

## *The ongoing loss of att in Swedish future constructions. A micro-diachronic corpus perspective*

Evie Coussé & Aleksandrs Berdicevskis & Yvonne Adesam

University of Gothenburg

[evie.cousse@gu.se](mailto:evie.cousse@gu.se) & [aleksandrs.berdicevskis@gu.se](mailto:aleksandrs.berdicevskis@gu.se) & [yvonne.adesam@gu.se](mailto:yvonne.adesam@gu.se)

This study focuses on a case of ongoing language change in Present-day Swedish. In the last decades, there has been an increasing tendency to drop the infinitival marker *att* after the future auxiliary *komma* (original lexical meaning 'to come'). (1) illustrates the future construction with *att* whereas (2) represents a case of *att* loss.

- (1) *Ja, vi tror att väntetiden **kommer att vara** 1 – 1,5 år framöver.*  
“Yes, we think that the waiting time **will be** 1 to 1,5 years from now.”
- (2) *Så **kommer** det nog **vara** några veckor till.*  
“There probably **will be** some weeks more like that.”

Delsing (1993) found that clauses with *att* loss often show topicalization which causes the subject to separate the auxiliary and the infinitival phrase. Olofsson (2008) similarly suggests that *att* is dropped when the auxiliary and infinitival phrase are non-adjacent. This ongoing change is argued to be part of a larger tendency in Swedish whereby auxiliaries selecting an infinitive with *att* start to join the class of auxiliaries selecting a bare infinitive (Mjöberg 1950, Lagervall 1999).

We investigate this ongoing change making use of what we call a ‘micro-diachronic corpus perspective’ tracking the loss of *att* on a year by year basis in several present-day corpora of Swedish (more specifically news from Göteborgs-Posten and SVT Nyheter, and the discussion forum Familjeliv; available at Språkbanken Text). We gauge the impact of language-internal factors (some of which were previously suggested in the literature) that can be expected to affect whether the *att* is likely to be lost. The factors include distance (in words) between *komma* and *att*; which verb class the infinitive belongs to; how complex the infinitival phrase is (how many verbs it contains); whether there is an *att* before and after the future construction in the sentence. We also add extralinguistic factors such as text genre (newspaper text vs. discussion forum). Our goal is to uncover how these language internal and external factors interact with the overall trend towards the loss of *att*.

### References:

- Delsing, Lars-Olof (1993) *Kommer utan att*. In: *Kalaspok till Christer Platzack på femtioårsdagen 18 november 1993 från doktorander och dylika*. Lund.
- Lagervall, Marika (1999) Jakten på det försvunna infinitivmärket. Om definitionen av modala hjälpverb och infinitiv utan *att*. In: *Från dataskärm och forskarpärm. Språkliga studier tillägnade Birgitta Ernby i juni 1999*. Göteborg, 126-134.
- Mjöberg, Joshua (1950) Infinitivmärke på glid. *Modersmållärarnas föreningens årsskrift* 71-80.
- Olofsson, Arne (2008) Framtid i förändring. Hur länge kommer *att* dröja sig kvar? *Språk och stil* 18, 143-155.