

Serial verb constructions

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1. Introduction

The Nordic languages have the possibility of so-called pseudo-coordination, as in (1) (see e.g. Josefsson 1991, Brandt 1992, Wiklund 1996, Johannessen 1998, Lødrup 2002, Vannemo 2003, Bjerre & Bjerre 2007, Kvist Darnell 2008, Nielsen 2011). Pseudo-coordination is typically used to express imperfective aspect (Tonne 2007). The first verb is either a positional verb like Sw. *sitta* ‘sit’, a verb of assuming a position (e.g. Sw. *lägga sig* ‘lie down’), change of location verbs like Sw. *komma* ‘come’ or *gå* ‘go’, the verb *ta* ‘take’ or a particle verb like *hålla på* ‘carry on’ (see further Lødrup 2002:122).

- (1) a. Jag sitter här och tänker. (Swe.)

I sit.PRES here and think.PRES

‘I’m sitting here thinking.’

- b. Hon gick och handlade.

She go.PAST and shop.PAST

‘She went shopping.’

Pseudo-coordination with posture verbs is possible in the Mainland Scandinavian and Faroese, but it is more restricted in Icelandic, where it is not accepted by all speakers (Wiklund 2007:191).

It is well known that although pseudo-coordination looks superficially like VP-coordination, it differs from ordinary coordinating structures in several respects. For instance, expletive subjects are possible independently of the second verb; cf. (2a) and (2b). Objects of the second verb can be extracted to sentence-initial position; see (3) (and e.g. Teleman et al. 1999/4:903.).

- (2) a. Det satt några pojkar och stickade vantar. (Swe.)

expl sit.PAST some boys and knit.PAST mittens

‘Some boys sat knitting mittens.’

- b. *Det stickade några pojkar vantar.

EXPL knit.PAST some boys mittens.

- (3) Den där artikeln har hon suttit och skrivit på hela dagen. (Swe.)
that there article has she sit.SUP and write.SUP on all day.DEF
 ‘She has been sitting writing on that article all day.’
 (Teleman et al. 1999/4:903)

The first verb in a pseudo-coordination is often assumed to take the second verb in its complement, and it is sometimes taken to form a complex predicate with the second verb (cf. e.g. Josefsson 1991 and Wiklund 1996 for discussion). For simplicity, I refer to *och/og* ‘and’ as a conjunction in the following.

In some Nordic varieties, there are similar constructions with BE or HAVE as the first verb followed by a tensed verb (typically a position verb) as the second verb; see (4).¹ Examples like these are attested in Denmark and southernmost Sweden. Sometimes, but not always, they have a conjunction.

- (4) Det är många har haft det huset. (Swe.)
it is many has had that house.DEF
 ‘There are many who have had that house.’
 (speaker from Ängelholm, Skåne; Håkansson 2012:74)

(Superficially) similar examples with HAVE as the first verb are used in Central Sweden (see below). I return to the question of how they should be analyzed in section 3 below.

The Norwegian and Swedish parts of the ScaDiaSyn survey included a couple of sentences to test whether to conjunction is obligatory in pseudo-coordination. The Danish part of the survey included sentences that tested the availability of examples with HAVE + tensed verb with and without a conjunction and with BE + a tensed verb with and without conjunction. Some of the results from the Nordic Syntax Database (Lindstad et al. 2009) are presented in section 2 below. In section 3, we consider other data sources, including the Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al. 2009), and briefly discuss possible analyses of the constructions with HAVE and BE. For additional data and discussion, see e.g. Pedersen (2007, 2011), Andersen et al. (2011) and Håkansson (2012).

