Changes in the properties of the noun in Danish – evidence from the indefinite article

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Abstract

In this paper, the properties of the noun in Old Danish and Modern Danish are examined, with the emphasis on Old Danish. The paper shows how Old Danish nouns did not need determiners in order to function as arguments and discourse referents. Based on this, it is claimed that Old Danish is typologically different from Modern Danish. It is also claimed that it is the formation of an indefinite article that signals the typological shift, and the paper provides an outline of the development of the indefinite article in Danish. The work takes its departure in a semiotic (i.e. structuralist) approach to functionalism.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I argue that the syntagmatic structure of nominals in Old Danish is fundamentally different from the one in Modern Danish. The data point to a structure in Old Danish whereby the bare noun has the potential of serving as an argument to a predicate; in fact, with respect to argument vs. non-argument, the noun itself is vague. Depending on the context, it may serve as an argument or not. In Modern Danish, this is not so; in Modern Danish, a noun needs some kind of determiner in order to serve as an argument. Based on this, I argue that a typological shift took place in Old Danish. Furthermore, I argue that the structural change is signalled by the formation of the indefinite article.

First, a brief description of what is meant by 'the properties of the noun' and how it applies to Old Danish is given (sections 2 and 3). In section 4, an inventory of the articles of Danish is provided. It is shown that Old Danish differs from Modern Danish in this respect. Then, in section 5, an outline of the development of the indefinite article is given. In sections 6-8, the structural changes of the properties of the noun and of the syntagmatic structure of nouns cum determiners are discussed. It is claimed that even though the definite article was found in Danish several hundred years before the indefinite article appears, it is the advent of the indefinite article that signals the typological shift in the structure of Danish nominals.

The approach to the question of syntagmatic structure in this paper is based on the semiotic functionalism characteristic of the research community of Danish Functional Linguistics (DFL), cf. Engberg-Pedersen et al. (1996, 2005). A major influence in this approach is found in the classical European structuralism.

2. The properties of the noun

It is not uncommon in the European structuralist-functionalist tradition to assume that the functional potential of the prototypical noun is at least twofold: One function of the noun is to carry the descriptive content for a type or a category, the other function is to point to an entity fitting the descriptive content. This stance is taken by Hewson (1991:329), who writes that it is the nature of the noun that in it there is "(a) a lexical element that *characterizes*, and there is also (b) what may be called a referent, that which is *characterized* by the lexical element of the noun" (emphasis according to original). Harder (1990:57) puts it like this: "a noun designates not just its descriptive content, but also something which *instantiates* the descriptive content" (emphasis according to original). However, it is not the case in all languages that the noun itself has the ability to 'instantiate the descriptive content'; in fact, Harder continues to say that his account holds for "nominal expressions" rather than for nouns themselves. Lyons (1977:425) very carefully distinguishes between nouns – which have denotation – and nominals – which have reference. The logical-philosophical discussion of what counts as referential will not be an issue for further debate in this paper. To the matter at hand, it will be sufficient to characterize nominals as linguistic items which have the ability to take the place of an argument to a predicate, and which may constitute discourse referents.

3. The properties of the noun in Old Danish

In Old Danish, the bare noun by itself has quite a large functional potential. It may function as subject and as object, as shown in (1):

(1) Dræpær **thræl** frælsan **man**[1]   (SL)[2]
     kills   slave free   man
     'If a slave kills a free man'

It may be incorporated in the predication, as shown in (2):

(2) ath hin takni hafwær thær **hembygd**   (SL)
     that the taken have   there homeplace
     'that the apprehended person lives there'

It may also function as a subject complement,[3] cf. (3):

(3) tho   ær han oc **thiuf** um han stial en pænning (SL)
     though is he   also thief   if   he   stole one pænning
     'however, he is also a thief if he stole (only) one penning'

In sum, the bare noun in Old Danish functions equally well in functions as argument (1) and as part of the predication (2)-(3). In fact, due to the wide potential of nouns, in many cases, it is not absolutely clear whether a noun is one or the other. Depending on context, the noun *kunu* in (4) may be interpreted as an argument in its own right, or as an incorporated element in a complex predication. This is reflected in the two translations in (4a) and (4b):

(4)   FAR. Man **kunu**   (SL)
         gets   man   wife
a.   'If a man gets a wife'
b.   'If a man gets married'

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[1] In all excerpts quoted from medieval manuscripts, the original orthography is preserved. This includes the punctuation and the use of small vs. capital letters.

