Layout of the talk

• Background – the notion of Standard Average European and Vernacular Universals
• Case study 1: null subjects
• Case study 2: negative concord
• Some reduplications
• Standardization vs. Verschriftligung
• Consequences for (historical) linguistics
Background

Standard Average European – SAE (Haskelmath 2001; cf. also Whorf 1939)

Germanic, Romance and Balto-Slavic – a typological group. Several morphosyntactic features determine the classification. In this talk three features will be in focus:

1. subject person affixes as strict agreement markers, i.e. the verb is inflected for person and number of the subject, but subject pronouns may not be dropped (no pro-drop)

2. verbal negation with a negative indefinite (e.g. English Nobody listened) (no negative concord)

3. no productive use of reduplication

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_Average_European
Background

Vernacular Universals – VUs (Chambers 2004, Trudgill 2009 etc.)

Sociolinguists have amassed copious evidence in the past 35 years for a surprising conclusion: a small number of phonological and grammatical processes recur in vernaculars wherever they are spoken. [...] Therefore, they appear to be natural outgrowths, so to speak, of the language faculty [...] (Chambers 2004:128)

VUs: “natural” linguistic features that emerge in all vernaculars.

I suggest that this attempt to establish a typological distinction between vernacular and nonvernacular varieties, by showing that vernacular varieties have a number of features in common which are absent from nonvernaculars, have ultimately been in vain. (Trudgill 2009:304f)
Background

Questions:

• are there any syntactic VUs in Germanic?

• if there are, what does it mean for the study of Germanic syntax?
Null subjects

No standard Germanic language allows referential null subjects.

a. Henne känner *(jag) inte. (Swedish)
   *her know I not
   'her I do not know'

b. Sie kenne *(ich) nicht. (German)

c. Hana þekki *(é) ekki. (Icelandic)

d. Her *(I) do not know.
Null subjects


a. I glaub moang bisd wieda gsund. (Bavarian; Axel & Weiß 2011:36)
   *I think tomorrow are-2sg again healthy*
   ‘I think that you will be well again tomorrow’

b. ...wama bmaid hama. (Central Bavarian; Axel & Weiß 2011:34)
   *because-1pl thought have-1pl*
   ‘because we have been thinking’

c. Ha der das nöd scho verzellt? (Zürich German; Cooper & Engdahl 1989:33)
   *have-1sg to-you it not already told*
   ‘Haven’t I told you that already?’
Null subjects

a. Vielleicht merksch plötzlich nix mee. (Swabian; Bohnacker 2013:10)
   *maybe notice-2sg suddenly nothing more*
   ‘Maybe you suddenly will not feel anything anymore.’

b. Ik tink datst my helpe moatst. (West Frisian; de Haan 1994:81)
   *I think that-2sg me help must-2sg*
   ‘I think that you must help me’

c. Trink nit di kave, vorem vest nit kenen slofn. (Yiddish; Jacobs 2005:261)
   *drink not the coffee because get-2sg not no sleep*
   ‘Don’t drink the coffee, because you won’t be able to sleep’

d. Witiō byddjum i Övdalim. (Övdalian)
   *know-2pl live-1pl in Älvdalen*
   ‘You know that we live in Älvdalen’
Null subjects

The distribution of Germanic null subject vernaculars.
Null subjects

The relation between verb agreement and null subjects in modern Germanic vernaculars. Only **bold** forms allow null subjects.

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Null subjects

Several generalizations apply:

• in the vernaculars, only null subjects in 1st and 2nd person are allowed (in contrast with Old Germanic)
• in the vernaculars, there is a clear link between null subjects and verb morphology (in contrast with Old Germanic)
• in the vernaculars, null subjects are – if grammatically possible – the default option (in contrast with Old Germanic)
• in the vernaculars, null subjects are equally common in main clauses and in subordinated clauses (in contrast with Old Germanic).

The null subjects in all Modern Germanic vernaculars seem to be syntactically identical, obeying identical restrictions.
Negative concord

Definitions of negative concord (NC):

Negative concord, sometimes also called double negation or multiple negation, involves instances where two or more negative morphemes co-occur and effect an overall negative reading in a clause, without logically cancelling each other out. (Anderwald 2005:113)

Roughly, we talk about negative concord in situations where negation is interpreted just once although it seems to be expressed more than once in the clause. (Giannakidou 2006:328f).

Syntax: number/type of negations, position(s), scope
Semantics: interpretation (relation natural/formal language)
Negative concord

I have not seen nothing. (Standard English)
≈ ‘I have seen something’

I’ve ain’t seen nothing (Non-Standard English)
≈ ‘I have not seen anything’ [NC!]

