

Free reflexives: Reflexives without a sentence-internal antecedent

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1. Introduction

Unbound reflexives exist in Icelandic and Faroese in contexts where an “author” or a logophoric center has been established in the discourse, as has been discussed by Maling (1984) and Sigurðsson (1990) for Icelandic, and Barnes (1986) for Faroese. An example of this is given in (1) from Sigurðsson (1990):

(1) Formaðurinn_i varð óskaplega reiður. Tillagan_i væri svívirðileg (Ice.)
chairman.DEF become.PAST furiously angry proposal.DEF be.SUBJ outrageous

og væri henni beint gegn sér_i persónulega. Sér_i væri sama...
and be.SUBJ it aimed against RFLX personally RFLX-DAT be.SUBJ indifferent

‘The chairman_i was furiously angry. The proposal was outrageous, and it was aimed against him(self)_i personally. He (himself)_i was indifferent...’

Here, the subject in the first sentence binds the two reflexives in the following two clauses. The main finite verbs are in the subjunctive mood in the two following sentences, and as we know, subjunctive marking is usually required for normal long-distance binding. The free reflexives in the example above thus seem to behave like regular long-distance reflexives in Icelandic, i.e. they can be described as logophoric reflexive pronouns. As logophoric reflexives they require an animate antecedent, and this antecedent is in some way the author or origin of the views in the following sentences. This type of logophoric reflexives seems to be rare or completely absent in the Mainland Scandinavian variants, though other types of free reflexives exist. Most notably, free reflexives with a generic interpretation are quite wide spread in Norwegian, especially among younger speakers, as discussed in Lødrup (2007). Further, in Western Jutland in Denmark, a possessive reflexive can have a non-clause mate antecedent that is not animate, though this possessive element may be more accurately analyzed as a regular pronoun, as we will see below.

2. Results

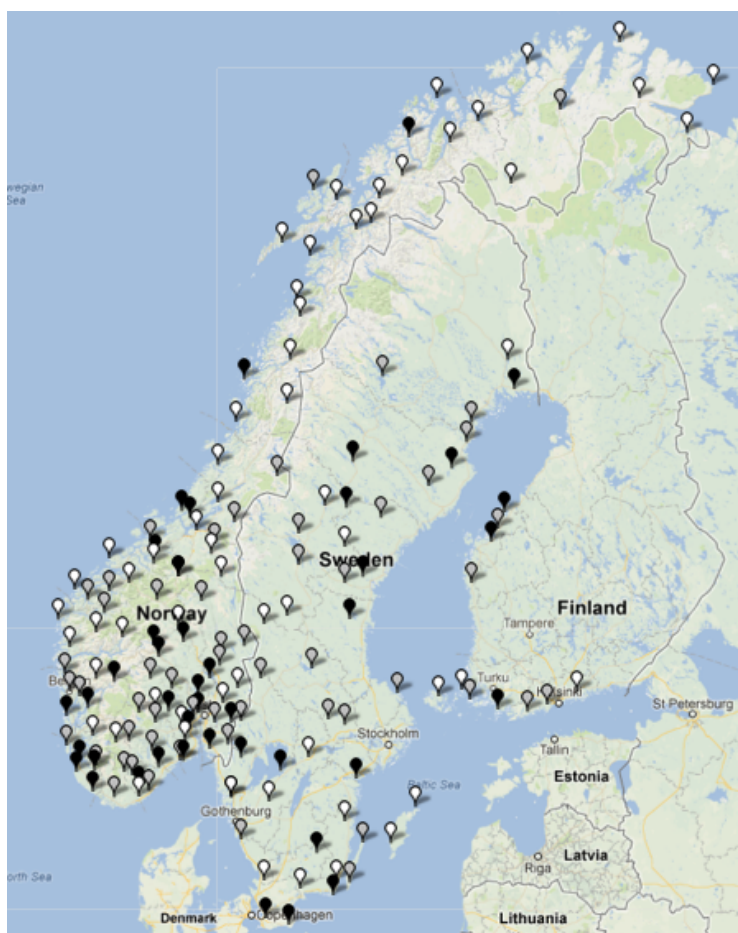
2.1 Nordic Syntactic Database (NSD)

In the ScanDiaSyn survey, the following two sentences were tested in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Both of them contain an unbound reflexive, a possessive reflexive in (2) and a complex object reflexive in (3), and in both cases, the reflexive has a generic reference, similar to *one (self)* in English.