[2] A full list of sources is given after the list of references.

[3] In the unmarked case, subject complements still do not contain an article in Modern Danish; this is different from Modern English. In Modern Danish, the sentence *han er en bager* 'he is a baker' with the article *en* 'a' would prompt an interpretation of subjective evaluation on the part of the speaker along the lines of: *wow, he's some baker!* (cf. Hansen 1927:52-56, 1967:170; Jensen 2012).

In Modern Danish, the use of the bare noun is restricted to the predication. In order for a noun to function as an argument, it must be accompanied by external means of determination, e.g. an article (Jensen 2007b). In (5), accompanied by the article *en*, the noun functions as an object. In (6), the bare noun is incorporated in the predication:

(5) Hun læser **en historie**.
     she   reads   a   (hi)story
     'She reads a story'

(6) Hun læser **historie**.
     she   reads   (hi)story
     'She studies history'/'She is a student of history'

As regards discourse functions, the bare noun also has a wider range of possibilities in Old Danish when compared to Modern Danish. In (7), the bare nouns *kunu* 'woman' and (the first mention of) *barn* 'child' both introduce new discourse referents, and the second mention of *barn* 'child' represents the continuation of the discourse referent mentioned earlier in the text:

(7) Varthær **kunu** døth. oc lifwær **barn** æftær. oc (...)
     becomes woman dead and lives child after. and (...)

     um them skil um. ath **barn** fic cristindom (SL)
     if   them divides about that child got christianity
     'If **a woman** dies and **a child** survives her, and (...) there is a disagreement as to whether **the child** was christened'

This is very different from Modern Danish where nouns functioning as discourse referents are always presented with determiners, e.g. articles. If translated into Modern Danish, the nouns in this excerpt would be presented with articles, just as is the case for the translation into English. In Old Danish, the bare nouns in (7) represent the prototypical way of introducing and continuing discourse referents - no determiner is needed.[4]

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[4] As a matter of interest, this applies to Old Norse as well, cf. Faarlund (2004:56 ff.).

4. Articles in (Modern Danish and in) Old Danish

In Modern Danish, there is a developed system of definite and indefinite articles. An inventory is given in table 1:

		singular		plural
		common	**neuter**	
indefinite	preposed	*en*	*et*	*(nogle)*[5]
definite	preposed[6]	*den*	*det*	*de*
	postposed	*-(e)n*	*-(e)t*	*-(e)ne*

Table 1. Inventory of articles in Modern Danish

Old Danish does not have this many articles, and Old Danish articles are not used as frequently as Modern Danish ones. Most importantly, no instance of the indefinite article is recorded in the earliest manuscripts (cf. Jensen 2006, 2009, 2011:164-167). The definite article does occur, but is not as commonly used as in Modern Danish. It always signals identifiability, and it always builds discourse referents, even if the discourse referent is of a generic[7] kind. As for the preposed article, it is likely that preposed demonstratives may already be used as articles; when this happens, it only ever occurs before an adjective (cf. note 6). An example of this is given in (8):

(8)   hafwær **thæn   døtha** mothær   (SL)
        has   the   dead   mother
        'if the dead person has a mother'

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[5] For a comprehensive account, complete with examples, of *nogle* 'some' as the indefinite article in the plural, see Hansen & Heltoft (2011:472-478, 485-486ff). It should be mentioned that although this analysis was first proposed almost a century ago (cf. Hansen 1927:29-30), it is as yet not universally accepted. However, it falls outside the scope of the present paper to take up this discussion.