2. Results

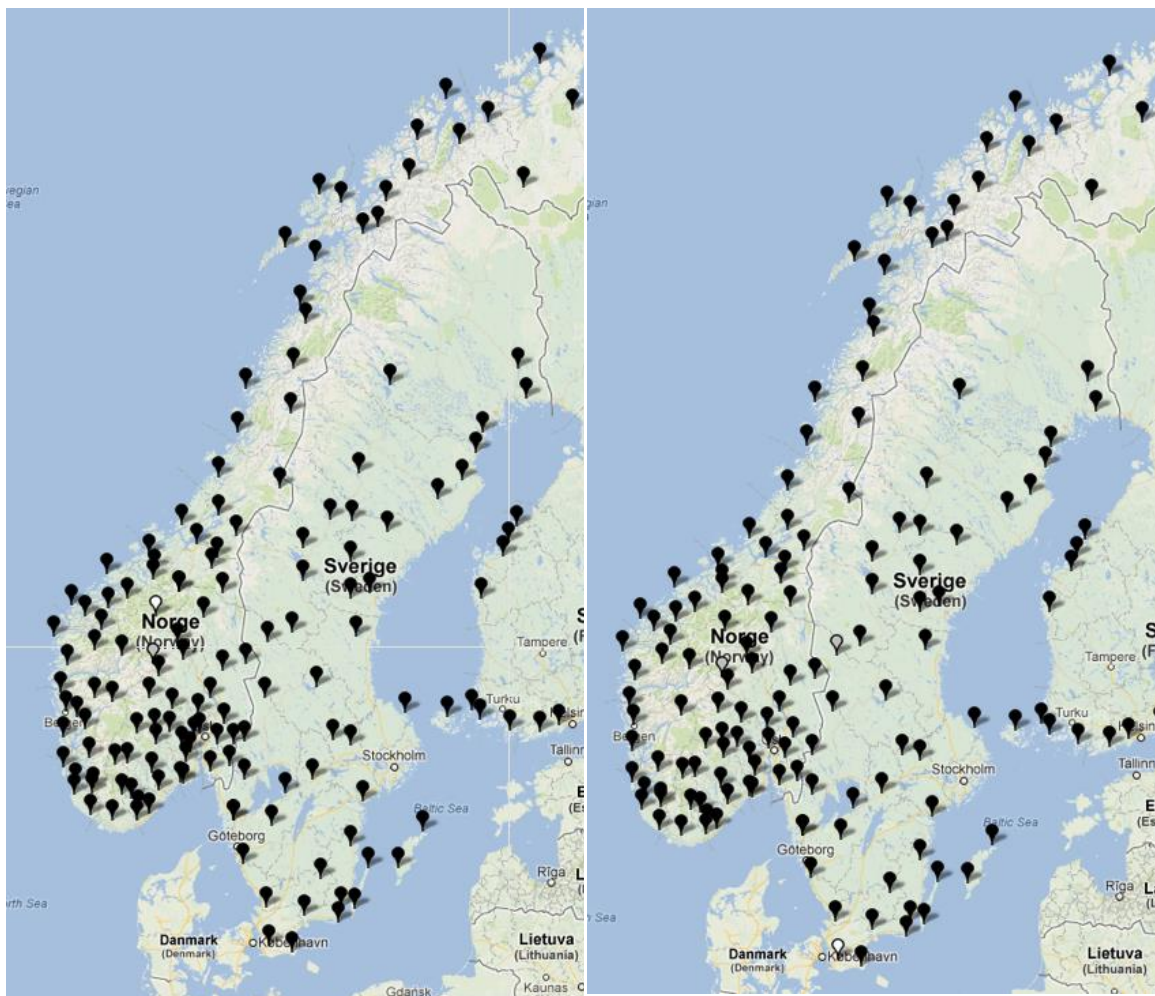
Pseudo-coordination without a conjunction

The following two sentences were included in the Norwegian and Swedish questionnaires:

- (5) a. Han sitter väntar. (#983) (Swe.)
he sit.PRES wait.PRES
 ‘He is sitting and waiting.’
- b. Sitter du där tänker? (#985) (Swe.)
Sit.PRES you there think.PRES
 ‘Are you sitting there and thinking?’

The tested sentences have the position verb *sitte/sitta* ‘sit’ as the matrix verb, and both lack a conjunction between the two finite forms. Sentence (#983) is a declarative, and (#985) a yes/no-question.

