

VERB MOVEMENT AND COMPLEMENTIZER AGREEMENT

Within the theoretical framework of the economy approach (Chomsky 1989), Germanic complementizer agreement phenomena (1) are problematic in two respects.

(1) [Dutch and German dialects; data from Haegeman 1990, Van Haeringen 1939, Van Ginneken 1939, Bruch 1973, Kufner 1961]

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|---------------------|-------------------|-----|----------|----------|
| a. West Flemish: | da-n-k | | ik | kom-(e)n |
| | that-1SG-subj.cl. | I | | come-1SG |
| b. South Hollandic: | dat-(t)e ze | | kom-(m)e | |
| | that-PL they | | come-PL | |
| c. Groningen: | of-s | | toe | kom-s |
| | whether-2SG | | you | come-2SG |
| d. Luxemburgish: | Géi wuer | s | de | well-s |
| | go where | 2SG | you | want-2SG |
| e. Bavarian: | damid-ds | | komm-ds | |
| | so that-2PL | | come-2PL | |

First, assuming that all languages have the structure in (2), we expect AGR, not COMP, to be the locus of agreement. Second, since agreement relations are SPEC-HEAD relations, we expect the subject to appear in SPEC,CP in cases of complementizer agreement, contrary to fact (3).

(2) COMP - AGR - T - AGR - V

(3)

- a. * ik da-n-k komen
- b. * ze datte komme
- c. * toe ofs koms

Both problems disappear if the agreement on the complementizer is derived from a lower functional head, AGR. I therefore assume that the complementizer agreement illustrated in (1) is a morphological reflex of AGR-to-COMP movement.

In this paper, I argue that this AGR-to-COMP movement takes place in Standard Dutch and Standard German as well, even though in these varieties no overt complementizer agreement exists. This hypothesis has a number of favorable consequences.

1. The AGR-to-COMP hypothesis, together with the general assumption that NPs are licensed in SPEC-HEAD configurations, entails that there is an AGRSP between CP and VP, and that the subject is licensed in the SPEC of this projection. By economy, we assume that NPs move to their licensing position, and (barring topicalization) are not allowed to move on. It therefore follows that in Dutch and German the subject is in SPEC,AGRSP in both main and embedded clauses. This explains why the subject doesn't precede the complementizer in embedded clauses (as in (3)), and why the subject in main clauses has none of the properties of non-subject NPs appearing in the first position (thus, the sentence initial subject is non-stressed and can be a clitic, contrary to sentence initial non-subjects). The alternative, according to which the subject is in SPEC,CP in subjectinitial main clauses, has the significant disadvantage that there is no reason for the subject to go to SPEC,CP (since the subject is licensed in SPEC,AGRSP, and doesn't have the properties of a topic), and that the subject therefore shouldn't be allowed to move to SPEC,CP, by economy.

2. The AGR-to-COMP hypothesis, together with the general assumption that NPs are licensed in SPEC-HEAD configurations, entails that the finite verb is in AGRS in main clauses in Dutch and German, and that AGRS is to the left of the VP. Similar proposals have been made before (Travis 1984,1991; Zwart 1991), but it remained unclear in these analyses why the finite verb in embedded clauses is not in AGRS but in V.

(4)

- a. dat Jan (*kuste) gisteren Marie *(kuste)
that J kissed yesterday M kissed
- b. Jan *(kuste) gisteren Marie *(kuste)

Now this fact follows from the AGR-to-COMP hypothesis. Suppose (Chomsky, class lectures 1991) that movement (at S-structure or LF) takes place for checking of morphological properties only. Abstracting away from checking of tense features, verb movement takes place to license the Case features of NPs (where Case = agreement). That is why the finite verb moves to AGRS in subjectinitial main clauses in German and Dutch. Suppose however that there is another way, not involving verb movement, to license the Case features of the subject. By economy, we predict that verb movement will not take place in that case. This is what happens in embedded clauses in Dutch and German, I claim. The abstract AGR element itself cannot license the subject NP, and has to be licensed either by movement of a lexical category to AGR (in main clauses) or by moving AGR itself to a lexical category (in embedded clauses). In the latter case, it is the trace of AGR that licenses the subject NP by SPEC-HEAD agreement.

3. Implicit in the AGR-to-COMP analysis is that in the absence of a complementizer no AGR-to-COMP can take place, so that verb movement has to take place. This explains the verb movement in complementizerless embedded clauses in German.

