

NELSON GOERING

Gothic

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 1: General Features



Roadmap

- Translation effects
- Linearization overview
- Gender and agreement
- Number
- Case
- Possession
- Definiteness

Translation Effects



Translation effects

- Gothic corpus is largely ultimately based on Greek texts
- None of the 5000+ Greek NT manuscripts preserves the exact source
- Effects of Greek are particularly striking in linearization
- Divergences (when real) may show ‘genuine’ Gothic syntax
- Correspondences may be due to:
 - 1) Gothic grammar coinciding with that of Greek
 - 2) Gothic grammar tolerating Greek patterns, even if less standard
 - 3) Gothic grammar being artificially calqued onto Greek

Translation effects (Mark 4:39)

kai diegertheis epetímēsen tōi anémōi kai eīpen tēi thalássēi
 and woken.up rebuked the wind and said the.DAT sea.DAT
jah urreisands gasōk winda jah qap du marein:
 and rising rebuked wind and said to sea.DAT

siópa, pephímōso
 be.silent.IMP be.silent.MID.IMP
gaslawai, afdumbn!
 be.silent.IMP silent.INCHO.IMP

‘And rising he rebuked the
 wind and said to the sea:
 be still and silent!’

Translation effects (Matthew 5:38)

ēkoúsate hóti erréthē: ophthalmòn antī ophthalmoĩ
hear.AOR.2PL COMP say.AOR.PAS.3SG eye.ACC.SG for eye.GEN.SG

hausidedup þatei qipan ist: augo und augin,
hear.PST.2PL COMP say.PP be.3SG eye.ACC.SG for eye.DAT.SG

kai odónta antī odóntos
and tooth.ACC.SG for tooth.GEN.SG

jah tunþu und tunþau
and tooth.ACC.SG for tooth.DAT.SG

‘You have heard that it is said:
an eye for an eye, and a tooth
for a tooth.’

Translation effects

- Gothic translators adjusted the text for grammatical reasons
- Assumption: corpus is largely grammatical
- Caveat: the corpus may not be typical or entirely idiomatic

Linearization Overview



Linearization: verbs

- Verb placement is often influenced by Greek
- Synthetic Greek verbs (*erréthe*) usually rendered VERB-AUX (*qipān ist*)
- Majority of surface forms V1 or V2, but V-final may be basic/unmarked
- Fronting processes include imperatives, *wh*-questions, negation, focus
- Overt subjects typically precede the verb; objects usually follow

Linearization: other

- Attributive and possessive adjectives typically follow nouns
- Genitives typically follow the modified noun
- Quantifiers and determinatives typically precede nouns
- Prepositions used exclusively
- In loose, traditional terms, may be in transition from 'OV' type to 'VO' type

Gender, Number, and Case



Gender

- Nouns are assigned to one of three gender classes
Masculine, feminine, neuter
- Adjectives, pronouns, and determinatives agree in gender, case, and number
- An animate neuter noun may agree according to natural gender

us-dribans *warþ unhuþō*
out-drive.PP.**MASC**.NOM.SG became demon.**FEM**.NOM.SG
'the demon was driven out'

- Conjoined animate masculine + feminine subjects trigger neuter agreement

was lōsēf jah aiþei is sildaleikjandōna
was Joseph and mother his marvel.PTCP.**N**.NOM.PL
'Joseph and his mother were marveling'

Number

- Core distinction is singular versus plural; dual is more peripheral
- Number is widely marked
- Triggers adjectival/pronominal/determinative agreement (like gender)
- Verbs also agree with nominative subjects
- Verbal agreement often only with first of postverbal conjoined subjects

was lōsēf jah aipei is sildaleikjandōna
was Joseph and mother his marvel.PTCP.N.NOM.PL
'Joseph and his mother were marveling'

Case

- Triggers adjectival/pronominal/determinative agreement (like gender)
- Agreement mismatches are rare
- Often governed (by verb, preposition, adjective)
- Genitive and dative have a range of independent uses

See now Miller 2019, pp. 113-157

Case - Dative

- Historical syncretism of dative, locative, and instrumental
- Dative absolute (see clausal syntax)
- Instrumental typically with bare dative:

sumai-þ-þan lōfam slōhun

some-and-then with.palm.DAT.PL struck

‘And then some struck him with the palms of their hands’

- Comitative is prepositional with *mip*

þamma mip twaim tigum þūsundjō gaggandin

him with two tens thousand.GEN.PL go.PTCP.DAT.SG

‘him coming with twenty thousand (troops)’

Possession

- Predicated possession has two competing constructions

- ‘MIHI EST’ type:

patei saurga mis ist mikila

COMP sorrow.FEM.NOM me.DAT is great.FEM.NOM

‘that I have great sorrow/that there is to me great sorrow’

- ‘HAVE’ type (with *haban* or *aigan**):

jah þan jūs auk nū saurga habaiþ

and then you.NOM.PL therefore now sorrow.ACC.SG have.2PL

‘and therefore you all now have sorrow’

Possession

- In attributed possession, a possessing noun is typically genitive

haubiþ lōhannis þis daupjandins
head.NOM John.GEN DET.GEN baptize.PTC.GEN
'the head of John the Baptist'

- In some instances of inalienable possession, the possessor may be dative

lōhannau ik haubiþ afmaimait
'John.DAT I head.ACC cut.off
'I have cut John's head off'

Reference

- Determined adjectives usually have some definite reference
- This is marked by weak endings instead of strong

*laistidēdun aftar imma **twai** blindans* (Mt 9:27)

‘two blind (men) followed after him’

*du-at-iddjedun imma **pai** blindans* (Mt 9:28)

‘the blind (men) approached him’

blindai us-saihuand (Mt 9:29)

‘blind (people) will see’

- Comparatives, most ordinals, and certain specific adjectives inflect weak

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Thank you for your attention!