there is also a so-called clause-external *så*-construction where the *så*-element is not continued by the finite verb. In these cases the *så*-element is followed by a subject-initial clause. One example of a sentential-external *så*-construction is given in (15) (Ivars 1993: 239).

- (15) Det som man saknar väldigt mycket (Fi.Swe.)
it that one misses very much
 så det är ju de här revyerna
SÅ it is MOD.PRT they here revues.DEF
 ‘The thing one misses very much, are these shows’

Sollid and Eide (2007) show that the usage of the element *så* in Finland-Swedish has much in common with the Finnish particle *ni*, and they suggest that the grammatical features of *ni* is transferred to *så* which

then functions as a way of “tying clauses together” (Sollid and Eide 2007: 20). A similar function as in Finnish is also found in Northern Norwegian ethnolects that have emerged in traditional Saami or Kven (Finnish) communities. In (16a,b) below clause-external *så*-constructions from Skibotn and Spansdalen, respectively, are shown. The Skibotn ethnolect has emerged in traditional Kven communities, whereas the Spansdalen ethnolect has emerged in a Saami community (examples from Sollid and Eide 2007: 11f). In both clauses the topicalized constituent is an adverbial clause, and the element *så* is followed by complete, subject-initial sentences. In (16a) *så* is followed by the subject *den finske* (‘the Finnish’), and in (16b) *så* is continued by the expletive.

- (16) a. siden e no har vært syk (Nor.)
since I now have been ill
 så den finske e blidd vanskelig for meg
SÅ the Finnish.DEF has become difficult for me
 ‘Since I have been ill, Finnish has become difficult for me’ (Skibotn)
- b. viss en famelie kom med veska og unga (Nor.)
if a family came with purses and kids
 så det va lætt å sei det e taterfølge
SÅ it was easy to say it is gipsies
 ‘If a family came with purses and kids, it was easy to say that they are gipsies’ (Spansdalen)

3.2 The difference between the MSc. languages

Given the NSD and NDC results presented in 2.1 and 2.2, and the data given in 3.1, we can conclude that there is variation between the MSc. languages when it comes to the types of *så*-construction and to the frequencies of the *så*-construction in spontaneous speech. In dialects in geographical areas where there has been contact between North Germanic and Finno-Ugric languages, the particle *så* has a wider range of functions (cf. Sollid and Eide 2007) and can appear in more structures (cf. section 3.1 above) than in dialects in other areas. In the following we will mainly consider the *så*-construction that induces declarative V3 sentences.

Looking at Norwegian, Sweden-Swedish and Danish, it seems like these go together in basically only allowing the *så*-construction when non-arguments such as adjuncts or adverbial clauses are topicalized, whereas Finland-Swedish also can have the *så*-construction when arguments are fronted. This is in accordance with the literature and in particular Ekerot (1988). In the first group, the element *så* can be interpreted as a kind of a topic marker (Østbø 2006), and Eide (2011) links the particle to topic-shift contexts (cf. Nordenström 2010). In Finland-Swedish *så* is a more general connector, as suggested by Sollid and Eide (2007). There are however many interesting semantic and pragmatic aspects of the *så*-construction that cannot be discussed here, but Ekerot (1988) treats these issues carefully.

Searches in NSD reveal differences in the frequencies between Norwegian, Sweden-Swedish (henceforth Swedish) and Danish. The *så*-construction seems to be more frequent in Norwegian than in Swedish and Danish, and looking in particular at *så*-constructions with a topicalized locative adjunct, such structures are 3 times as frequent in Norwegian than in Swedish, and 15 times as frequent in Norwegian than in Danish. This finding for Swedish is in accordance with the claim in Ekerot (1988: 45) that locative adverbial clauses are less likely than other subordinated clauses to appear in the *så*-construction.

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Web sites:

- Nordic Atlas of Language Structures (NALS) Journal: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nals>
- Nordic Dialect Corpus: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>
- Nordic Syntax Database: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>