

A quantitative investigation of left extraposition in Old Danish charters

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This article presents a quantitative investigation of the phenomenon *left extraposition* ('left dislocation') in Danish prepositional phrases, e.g. *til den tid da er problemet løst* ('at that point, then the problem will be solved'), where the left-dislocated constituent is represented by a resumptive element inside the sentence (here: adverbial *da* 'then'). Today, many Danish language users associate left extraposition negatively with media language, where it is considered redundant. However, the phenomenon is not a recent one: this article deals with the occurrence of left extraposition in the 14th and 15th centuries. The data of the investigation is based on charters written in Old Danish. The focus lies on prepositional phrases in the so-called *corroboration*, e.g. *tel windingsbyrth tha ær mynd insigilæ hæynt for thætta breef* ('in witness then is my seal hung upon this charter'), where the prepositional phrase *tel windingsbyrth* ('in witness') is placed in left extraposition and resumed by the adverb *tha*, also written *ta* ('then'). Throughout the entire examined period, prepositional phrases in left extraposition are found alongside prepositional phrases placed directly in the pre-field position, i.e. the first position of the sentence proper. However, the investigation shows a clear development during the first half of the 15th century: from a high occurrence of prepositional phrases in left extraposition to a somewhat lower occurrence around the middle of the 15th century, where prepositional phrases in the pre-field position become more frequent. Sample surveys of charters written in Old Swedish from the same period and Old Danish charters from around 1500 also seem to mirror this development throughout the 15th century.

KEYWORDS: left dislocation; prepositional phrases; topicalization; charters; resumption; composition marker