[6] The preposed definite article only ever occurs immediately preceding an adjective. Thus, the preposed definite article is sometimes called the 'adjective article', e.g. Møller (1974). In this respect, Danish differs from other Germanic languages such as Modern English and German.

[7] According to Faarlund (2004:58), the use of the definite article in Old Norse expresses unique and specific reference. In Old Danish, the article may also be used to express generic reference as shown in the examples.

As for the postposed definite article, sporadic instances do occur, cf. (9)-(11):[8]

(9)   Vil   **bryti**   skilias   fran   hus   bonda sinum (...)
      will bailiff separate.PASS from house man   his   (...)

      fari   **brytin**   til   twiggia   thinga   (SL)
      go.SBJV bailiff-DEF to   two   things
      'If a farm bailiff wants to separate from his master the bailiff must attend two assemblies'

(10) tha   bøtær hin   ær   **høfthingin**   war
      then pays   he   who   chief-DEF   was

      i   therra   færth   fulla man   bøtær   (SL)
      in   their   expedition full   man   fines
      'Then he who was the ringleader of the expedition must compensate for the dead man in full'

(11) Thettæ   ær   skial   mællæ   bondæ   mark   oc
      this   is   boundary between   farmers land   and

      kununglef   (...) swa   at   **dammæn** i   **bækkæn**
      kings-property (...) thus at   pond-DEF   in   stream-DEF

      swa   nithær at   **bækkæn**   i   høkis   wasæ   (VJ)
      thus   down   to   stream-DEF in   høkis   wasæ
      'This is the boundary between the farmers land and the kings property (...) thus at the pond in the stream, further down to the stream in Høkes Vase'

As a matter of interest, in (9) the identifiability relies on the antecedent *bryti*; in (10) the identifiability relies on inference – where there was a gang of attackers – there could be a chief (the noun *høfthing* 'chief' is not mentioned earlier in the text), and finally, the identifiability instructed by the definite articles in (11) relies on the knowledge of a landscape in the real world.[9]

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[8]   The enclitic definite article is attested in a few runic inscriptions found in very different places in Scandinavia. The earliest attestations are from Uppsala in Sweden around 1040; in Denmark, the earliest attestation is from Northern Jutland around 1200, cf. Jensen (2007a:147).

[9]   Himmelmann (1997:243) suggests that the definite article does not stem from anaphoric use of demonstratives, but of what he calls the recognitial use, i.e. a use based on mutual knowledge, not just identifiability.

However, examples of nouns with enclitic articles like (9)-(11) are few and far between (cf. Jensen 2006, 2011:164-167).

From this account, we can make an inventory of articles in the singular in Old Danish as in table 2:

postposed definite article	(*bryti*)-*n*
preposed definite article	*thæn* (*døtha*)
(NB. no indefinite article!)	

Table 2. Inventory of articles in Old Danish

The preceding account also serves as the background for a summary of the properties of the noun in Old Danish. The main property of the noun in Old Danish is to carry the descriptive content of the noun. In addition to this, the noun has yet another property, namely the potential of forming discourse referents. This may be depicted as in table 3:

	noun	**article**
property	descriptive content (+ referential potential)	referential
	barn	
	bryti	*-n*
	høfthing	*-in*

Table 3. Properties of the noun in Old Danish

This amounts to saying that the noun itself without the aid of some external means, e.g. an article, has the potential of functioning as an argument (a nominal, cf. section 2 and Lyons 1977:425). Even though, as in (9)-(11), the noun does occur with the addition of the enclitic definite article, this is not the prototypical way of presenting discourse referents, and the presence of the article is not required from a structural point of view. It could be said that as the noun is vague regarding the potential as a discourse referent, by the addition of the article, the vagueness of the noun is dissolved.

5. The development of the indefinite article in Old Danish
The definite article existed in Danish a long time before the indefinite article. As shown in the previous section, its main purpose was to dissolve the vagueness of the noun in favor of a function as an argument and a discourse

referent. However, the definite article was by no means obligatory in that stage in Old Danish. At some point the indefinite article was developed in Danish, and this signals a typological shift (cf. section 6).