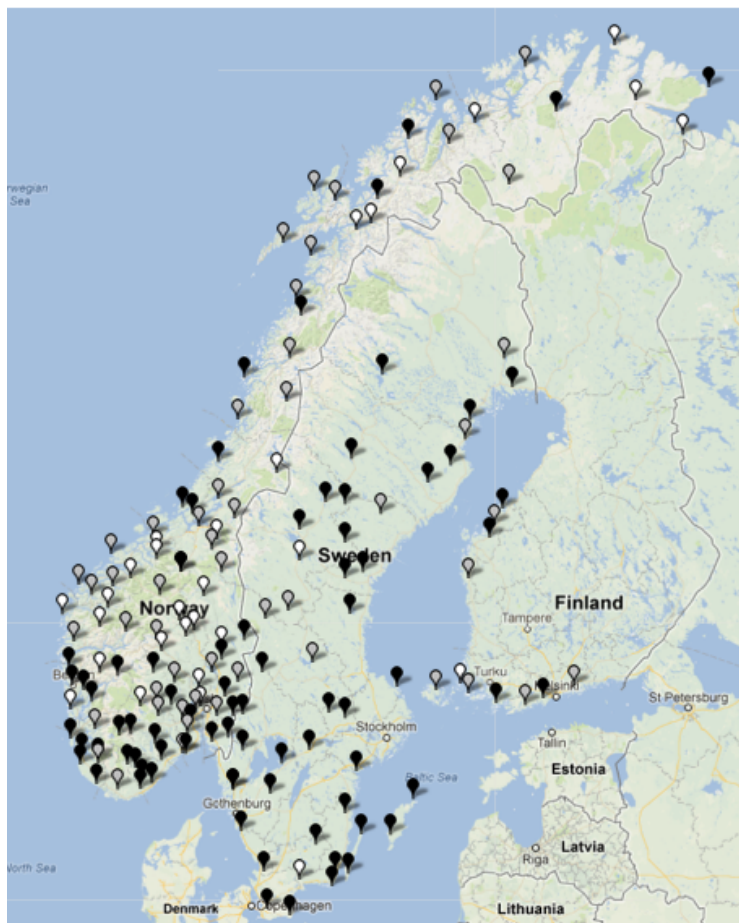
(2) Sin egen hund er alltid best. (#123) (Nor. [11](#).)
RFLX.POSS OWN dog is always best
 ‘One’s own dog is always the best one.’

(3) Det som hender alle må en gang hende seg selv. (#122) (Nor.)
it REL happen everyone must one time happen RFLX SELF
 ‘What happens to everyone else, will eventually happen to one self.’

The results are shown in Map 1:



Map 1: Unbound generic possessive reflexive.
(#123: *Sin egen hund er alltid best. 'One's own dog is always the best one.'*)
(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score)



Map 2: Unbound generic complex reflexive
 (#122: *Det som hender alle, må en gang hende seg selv.* 'What happens to everyone else will eventually happen to one self.')

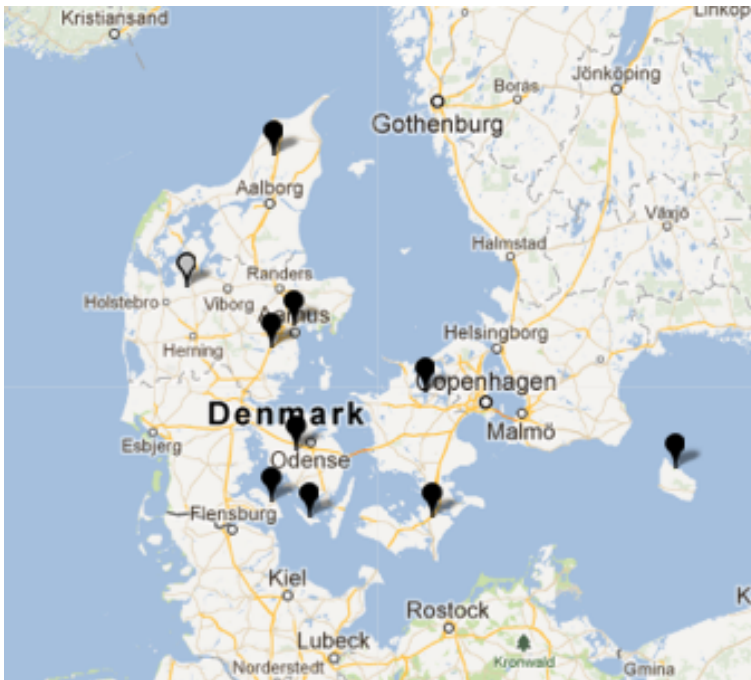
(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score)