Negative concord

NC is assumed to be absent from the Scandinavian languages:

There is no cumulative or multiple negation, either in standard speech or in the dialects […] (Haugen 1986:157)

- NC is not mentioned by Jespersen (1917).
- Accordingly, there has been very little research about NC in Scandinavian (but see Garbacz 2010:122ff, and Østbø 2013:213ff).
- As for West Germanic, NC is present in several non-standard varieties, and has been discussed in depth (cf. Labov 1972, Anderwald 2005, Ingham 2006, and many others for non-standard English).
Negative concord

NC is however present in (at least) four varieties of
Swedish (cf. Garbacz 2010, Lundström 1939:154f, Ivars
2010:250ff, Rosenkvist 2012, in print a, b, c).

- Övdalian
- Nylandic
- Southern Ostrobothnian
- Estonian Swedish
Negative concord

NC in varieties of Swedish.
Negative concord

Övdalian examples

a. Ig ar it si‘tt inggan. (Garbacz 2010:86)
   *I have not seen no one*
   ‘I haven’t seen anyone.’

b. Tjyöpum int ingger so kringgt. (Levander 1909:111)
   *buy.1pl not no one so often*
   ‘We don’t buy any very often.’

c. Eő ir dő wel it að ingg, eő-dar. (Åkerberg 2012:327)
   *it is then well not for nothing that*
   ‘That is completely useless.’
Negative concord

Nylandic examples (from Lundström 1939:154f).

a. Dom a **it alder** vari i stonn ti dra iett.
   *they have not never been in mode to pull even*
   ‘They have never been able to agree.’

b. Ja ä **int rädd för ingan**.
   *I am not afraid of noone*
   ‘I’m not afraid of anyone.’

c. Han fick **int ändo inga straff**.
   *he got not still no punishment*
   ‘He still wasn’t punished.’
Negative concord

Southern Ostrobothnian examples (from Ivars 2010:250f).

a. Du va it aldri he i?
   you were not never it not
   ‘You weren’t ever that?’

b. It ha dårn ju aldri ut tårme förr i.
   not had they well never out those before not
   ‘They never had those out before.’

The clause final i is an NPI-particle that occurs in some varieties of Swedish around the Baltic sea (cf Rosenkvist 2012).
Negative concord

Estonian Swedish examples (from Lagman 1990)

a. Änt kund han tåva inga oxar [...] (Nuckö)
   not could he take no oxen
   ‘He [the wolf] could not take any oxen.’

b. E Kälet [...] fickst änt ferekoma inga larm. (Ormsö)
   in Kärrslätt was-allowed not occur no noise
   ‘In Kärrslätt, no noise was allowed.’

c. Nö fick itt inga menski ga häim itt. (Rågö)
   now was-allowed no person go home not
   ‘No person was allowed to go home now.’

d. Äte hav vi engan kro pa Run, å äte hav vi engt kino. (Runö)
   not had we no pub on Runö and not had we no cinema
   ‘We had no pub on Runö, and we had no cinema.’

Most varieties of Swedish allow a doubling negation in a final annex – such doubling negations are ignored here.
Negative concord

In all examples, the negation (‘not’) precedes the N-word (‘nothing’, ‘no one’, ‘never’ etc.)

not > nothing, no one, never

Archive material, corpora and informant studies indicate that the opposite order is not used in any of the four varieties.

*nothing, no one, never > not

NC of a similar type (non-restrictive, cf. Giannakidou 2006) can also be found in a number of continental West Germanic vernaculars.
Negative concord

NC in varieties of Swedish and in continental West Germanic.

Non-restrictive NC is attested in a number of Germanic vernaculars (English dialects are not included here).
Reduplication

There also seem to be several cases of productive reduplication in vernacular Germanic. Cf. Barbiers et al 2008: *Microvariation in Syntactic Doubling*:

https://books.google.be/books?id=53ntCNdwX9cC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sv#v=onepage&q&f=false

Some examples:

• subject doubling (Övdalian, Dutch dialects etc.)

  Og *an* sagd nู่fel *an* at * nga* lärd sakt * nga* finnas. (Rosenkvist 2015b)

  *and he said* nู่fel *he that she may* sakta *she exist*

  ‘And he SAID that it SHOULD exist.’

  *Ze* komd *zaai* oek mergen. (van Craenenbroeck & van Koppen 2002, D’Alessandro et al 2010)

  *she comes she also tomorrow*

  ‘In spite of what you might think, she’s also coming tomorrow’
Reduplication

• agreeing complementizers (Bavarian, Frisian etc.)

  a. **datst** do Pyt helpe moatst. (West Frisian; de Haan 2010)
  
  *that*-2sg *you* *Pyt* *help* *must*-2sg
  
  ‘that you have to help Pyt’

  b. **oftst** my helpe moatst. (West Frisian; de Haan 2010)
  
  *if*-2sg *you* *me* *help* *must*-2sg
  
  ‘if **you** have to help me’

[...] complementizer agreement is a significant property of Continental West Germanic dialects in that it distinguishes them from other Germanic languages/dialects like English or the Scandinavian ones, which all lack it. (Weiß 2005:152f).
Reduplication