It is commonly agreed that the indefinite article in many languages stems either from the numeral 'one' or from the indefinite pronoun '(some) one', cf. Terner (1922:32 on Swedish); Behaghel (1923:415 on German); Mylord-Møller (1923 on Danish); Hansen (1927:24-25, 171 on Danish); Leijström (1934:127 on Swedish); Christophersen (1939:98 on English); Brøndum-Nielsen (1962:168-175, 1965:413-417 on Danish); Givón (1981 on several non-Germanic languages); Traugott (1982 on English); Hopper & Martin (1987 on English); Askedal (2012 on several Germanic languages).

In the manuscripts of Old Danish, there are many clear cases of *en* 'one' as a numeral, cf. (12), and there are also many cases of *en* '(some) one' as an indefinite pronoun, cf. (13):

(12)　oc　　scal　　sweriæ　　for　　døthæn　　man　　mæth　　thre
　　　　and　　must　　swear　　for　　dead　　　man　　with　　three

　　　　tyltæ.　　　　　　　　　　　　oc　　for　　sar　　　mæth
　　　　dozen.of.supportive.witnesses　and　　for　　wounds　with

　　　　en　　tylt　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(EL)
　　　　one　　dozen.of.supportive.witnesses
　　　　'and must swear for the dead man with three dozen 'supporters' and for wound(s) with **one** dozen'

(13)　dull　　man　ænti　liutæ　ællær　sar.　　　tha　a　　han
　　　　denies　man　either　damage　or　　wounds　then　has　he

　　　　fore **et** theræ　　ecki　　meræ　at　sæliæ　æn　ene　næfnd
　　　　for　one　they.GEN.PL　nothing　more　to　give　than　one　jury

　　　　oc　sithæn　foræ　the　annær　sár　　laghfastæ　　man　eth (EL)
　　　　and　since　for　the　second　wound　lawapproved　men　oath
　　　　'If a man denies to be guilty of damage or wound(s), then he is only obliged to present a jury regarding **one** of them, as for the other wounds, the oath of 'law-approved' men will suffice'

There is some dispute as to whether the article originated from the numeral or from the indefinite pronoun, and even whether the article originated

from the numeral or vice versa, e.g. Behaghel (1923), Leijström (1934), Christophersen (1939), von Mengden (2008); in this paper, however, these particular disputes will not be addressed.

The earliest attested occurrences of the indefinite article are found in manuscripts dating back to around 1300.[10] At this time, occurrences are still sporadic, the bare noun representing the prototypical way of presenting nominals, but in some manuscripts the word spelled *en/een/eet* could be seen as tokens of the article 'a', cf. (14)-(16):

(14)   Swa com   **en   røst**   af   himæn   (SC)
        so   came   a   voice   of   heaven
        'Then came **a voice** from Heaven'

(15)   E   uar   han   sum   **eet   lamb** (Lam)
        always   was   he   like   a   lamb
        'Always he was like **a lamb**'

Both (14) and (15) are excerpted from narratives from the 14th century, and by the 15th century the use of (definite and) indefinite articles is very much as it is in Modern Danish in this text type (Jensen 2007b). However, (16) is taken from a rather large collection of medical recipes:

(16)   oc   giør   th*æt*   warmt   innen   **een   pannæ**   (BM)
        and   make   that   warm   within   a   skillet
        'and make it warm in **a skillet**'

In this particular text (Book of Medicine) the indefinite article is used in many of the recipes, and in contexts where it cannot be confused with the numeral 'one'. This is interesting because medical recipes resemble legislative text types much more than narratives do, and therefore it might have been expected that the distribution of the indefinite article in the Book of Medicine had resembled that of the legislative text. The fact that the indefinite article is regularly used in this text suggests that it is on its way to become a standard feature in Danish at this time.