The isoglosses for the two sentences are clearly not identical, though they share some traits. It is clear that the unbound generic possessive is primarily a Northern Norwegian feature, though it is accepted all the way down the coast to Bergen. In other parts, there is a great amount of variation, though the scores are lower in and around the big cities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger). The unbound generic complex reflexive is mainly accepted in the neighboring counties Sogn og Fjordane, Møre og Romsdal, Oppland, and Hedmark, and in addition at various measure points in Northern Norway. In Sweden, it is hard to see any straightforward dialectal patterns for either of the two sentences, but it should be noted that the unbound possessive reflexive overall gets higher scores than the unbound complex reflexive, which is almost universally rejected.

The Danish part of the survey included a sentence with a possessive reflexive with an antecedent in a preceding sentence. In the test sentence, given in (4), the antecedent is inanimate, showing that this is not a logophoric reflexive of the Icelandic type.

- (4) *Bilen_i vil ikke starte. Det er sin_i karburator det er galt med.* (#1366) (Dan.)
car.DEF want not start.INF. It is POSS.RFLX carburator it is wrong with
 'The car_i won't start. There is something wrong with its_i carburetor.'

As shown in the map below, the sentence gets low scores everywhere except in Western Jutland. Here, three out of five informants judge the sentence as fully acceptable.



Map 3: Unbound possessive reflexive with inanimate antecedent.
 (#1366: *Bilen vil ikke starte. Det er sin karburator det er galt med. 'The car won't start. There's something wrong with its carburetor.'*)
 (White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score)

3. Discussion

The generic unbound reflexives found in Norway and Sweden seem to be a different phenomenon than the logophoric reflexives in Insular Scandinavian (see Thráinsson 2007, chapter 9.2.2 for more discussion on this issue). As Lødrup (2007) observes, the generic unbound reflexives are more common among younger speakers, indicating that this is a new phenomenon in Norway.

To which extent the Western Jutlandic unbound reflexive is related to the Insular Scandinavian logophors is however an open question. Thagaad Hagedorn and Jørgensen (2012) argue that Western Jutlandic *sin* is just a regular possessive pronoun, used when the antecedent is neither masculine nor feminine. These authors argue that Western Jutlandic lack special reflexive possessive form, just like e.g. English and German. Thus, a regular possessive masculine or feminine pronoun can be used even when the antecedent is local, as illustrated in (5) (from Thagaad Hagedorn and Jørgensen 2012):

- (5) Men Andes_i gor alti etter hans_i egen hue. (W. Jut.)
but Andes go.PRES always after his own head.PRES cat.CG
 'But Andes always follows his own whim'

In all other North Germanic dialects, a reflexive possessive would be used in a sentence like (5), see Lundquist (2014). When the antecedent is not a human, and not specified for a natural gender, *sin* is used as a possessive pronoun as shown in (6) (from Thagaad Hagedorn and Jørgensen 2012). This is true when the antecedent is a non-specific human as well, according to Thagaad Hagedorn and Jørgensen (2012).

- (6) A skyndt mæ aa brend den_i næst skaaj aa, aa den_i gjor si_i virkning (W. Jut.)
I hurried me to fire the next shot off, and it make.PRES POSS effect.
 'I hurried in firing the next shot, and it made its effect'

As we saw from the result in the ScanDiaSyn-survey, not all informant from Western Jutland accepted test sentence (4). As pointed out by Thagaad Hagedorn and Jørgensen, not all dialect speakers in their survey accepted the possessive pronominal forms when the antecedent was local. It is probably safe to conclude that the Western Jutlandic possessive paradigm is now losing some of its old traits, and gaining properties similar to that of the standard Danish paradigm. However, as noted by Strahan (2011), at least some speakers of Western Jutlandic accept long-distance binding of possessive *sin* in typical "logophoric" contexts, as in (7) (from Strahan 2011):

- (7) Trond_i ville have at vi skulle snakke om si_i søster. (W. Jut.)
Trond want.PAST have that we should talk.INF about RFLX.POSS sister.
 'Trond_i wanted that we should talk about his_i sister.'

It is thus possible that a new type of long distance anaphors has developed in the meeting between standard Danish possessive paradigm and the old Western Jutlandic system (i.e., a system that contains the unbound element *si(n)*).

References

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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>

[1] In the Swedish part of the survey, a different sentence was used for testing this phenomena: *Sitt eget hus är alltid tryggast* 'One's own house is always the safest one'.