Both sentences are rejected throughout Norway, Sweden and Finland, with only a couple of exceptions; see Map 1 and 2. The declarative sentence (Map 1) is accepted in one location in Oppland in Norway, and it gets a medium score in one location (Vang) in Oppland. The yes/no-question (Map 2) gets an intermediate score in two locations (one is Vang in Oppland), and it is accepted in one location in Skåne in Southern Sweden.



Map 1: Pseudo-coordination without conjunction in a declarative clause in Norwegian and Swedish. (#983: *Han sitter venter.* ‘He is sitting and waiting.’)
 Map 2: Pseudo-coordination without conjunction in yes/no-question in Norwegian and Swedish. (#985: *Sitter du där tänker?* ‘Are you sitting there and thinking?’)

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

HAVE + tensed verb without a conjunction

The Danish questionnaire included the following sentences, which involve present tense of HAVE + a present tense stative verb, without a conjunction:

- (6) a. Jeg har en moster bor i København. (#528) (Da.)

I have.PRES an aunt live.PRES in Copenhagen

‘I have an aunt living in Copenhagen.’

- b. (Jeg har ikke smidt mit legetøj ud) (#532) (Da.)

I have.PRES not throw.PASTPART my toy out

jeg har det ligger på loftet.

I have.PRES it lie.PRES on loft.DEF

‘(I haven’t thrown my toy out) I have it lying on the loft.’

The sentences differ with respect to the nature of the subject of the embedded verb. Sentence (#528) has an indefinite DP subject, whereas (#532) has a pronominal subject. The instruction was that HAVE should carry stress. Neither of these sentences is grammatical in any of the locations where they were tested.

HAVE + tensed verb with a conjunction

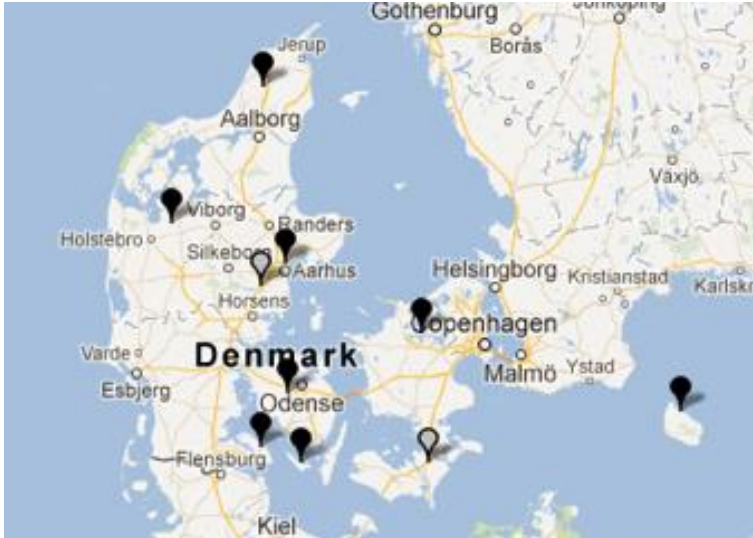
The Danish questionnaire also included the following sentence which involves present tense of HAVE + a present tense stative verb, with a conjunction:

- (7) Jeg har en moster og bor i København (#527) (Da.)

I have.PRES an aunt and live.PRES in Copenhagen

‘I have an aunt living in Copenhagen.’

Sentence (#527) does not receive a high score in any location but gets a medium score in two locations (Eastern Jutland and Falster); see Map 3.



Map 3: Present tense HAVE + present tense stative verb (bo 'live') with conjunction in Danish.

(#527: *Jeg har en moster og bor i København.* 'I have an aunt living in Copenhagen.')

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

BE + tensed verb without a conjunction

The Danish survey included the following sentence with BE + finite eventive verb without a conjunction:

(8) der er en hund gør hele tiden. (#562) (Da.)

there be.PRES a dog bark.PRES all time.DEF

'There is a dog barking all the time.'

The sentence was not accepted in any location.