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[10] In the manuscript Codex Runicus, perhaps the earliest example of the indefinite article is found. In between other texts, a single line from a song, complete with an early version of musical notes, appears. This line reads: "drømde mik en drøm i nat um silki ok ærlik pæl" – lit.: 'dreamed me a dream last night of silk and valuable cloth' (Song).

In order to give an account of the diachronic process leading to the development of the indefinite article, ideally, it is necessary to consult sources from an earlier stage of the language. This is possible in the manuscript AM 455,12° containing the legislative text called *Eriks sjællandske Lov*. Based on palaeographic evidence, the manuscript is dated to around 1300. However, as regards the age of the language (rather than the age of the manuscript itself), this is likely to be of a much earlier stage than the language represented in (14)-(16), cf. Brøndum-Nielsen (1918); Wellejus (1972); Jensen (2006, 2011:83-89).

At this stage of Old Danish, the bare noun still represents the prototypical way of introducing discourse referents, cf. (17):

(17) Dræpær **man** anner   a   **tørghi**. tha a   han   at bøtæ
      kills   man (an)other at square   then has he   to pay

      furtiughæ marc frændær til manbøtær. oc swa **kunung** (EL)
      40   marc relatives to manfines   and so   king
      'If a man kills another in the square, then he must pay a fine of 40 marc to the relatives in addition to the compensation for the lost life, and the king as well'

But we also see a number of cases where one entity is singled out in the context of some plurality; this might be paraphrased as 'one of several'. This is the case in (18)-(20):

(18) warthær swa at   **en   man** sæctær **annæn** um   sar (EL)
      becomes so   that one man sues   another about wound(s)
      'if so happens that **one man** sues **another** about wound(s)'

(19) Mælær **en   man** with **annær** (...) at sæliæ hanum iord (EL)
      talks one man with another (...) to sell   him   land
      'If **one man** talks to **another** about selling him land'

(20) Gør   thet oc **en   lot** af byn   (EL)
      does it   also one part of town
      'If also **one part** of the town does it'

In many of these instances, the noun, in fact, represents a new discourse referent, and examples like these may very well constitute the bridging

contexts (Heine 2002) for the reanalysis (in the sense of Andersen 1973) of 'one' as an indefinite article used by the introduction of new discourse referents.

6. The changes in the properties of the noun

It seems that in all languages which have nouns, the noun may have the ability to carry the descriptive content of a type or a category. But only in some languages may the noun itself have the potential to serve as an argument. In languages such as Modern French (Hewson 1991:333; Herslund 2003), Modern English (Christophersen 1939:83; Lyons 1977:392-393, 430, 452; Harder 1990), Modern German (Admoni 1970:127), and Modern Danish (Thomsen 1991; Herslund 1995; Heltoft 1996), this potential appears to be missing - at least in the singular.

In languages like Latin (Blatt 1946:31, 105; Hewson 1991:334), Modern Finnish (Chesterman 1991:90f), Modern Russian (Christensen 1992:19; Nørgård-Sørensen 1992:90), Old Norse (Faarlund 2004), Old English (Wood 2007), and Old Danish, the noun itself does have this ability, i.e. to serve as an argument to the predicate and thus as a nominal. The difference between the functional potential of the noun in Old Danish and Modern Danish may be sketched as in table 4:

	The properties of the noun	The functional potential of the noun to build nominals
Old Danish	descriptive content (+ referential potential)	*noun ± determiner (e.g. article)*
Modern Danish	descriptive content	*noun + determiner (e.g. article)**
		* NB. *bare noun ≠ nominal*

Table 4. The properties of the noun

This fundamental difference between the two chronolects may once again be illustrated by (4), here repeated as (21):

(21)   FAR.   Man   **kunu**   (SL)
        gets   man   wife
a.   'If a man gets a wife'
b.   'If a man gets married'

In Old Danish, the noun may or may not take the place of an argument to a predicate, cf. the noun *kunu* 'wife' in (21). In (21), the noun *kunu* 'wife' may either be interpreted as the object argument to the predicate *far* 'gets', or it may be interpreted as incorporated in a predication *far kunu* 'gets married'. The noun itself is vague in this respect, as it has the potential to function either way. In Modern Danish, this is not so. If the excerpt in (21) were to be translated into Modern Danish, it would be necessary for the translator to make an assessment from the (perhaps extra-linguistic) context in order to choose one of the two options conveyed in the English translations of (a) and (b).