(5)

- a. Ich glaube [_{CP} dass [_{AGRSP} er [_{VP} das Brot gegessen hatte]]]
I think that he the bread eaten had
- b. Ich glaube [_{CP} [_{AGRSP} er hatte [_{VP} das Brot gegessen t_v]]]
I think he had the bread eaten

The CP-projection in (5b) is employed whenever extraction out of the embedded clause takes place, yielding inversion in the embedded clause as in the main clause.

(5)

- c. Womit glaubst du [_{CP} t hatte [_{AGRSP} er t_v [_{VP} das Brot t gegessen t_v]]]

4. Assuming that inversion in wh-constructions follows from a SPEC-HEAD requirement at the CP level (cf. Rizzi 1990), the interesting fact is that in embedded questions in Dutch and German neither inversion nor V-to-AGRS takes place.

- (6) Ik weet wat (*wil) ik (*wil) niet *(wil)
I know what (want) I (want) not (want)

It has often been assumed that the complementizer in embedded questions is not absent, but empty. If this is the case, the absence of V-to-COMP in embedded clauses is explained, but not the absence of V-to-AGRS. This follows however, if AGR-to-COMP may target the empty complementizer in embedded questions as well. We thus predict that agreement can show up on the empty complementizer. This is correct, as we can see in complementizer agreement dialects:

(7) [South Hollandic]

- a. Ik zel es hore watte ze zegge
I will prt hear what-PL they say-PL
- b. Ik zel es hore watoffe ze zegge
I will prt hear what-if-PL they say-PL

On the assumption that AGR-to-COMP takes place in the standard varieties of Dutch and German as well, it follows that the finite verb in embedded questions doesn't move to AGRS, just like in other embedded clauses.

5. On the assumption of Rizzi (1990) that COMP + agreement is a head governor licensing a trace in subject position, the AGR-to-COMP hypothesis explains the absence of that-trace effects in Dutch and German. It also explains why the da-die rule of West Flemish is optional, contrary to the que-qui rule of French. Rizzi's

assumption that *die=da+agr* cannot be right, since West Flemish has overt complementizer agreement of a different form, as in (1a).

6. The phenomenon that AGR-to-COMP turns a non-licensing head into a licensing head has a parallel in the Italian Aux-to-COMP cases (Rizzi 1982). If so, we can maintain that there is only one way of Nominative Case licensing (SPEC-HEAD agreement), and that assuming an additional way (Head Government) is redundant. Interestingly, Aux-to-COMP in Italian licenses only overt NPs and pleonastic empty subjects. The same is true for embedded clauses in Dutch (8). Thus, semi-prodrop may be reduced to AGR-to-COMP movement, Aux-to-COMP being a special instance of the general phenomenon.

(8)

- a. *(Het) is duidelijk dat...
 it is clear that
- b. dat (het) duidelijk is dat...
 that it clear is that

7. In some Dutch dialects (Brabants, WestFlemish, East Netherlandic) the complementizer agreement differs from the verbal agreement. In these cases, the verb has the verbal agreement in subjectinitial sentences, but the complementizer agreement in inversion constructions.

(9) [East Netherlandic, Van Haeringen 1958]

- a. dat-(t)e wij speul-t/*speul-e
 that-1PL we play-1PL
- b. Wij speul-t/*speul-e
- c. Daar speul-e/*speul-t wij

This follows from the AGR-to-COMP hypothesis, assuming that in inversion constructions the verb is in COMP (Den Besten 1990) (and assuming that complementizer agreement overrides verbal agreement). In Standard Dutch, the finite verb of 2SG also has a different form depending on whether inversion has taken place or not:

(10)

- a. dat jij loop-t/*loop ('walk')
- b. Jij loop-t/*loop
- c. Daar loop/*loop-t jij

This hitherto mysterious fact follows from the AGR-to-COMP hypothesis (AGR-to-COMP taking place in (10a), targeting the complementizer, and in (10c), targeting the fronted verb, but not in (10b), where the verb is in AGRS). As is well known, semi-prodrop in Standard Dutch is also possible in inversion constructions, again arguing for AGR-to-COMP. The paradigms in (9) and (10) provide additional evidence against analyses according to which the verb always goes to COMP in main clauses of Dutch and German, thus supporting the AGR-to-COMP analysis and its underlying assumption of Nominative Case licensing as SPEC-HEAD agreement in AGRSP.

The paper also contains a section reviewing the evidence for functional heads to the right and to the left of the VP in Dutch and German, showing that positing all functional heads to the left of the VP is clearly preferable, both on empirical and conceptual grounds.

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