BE + tensed verb with a conjunction

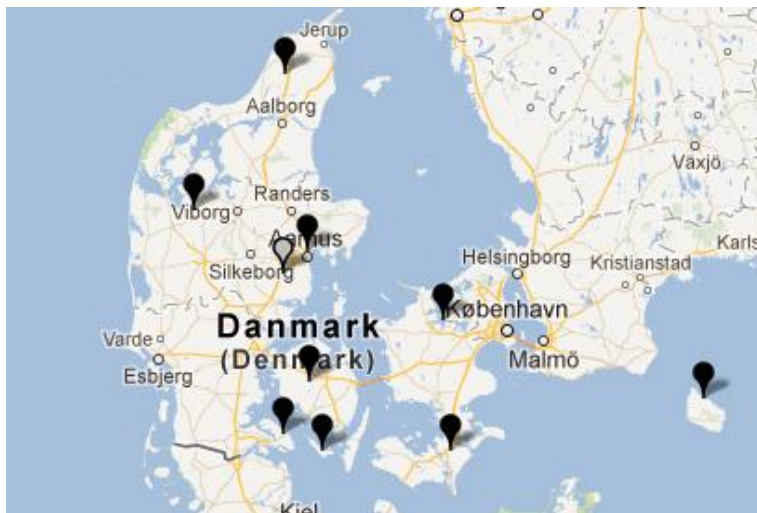
Sentence (#561) is identical to (#562) but includes the conjunction:

(9) der er en hund og gør hele tiden. (#561) (Da.)

there be.PRES a dog and bark.PRES all time.DEF

'There is a dog barking all the time.'

This version was generally not accepted either, but it got a medium score on Eastern Jutland; see Map 4.



Map 4: Present tense BE + present tense of eventive verb with conjunction in Danish.

(#561: *Der er en hund og gør hele tiden.* 'There is a dog barking all the time.')

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

3. Discussion

3.1 Other data sources

Examples of pseudo-coordination without a conjunction have been reported to occur in Telemark in Norway (see e.g. Skulerud 1918:89), but the tested sentences are as noted not accepted in the present-day dialects. With a present or past tense of *sitte/sitta* 'sit' as the first verb, no clear examples without a conjunction have been attested in the NDC.² Pseudo-coordination with a conjunction is on the other hand not uncommon; an example is given in (10).

- (10) så satt de och prata
 so sit.PAST they and talk.PAST
 'So they sat talking.'
 (boe_ma_03, Telemark)

Ejskjær (1964) discusses the construction with HAVE/BE + tensed verb (often taken to involve subject-relatives without a complementizer; see below) in Danish and the dialects spoken in Skåne in Southern Sweden (cf. Håkansson 2012, Pedersen *to appear*). Some of her examples are given in (11) and (12).

- (11) a. vi har en datter bor hos ham
 we have.PRES a daughter live.PRES with him
 'We have a daughter living with him'
 (Omø, South-western Zealand; Ejskjær 1964:119)

- b. Honn har en dåttor bor i samma hus.
she have.PRES a daughter live.PRES in same house
 ‘She has a daughter living in the same house.’
 (Ystad, Skåne; Ejskjær 1964:119)

- (12) a. de er jo så mange og ska have mad.
they be.PRES PRT so many and shall.PRES have food
 ‘They are so many who should have food.’
 (Eastern Zealand; Ejskjær 1964:118)

- b. Va där ingen jallp fruen?
was.PAST there no.one help.PAST woman.DEF
 ‘Did no one help the woman?’
 (Ystad, Skåne; Ejskjær 1964:119)

According to Ejskjær, the variant without a conjunction is more common in Skåne than the syndetic one, whereas the variant with a conjunction is more frequent in Denmark. However, in the older dialect material, both versions are attested in both Denmark and Southern Sweden with HAVE as well as with BE as the matrix verb. It seems that examples without *og* were more common in previous stages of Danish. The results from the ScanDiaSyn survey suggest that with HAVE as the matrix verb, a conjunction is generally required in the present-day dialects, but also then, the tested sentences are often rejected by the informants.

A construction with HAVE + a tensed (position) verb also occurs in Central Sweden (see Nordberg 1977). Håkansson (2012) gives examples from the Nordic Dialect Corpus, where the construction can also be (sparsely) attested from other parts of Sweden. A couple of his examples are given in (13).