Hewson makes the observation that in the Modern French nominal there is a division of labour between the article that "carries all the grammar" and the noun which in turn is left as "a simple lexeme", and that in this respect we see "a typological shift from Latin, where the noun combined within itself both grammatical and lexical elements" (Hewson 1991:333-334). The same could be said for Danish: From Old Danish to Modern Danish there was a typological shift, where the noun itself lost the grammatical potential of functioning as argument, and now only regains this ability by external means in the form of determiners such as articles, pronouns etc.

7. The structural change of Danish nominals

In the examples (18)-(20) from Old Danish, we saw phrases consisting of the word *en* '(some)one' and a noun. To the speaker of Modern Danish (and English) this probably does not look very unfamiliar, but the internal structure within the phrase in these examples is in fact fundamentally different from the one seen in Modern Danish. In Modern Danish the noun is dependent on the article to serve as an argument, whereas in the examples (18)-(20) from Old Danish, the word *en* '(some)one' simply co-occurs with the noun.

This may be explained in the terms offered by Himmelmann (1997), who makes the distinction between what might be called 'phrasal structure' and 'group structure'. Himmelmannn describes the two ways of organizing the nominal (or indeed any syntagm) as follows:

> "eine *phrasale Gestalt* ist ein Syntagma, in dem syntaktisch
> selbständige Elemente in Konstruktion mit mindestens einem
> syntaktisch unselbständigen Element (einem Grammem) stehen. Die
> Konstituenten bilden notwendigerweise eine sequentielle Einheit

> [...], wobei für die Abfolge der Konstituenten typischerweise feste Regeln gelten." (Himmelmann 1997:137; emphasis according to the original)
> 'a phrasal construction is a syntagm, where syntactically independent elements occur with at least one syntactically dependent element (a grammeme). The construction must form a sequential unity, typically with a strict word order.'

> "eine *Gruppe* ist ein Syntagma, in dem syntaktisch selbständige und gleichrangige Elemente juxtaponiert sind. Die Elemente können eine sequentielle und prosodische Einheit bilden, müssen es aber nicht." (Himmelmann 1997:137; emphasis according to the original)
> 'a group is a syntagm, where syntactically independent and equal elements are juxtaposed. The elements may form a sequential and prosodic unity, but they do not have to.'

The syntagmatic structure characteristic of "phrasale Gestalten" is the one we are familiar with in most of the Modern Germanic languages. In this structure, at least one element is syntactically dependent on another. Further characteristics of phrasal structure are a formal unity and a strict sequential ordering. Different from this is the syntagmatic structure seen in a so called "word group". Within a word group several words may co-occur alongside each other, but they remain independent units in their own right: the occurrence of one is not dependent on another.[11] A word group may – but does not have to – appear as a sequential and prosodic unity. Following this description, the syntagmatic structure in the two chronolects may be sketched in a crude notation as in table 5:

Old Danish　　'group structure'　*en man* 'one man'　[one][man]
Modern Danish 'phrasal structure' *en mand* 'a man'　　[a man]

Table 5. The internal organization of group structure and phrasal structure

In support of this claim, the following observation is put forth - in many of the Medieval texts that have been written down more than once and therefore exist in more than one manuscript, e.g. legislative text, in some

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[11] However, when they do co-occur, they will show agreement as regards relevant morphological categories, such as gender, number and case in Old Danish nominals.

manuscripts the noun may be accompanied by the word *en* (be it a fully developed article, a numeral or a pronoun) in others it may not: (22)-(23) are excerpted from two different manuscripts containing the legislative text called *Arvebog & Orbodemål*.

