

Norwegian *gå*-copula construction: from motion verb to copula

Motion verbs play an important role in the constructionist studies of Nordic languages. One of the reasons is that they tend to develop into different kinds of grammatical constructions, such as future constructions (Hilpert 2008; Andersson & Blensienius 2018; Kinn 2018). This study explores another interesting, yet poorly understood, case where the Norwegian motion verb *gå* ‘walk’ develops into a copula. In this unusual development, *gå* lost its dynamic sense and became a word that links subjects to adjectival predicates, as in (1) (Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo 1997). This [(NP) *gå* ADJ] construction is referred to as the *GÅ*-COPULA construction in this study.

- (1) *Mange av dem har gått sultne i månedsvi.*
 many of them **have.PRS** **walk.PTCP** hungry.PL in months
 ‘Many of them **have been** hungry for months.’
 (<http://no.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-n%C3%A5r-rekordmange-med-matvareassistanse-i-syria>)

The goal of this study is to examine the constructional characteristics of the *GÅ*-COPULA construction and explain their idiosyncrasies by positing a polysemy link between this construction and the *GÅ*-SECONDARY PREDICATE construction. Methodologically speaking, the data examined are collected from the “noTenTen17 Bokmål” corpus, a large web corpus that includes 2.47 billion words (https://app.sketchengine.eu/#concordance?corpname=preloaded%2Fnotenten17_bokmal).

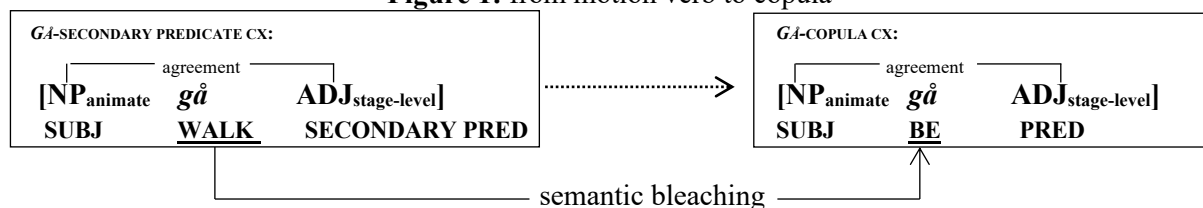
This corpus-illustrated study has two major findings. First, the *GÅ*-COPULA construction displays constructional characteristics that differentiate it from the *VÆRE* ‘be’-construction, the least marked copula construction in this language: (i) only adjectives can be predicative elements; (ii) subjects are restricted to animate NPs; (iii) only stage-level adjectives (Carlson 1980; Krifka et al. 1995) can be used in this construction; and (iv) this construction implies that the states at issue continue for a certain period of time.

Second, these idiosyncrasies of the *GÅ*-COPULA construction can be explained by analyzing it as related to the *GÅ*-SECONDARY PREDICATE construction via a polysemy link. In the *GÅ*-SECONDARY PREDICATE construction, a single clause contains two predicative elements (Müller 2002; Shultze-Berndt & Himmelmann 2004). For example, in (2), both *gikk* ‘walk.PST’ and *sultne* ‘hungry.PL’ are predicated of the subject *de* ‘they’. Note that, as in the *VÆRE*-construction and the *GÅ*-COPULA construction, adjectives agree with subjects in this construction.

- (2) *Vi gikk sultne hjem.*
 we **walk.PST** hungry.PL home
 ‘We **walked** home hungry.’ (<https://litteraturgarasjen.no/2014/07/29/reisebrev-this-is-the-end/>)

The main analysis of this paper is that the *GÅ*-COPULA construction is linked to the *GÅ*-SECONDARY PREDICATE construction, forming a network, as in Figure 1. They share the same morphosyntactic and semantic constructional characteristics, such as agreement, animate subjects, and stage-level adjectives. The only difference between them is that the dynamic meaning of *gå* has bleached out in the *GÅ*-COPULA construction.

Figure 1: from motion verb to copula



To conclude, this study reveals the constructional characteristics of the the *GÅ*-COPULA construction and analyzes them in terms of the polysemy link between the *GÅ*-COPULA construction and the *GÅ*-SECONDARY PREDICATE construction. It also demonstrates that constructionist approaches

to Nordic languages can make a meaningful contribution to explaining this unique development of the Norwegian motion verb *gå* into a copula and beyond.

References

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