- (13) a. Jag har ju inte alla står framme nu.
I have.PRES PRT not all stand.PRES out now
 ‘I don’t have all standing on the table now.’
 (Villberga, Central Sweden; Håkansson 2012:88)

- b. då hade en ju farfar bodde i grannkåken hemma
then have.PAST one PRT grandfather live.PAST in neighbor.house.DEF home
 ‘Then I had my grandfather home, living in the house next door.’
 (Torsö, South-western Sweden; Håkansson 2012:88)

3.2 Theoretical issues relating to pseudo-coordination and HAVE/BE + tensed verb

The Danish construction with HAVE/BE has traditionally been taken to involve a subject-relative without a complementizer (see e.g. Jensen 1949, Ejkskjær 1964). This analysis is perhaps possible for examples like that given in (11a) above, with BE as the first verb, since it can be paraphrased with a relative clause. This is however not the case with the Central Swedish examples with HAVE, nor with all the sentences with HAVE tested in the ScanDiaSyn survey (cf. Nordberg 1977 for Swedish and Pedersen 2007 for Danish). Instead, the second verb form corresponds semantically to a present participle (as suggested by the translations). As pointed out by Pedersen (2007), the construction with HAVE as the first verb is more restricted than the construction with BE with respect to which verbs are possible as the second verb, but this has not been systematically tested. Like the corresponding examples with a present participle, the construction with HAVE expresses imperfective aspect, and it also seems to have a locative reading. Moreover, the construction with BE does not require the two verbs to carry the same tense; cf. (13).

- (13) Här var ingen hade rökt sill på den tiden.
here be.PAST no.one have.PAST smoke.SUP herring at that time.DEF
 ‘Here was no one who had smoked herring at that time.’
 (Ystad, Skåne; Håkansson 2012:77)

Like Pedersen (2007), Håkansson (2012) suggests that the construction with HAVE should be treated as a type of pseudo-coordination, whereas the construction with BE involves subject-less relative clauses, but without going in to the details of the syntactic analysis. It is for instance not clear why the latter construction requires BE as the matrix verb.

In Swedish and Norwegian, the pseudo-coordinations tested in the survey require a conjunction, and in this respect they differ from the construction with HAVE + tensed position verb exemplified in (13). In Danish, the construction with HAVE has more in common with pseudo-coordination (at least superficially), since a conjunction is typically required. Lødrup (2002) argues that not all pseudo-coordinations should be given the same analysis. For instance, pseudo-coordination with *sitte/sitta* ‘sit’ as the first verb allows the second verb to be in the passive with the first verb in the active, but this is impossible with *ta* ‘take’ as the first verb:

- (14) a. En mann sitter på kontoret og blir beundret av kollegaene. (No.)
a man sit in office and become admire by colleague
PRES DEF PRES PASSPART DEF.PL
 ‘A man is being admired by his colleagues in the office.’

- b. * Han tok og ble slått.
he take.PAST and become.PAST hit.PART
 Intended: ‘He was suddenly being hit.’
 (Lødrup 2002:135)

The construction with HAVE + a tensed verb obviously differ from (all kinds) of pseudo-coordinations with respect to the relation between the embedded verb and the matrix subject: in pseudo-coordinations, but not in the construction with HAVE, the two verbs take the same subject. At the same time, pseudo-coordinations share the requirement of tense-agreement with the HAVE-construction, as well as with (certain cases of) the so-called double supine (see [Larsson 2014](#)).³ In all these constructions, the second verb must have the same tense form as the first verb.

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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 Capitalized BE and HAVE are used to cover forms *vara* and *ha* in Swedish and the correspondences in the other Scandinavian languages.

² The searches in the NDC included present or past forms of *sitte/sitta* 'sit' + a present/past form of a following verb, with up to three words between.

³ The double supine is generally taken not to occur in Danish, but examples that could be analyzed as the double supine can be attested in Eastern Jutland, where also the sentences with HAVE + tensed verb (without conjunction) appear to be accepted by some speakers (see the section on the double supine, [Larsson 2014](#)). The double supine was however not tested in the Danish part of the ScanDiaSyn survey.