(22) a. hittir **en man** at særæ   fæm sar   **en annan   man**
                                                                    (AO1)
          finds one man to wound five wounds one (an)other man

      b. Gør **mand en anden   mandt** fem   saar   (AO3)
              does man   one (an)other man   five   wounds
              'If a man wounds another man with five wounds'

(23) a. En warthir at   **en man** vetir   **andrum manni**
          but becomes that one man   contributes another   man

          fæmtan   saar   (AO1)
          15   wounds

      b. Skeer   dett saa att **en mandt** gør **en anden   mandt**
              happens it   so   that one man   does one another man

              femtan   saar   (AO3)
              fifteen   wounds
              'If it so happens that a man wounds another man with fifteen wounds'

(22)-(23) show two different excerpts from the text, each from two different manuscripts. Apparently, syntactic function is not a decisive factor of the distribution of *en*. As it is shown, in the first set (22a,b), it is the subject of the sentence that may or may not appear with the word *en*. In the second set (23a,b), it is the object. Another interesting fact is that the use of the word *en* seemingly is not restricted or even preferred to one manuscript over the other. This apparent lack of preference could be even more widespread than shown in (22)-(23). Included in the published edition of *Arvebog & Orbodemål* is a critical apparatus of the deviations of other manuscripts. This apparatus reveals that the word *en* is included sometimes in some manuscripts and not in others, without any apparent system. This suggests that the word is indeed not obligatory in order to make the noun function as an argument, but may be taken along or left out if the scribe so decides.

8. Summary of the changes

What is characteristic of the changes described in this paper is that they are interrelated, but also that they are without a direct causal link. It cannot be said that the development of the indefinite article caused the new syntagmatic structure, nor did it cause the changes of the properties of the noun or vice versa. Rather, the changes slowly happened through a process named 'regrammation' by Andersen (2006). According to Andersen, a regrammation is "a change by which a grammatical expression through reanalysis is ascribed different grammatical content (change within and among grammatical paradigms)" (Andersen 2006:233; cf. also Nørgård-Sørensen, Heltoft & Schøsler 2011; Lucas 2012). Regrammations take place "within and among grammatical paradigms", and, in fact the two changes could be depicted as in tables 6 and 7 below. As regards the properties of the noun in the two different stages of Danish, the contents of the sketches set up in tables 3 and 4 constitute the basis for such paradigms. The first paradigm in question is the opposition of a bare noun vs. a noun cum article. In table 6, this paradigm and the change therein are depicted:

bare noun	descriptive content, reference (optional)
noun cum article	descriptive content, reference
	↓
bare noun	descriptive content
noun cum article	descriptive content, reference (optional)

Table 6. The change in the properties of the noun

The change shown in table 6 concerns the content of the expression, not the expression itself. The same goes for the changes concerning the syntagmatic structure of the nominal depicted in table 7:

group structure	[*en*] [*man*]	reference + referential potential	discourse referent
	[*man*]	referential potential	discourse referent / part of predication
↓			
phrasal structure	[*en mand*]	referential potential	discourse referent
	[*mand*]	not referential potential	part of predication / abstract meaning

Table 7. The change in the syntagmatic structure of the nominal

In both cases, the change takes place in the content of the expression, and as a result of this, many more instances of nouns accompanied by determiners appear on the expression side, i.e. in the spoken and written discourse in Danish.

As always, actualization is preceded by reanalysis, cf. Timberlake (1977), Andersen (2001). The reanalysis takes place in the internal grammars of individual language users, and the reanalyzed structure remains internally within the mind of these language users until they themselves make use of the new structure (Andersen 1973). The new structure is thus invisible up to the point where it is used ('actualized'). This entails a period of time where different grammatical structures coexist within the speech community, typically without causing any communicative trouble in everyday use of language.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a functionalist take on nominal structure in Old and Modern Danish. The aim has been to show how different changes in a language are interrelated, and that the change of the internal structure of the nominal is closely interconnected with other changes of structural kind, e.g. the changes of the properties of the noun. As a part of this, the development of the indefinite article is interesting in that it turns out to be a signal of a major typological shift taking place in Danish.

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