Clause-linkage, rhetoricity and narrative exceptionalism : A view from Early New High German and Early Modern Danish

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The starting point of this contribution is the long-standing claim that the syntax of Western European languages in the 16th and 17th centuries was under the influence of a model transmitted from Latin via the reception of rhetorical treaties: periodic writing. The Latin *periodus* is made up of two equally long components or *cola*, the protasis and the apodosis. A well-formed period is supposed to be "closed", and to included signals of internal consistency; a typical strategy for this aim is the use of a correlative construction with a resumptive clitic at the acme (the beginning of the apodosis; hence the fact that "*if* p, *then* q" constructions are still called protasis-apodosis constructions today). Most importantly, the period is a recursive structure. Periodic subpatterns can occur within each of the *cola*. Several studies have showed the relevance of this model to account for clause syntax in a plurality of Early Modern European languages (most recently Lefèvre 2017, Siouffi 2019, Rinas 2019). Their views are corroborated by Lenker's (2010) research on Early Modern English, although Lenker uses the notion of "rhetoric of copia" instead of periodicity.

However, historians of French syntax make a sharp distinction between the period and the so-called "bound sentence" (*phrase liée*), which is attested earlier, shows a lesser degree of internal consistency and resorts to relative clauses to generate an effect of accumulation (see Mounier 2021). This distinction is linked to text genres: narrative prose is supposed to be largely immune against the periodic model, and to use bound sentences.

In this contribution, I turn to the ENHG Historia des Dr Johann Faustus (1587) and its Early Modern Danish (EMD) translation (1588), for which I had previously claimed to identify periodic patterns that, however, relied on the kind of relative clause constructions that Mounier (2021) identifies as signals for the "bound sentence".

I show that two concepts of the period have to be distinguished.

1) the period as a syntactic unit, relying on identifiable clause-linking strategies, most crucially correlative constructions and the use of left-dislocated adverbial clauses.

2) the period as discourse-cohesive unit, organizing thematically consistent discourse moves into *cola* whose disposition follows a recursive binary pattern.

In the ENHG data, narrative and descriptive passages fail to verify the first set of properties to the same extent as argumentative passages. However, the second group of properties is still relevant in non-argumentative passages and can account for word order and ellipsis phenomena.

In EMD, the semantic and pragmatic structures underlying the second group of properties have no implications on formal features of the text independently of clause-linkage strategies, which are much more consistent with the first set of properties that was the case in ENHG. There is no narrative exceptionalism in the EMD data, whereas there is indeed a difference between argumentative and non-argumentative passages in ENHG – but while this difference is manifested at the level of clause-linkage, the notion of a rhetorical unit based on the Latin period should not be disparaged in narrative contexts: it is still operating at the discourse-organizational level.

References

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