- doubling negatives in final position – data from Swedish (cf. Rosenkvist 2012, in print)

a. Det är ändå ingen som förstår e (Sweden, Delsbo)
   it is still none who understands neg
   ‘Still, none understands.’

b. It ha dår ju aldri ut tåmde förr i. (southern Ostrobothnian)
   not had the well never out those before neg
   ‘They never put those out before.’

c. Int har jag drukkit kaffe na. (Ostrobothnian)
   not have I drunk coffee neg
   ‘I haven’t had coffee.’

d. Ig beller int kumå noð. (Övdalian)
   I can not come neg
   ‘I can’t come.’
Reduplication

Some other possibly interesting cases (cf. Barbiers 2008):

• resumptive pronouns (cf. Fischer 2007:38–40)
• do/tun-support (cf. Langer 2001)
• doubling of finite and infinite verbs (cf. Langer 2001:172, Brandner 2008)
• doubling of determiners, auxiliaries
• doubling of auxiliaries
• etc.
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

Interim summary: in the Germanic vernaculars, several features that are supposed to be absent from SAE can be attested.

Why can’t these features be found in the standard languages?

Standardisation inhibits linguistic change. (Milroy 2000:14)

[the role of standardization is to] fix and ’embalm’ (Samuel Johnson’s term) the structural properties of language in a uniform state and prevent all structural change (Milroy 2000:14)

But: standardization also kills variation!
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

“[…] despite a decrease in the use of polynegation as a marker for emphatic negation in general writing (cf. Pensel 1976), the grammarians did discuss the construction and, in all cases until the eighteenth century, polynegation was a legitimate, sometimes even positive (*zierlich*, Girbert 1653) rule of German which stood in contrast to Latin in that two negative words did not cancel each other out. This view had changed, however, by the mid-eighteenth century, when polynegation was negatively stigmatized as a redundant construction, violating the general rationalist view that language should be as precise as possible, and avoid all that is not strictly necessary (cf. Blackall 1966).” (Langer 2001:167)

“This [multiple negation] is certainly only vernacular, but it is difficult to argue for it as a vernacular universal when in fact it is confined to the vernaculars simply because it has been lost in Standard English—because of a linguistic change that took place in (pre-)Standard English.” (Trudgill 2009:307)
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

“The disappearance of optional clitic negation appears to be part of the process of standardization which leads to modern standard Dutch. Flanders, which at that point is politically detached from the northern Netherlands, is not subject to the standardization process. Many archaic features of Dutch, such as verb projection raising and clitic negation remain present in Flemish dialects and are only now being pushed out of the system by the pressure of standardization. (Hoeksema 1997:141)

“However, as a broad generalisation it seems reasonable to believe that the loss of the *ne* sentential negator may indeed have had repercussions on the expression of negation in English, in terms of favoring NPIs rather than NC, at least in the educated register of English transmitted to us by the textual record.” (Ingham 2006:94)
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

Standardization:

• requires an emerging written standard, developed and defined by a cadre of professional writers/grammarians
• targets three types of linguistic structures:
  • regional features (partly random selection)
  • vulgar features (random selection)
  • irrational features
• can be traced in historical records.
• is more or less language-specific.
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

Verschriftligung (cf. Fischer 2007):

- is an unintentional result of alphabetization
- turns language into an object that can be studied and manipulated
- targets (perceived) redundancies and gaps
- is more or less universal
- is perhaps driven by an urge for an isometric (rational) relation between written and spoken language (a balanced Saussurean sign)
Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

Verschriftligung – how it may operate: NC

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<th>I</th>
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## Standardization vs. Verschriftligung

Verschriftligung – how it may operate: null subjects

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Consequences for (historical) linguistics

• The notion of SAE is based on the European standard languages, which have a long history of writing and standardization
• Some of the linguistic similarities that form the base for SAE can be seen as artificial
• Several syntactic features that are missing in SAE are present in many Germanic vernaculars
• Non-written vernaculars are not severely affected neither by standardization, nor by Verschriftligung
• The vernaculars thus may provide a better view of Germanic syntax.
• But: there are no VUs in the sense of Chambers (2004): not all of the vernaculars have null subjects and NC, for instance.
Consequences for (historical) linguistics

"Strangely enough it is the written language that often has been taken as the yardstick for grammaticality judgements in linguistic theories. If one thus compares constructions in the modern written language with similar constructions in the older stages of that same language–where we, of necessity, deal with written texts but texts that may reflect oral speech more closely–then we may be comparing apples with pears. In the historical linguistic literature, however, this distinction is rarely made so that historically separate developments are presented as directly in line.” (Fischer 2007:41)

"My suggestion is thus that, for at least certain features of the English language that are found in nonstandard varieties but not in Standard English, this is perhaps best regarded as being due to unusual or idiosyncratic developments in the minority Standard English, not to some special qualities of the majority vernaculars.” (Trudgill 2009:309)
Thanks for listening!

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(send me an e-mail if you want a list of references)