

The grammar of Danish talk-in-interaction

- four phenomena and some methodological considerations

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Based on a corpus of transcripts of authentic interactional data in Danish, the authors analyse four phenomena, which they claim have grammatical features that are different from comparable features in written Danish.

1. There are four different spoken forms of the word “what”. Some cannot occur in the same contexts or perform the same functions, so they must be considered different words.
2. After the word *fordi* (‘because’), main clause word order, which is infrequent in written language, is by far the most frequent in the corpus, and this difference reflects different semantic and sequential functions. Furthermore, the data indicate that speakers can mark ‘because’ utterances as independent from the previous speech also by insertion of disjunctive elements in, or before, the ‘because’ utterance.
3. Complex constituents that occur as the first element in a spoken Danish clause tend to be placed before the clause frame with an anaphoric “copy” placed in the first slot within the clause frame. Only full noun phrases that are not too complex and which are already informationally “activated”, can occur without a “copy”.
4. The distribution of the hesitation marker *oh(m)* (“uh(m)”) is not only used as a “planning pause”. It tends to cluster at the beginning of utterances and around the main noun phrase in the end of a turn-constructural unit. Some interactional functions of “uh(m)” are analysed, among them self-repair projecting ones and ones that contribute to proposing sequence closure.

The analyses produce useful descriptions that can challenge a “written language bias” and contribute to developing a grammar of spoken Danish that is true to the language as it is actually used in interaction.