HAL
open science

Review of Hellqvist, Birgitta (2015). Le gérondif en français et les structures correspondantes en suédois

Jasper Vangaever

To cite this version:

Jasper Vangaever. Review of Hellqvist, Birgitta (2015). Le gérondif en français et les structures correspondantes en suédois. Languages in Contrast, 2017, 17 (1), pp.151-153. 10.1075/lic.17.1.07van . hal-01980389

HAL Id: hal-01980389

https://hal.science/hal-01980389v1

Submitted on 25 Jan 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Birgitta Hellqvist, *Le gérondif en français et les structures correspondantes en suédois.* Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2015. 192 pp. ISBN 978 91 554 9361 5. [Studia Romanica Upsaliensia 82]

Reviewed by Jasper Vangaever (Université Lille3, France & Ghent University, Belgium)

In this book, the author examines a French structure that has gained a lot of attention in the last two decades, viz. the gerund. A comparison of its usage in French with the corresponding structures in Swedish shows (1) the multifunctionality of the French gerund and (2) the way Swedish translators deal with this multifunctionality. The study is exclusively synchronic and descriptive.

The first chapter presents mainly the corpus of the study, which contains 13 original French and 13 original Swedish novels and their Swedish and French translations (52 novels in total). It also presents the theoretical framework, which is almost entirely built on the work of Swedish authors (e.g. Halmøy 2003) and on Kleiber (e.g. 2007, 2009). The absence of a general framework and of modern theories is one of the weakest points of the book.

Chapter 2 opens the first part of the book, which is exclusively concerned with French. It examines the frequency of the gerund in the corpus (1684 cases in the original French novels and 2304 in the French translations of the original Swedish novels) and shows that the gerund is more frequent in novelistic fiction than in written press and spoken language.

Chapter 3 explores the syntax of the French gerund. In its prototypical use, the gerund has an implicit subject that is coreferential with the subject of its governing predicate. It also rarely has a subject that differs from that of its governing predicate. Unfortunately, these rare cases are not further examined. Studying these cases from the perspective of a discourse-related theory such as logophoricity (cf. Hagège 1974) might prove interesting. Other syntactic properties of the gerund are its ability to take complements (e.g. direct objects and adverbs), its free word order with respect to its governing phrase and its possible coordination with other gerunds. Finally, as a consequence of its non-finite character, the gerund does not express grammatical time or aspect, but is situated in time by its governing predicate.

In chapter 4, the last chapter to focus on French, the author deals with the semantics of the gerund. Crucially, the meaning of the gerund is built up from an invariable core meaning and a circumstantial co(n)text-related interpretation. The author follows Kleiber (e.g. 2007) in considering the integrative function as the invariable core meaning of the gerund, viz. to integrate the action it expresses in the action expressed by its governing predicate so as to conceive the two actions as one single situation. Depending on the relation between the two actions, this invariable core meaning receives a co(n)textual circumstantial

interpretation. The author distinguishes 9 such interpretations, divided into 3 groups. The first group contains the interpretations of concomitance, accompaniment and manner, in which the gerund expresses an action that is realized simultaneously with the action of its governing predicate. In its fourth interpretation (group 2), the gerund sets the temporal scene of the action of its governing predicate. The third group consists of five logico-causal interpretations: cause, condition, means, consequence and concession. Although this typology is very accurate, the study would have profited from a more general and typological approach to circumstantial relations (e.g. Kortmann 1997, Diessel 2001), which would not only have strengthened the analysis, but would also have enabled interesting comparisons with other European or even non-European languages.

The second part of the book, which focuses on Swedish, starts in chapter 5. After motivating the comparative approach adopted in the study, the author summarizes the main properties of the French gerund. She then hypothesizes that each Swedish structure corresponding to the French gerund has at least one of its 9 circumstantial interpretations.

Chapter 6 confirms this hypothesis. Swedish has 9 structures corresponding to the French gerund, which all have one or more of its circumstantial interpretations. The Swedish structures are: a present participle, two different PPs (preposition + (*att* +) NP), a coordinated/juxtaposed clause, a relative clause, a circumstantial clause and 3 different main clauses (subject + finite predicate (+ particle) or subject + expressive verb). Although each structure is exemplified, the absence of good glosses hinders the non-specialist of Swedish from understanding the correspondences/differences between French and Swedish. The chapter ends by examining how Swedish renders (1) the French gerund in incision, (2) the one preceded by the adverb *tout* and (3) its grammaticalized uses.

The book being reviewed here is interesting for several reasons. Most importantly, the author shows (1) the multifunctionality of the French gerund, (2) how Swedish deals with this multifunctionality and (3) how the Swedish tendency of making explicit the implicit circumstantial interpretation of the French gerund reflects the Swedish translators' concern for semantic precision.

Although the study fits the descriptive goals of the author, it would have been interesting to frame the analysis in a more general, language-independent theoretical framework. I am quite convinced that this topic would profit from the use of typological accounts of clause linkage (e.g. Kortmann 1997, Diessel 2001, Hetterle 2015), which have proven their ability to systematically deal with numerous clause types in very wide and varied language samples. This could be a subject for further research.

References

Diessel, H. 2001. "The Ordering Distribution of Main and Adverbial Clauses: A Typological Study". *Language* 77(3):433-455.

Hagège, C. 1974. “Les pronoms logophoriques”. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 69: 287-310.

Halmøy, O. 2003. *Le gérondif en français.* Paris: Ophrys.

Hetterle, K. 2015. *Adverbial Clause in Cross-Linguistic Perspective.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Kleiber, G. 2007. “En passant par le gérondif: simultanéité ou non?”. *Travaux linguistiques du Cerlico* 20. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes. 109-123.

Kleiber, G. 2009. “Le gérondif: fonction syntaxique ou catégorie grammaticale?”. In *Panorama des études en linguistique synchronique et diachronique*, G. Vetulani (ed), 215-239. Lask: Oficyna Wydawnicza Leksem.

Kortmann, B. 1997. *Adverbial Subordination: a Typology and History of Adverbial Subordinators Based on European Languages.* Berlin: De Gruyter.