

Scandinavian infinitivals and the AGR parameter

1. Icelandic control infinitivals exhibit verb movement. The verb (the main verb or the leftmost auxiliary if the infinitival contains auxiliaries) occurs to the left of sentence adverbials such as *aldrei* 'never', traditionally taken to mark the VP border. On the other hand Mainland Scandinavian does not exhibit such verb movement in control infinitivals. This contrast is exemplified in (1) and (2) where Norwegian represents Mainland Scandinavian.

- (1) a. Jólasveinarnir lofuðu að borða aldrei búðing. *Icelandic*
 Santa-Clauses-DEF promised to eat never pudding
 b. *Jólasveinarnir lofuðu að aldrei borða búðing.
 Santa-Clauses-DEF promised to never eat pudding
 'The Santa Clauses promised to never eat pudding'

- (2) a. *Julebukkene lovte å spise aldri pudding. *Norwegian*
 Xmas-goats-DEF promised to eat never pudding
 b. Julebukkene lovte å aldri spise pudding.
 Xmas-goats-DEF promised to never eat pudding
 'The Christmas goats promised to never eat pudding'

The situation in control infinitivals parallels the situation found in embedded finite clauses where there is finite verb movement in Icelandic but not in Mainland Scandinavian. Consider (3) and (4).

- (3) a. ... að jólasveinarnir borðuðu aldrei búðing. *Icelandic*
 that the-Santa-Clauses-DEF ate never pudding
 b. *... að jólasveinarnir aldrei borðuðu búðing.
 that the-Santa-Clauses-DEF never ate pudding

- (4) a. *... at julebukkene spiste aldri pudding. *Norwegian*
 that the-Xmas-goats-DEF ate never pudding
 b. ... at julebukkene aldri spiste pudding.
 that the-Xmas-goats-DEF never ate pudding

The movement in question is generally referred to as V-to-I-movement, and since Holmberg and Platzack (1988) it has been widely accepted that the difference between the languages on this point in some way or another is related to a very clear difference in the verbal morphology of Icelandic on the one hand and Mainland Scandinavian on the other: Icelandic has a rich inflectional system with both person and number subject-verb agreement on finite verbs, whereas Mainland Scandinavian finite verbs only carry tense morphology. This difference is captured by Holmberg and Platzack (op.cit, 1995) by postulating the so-called "AGR-parameter", and the idea is basically that a positive setting for this parameter triggers V-to-I-movement whereas a negative setting does not. A number of other syntactic properties which will not concern us here have been related to this parameter.

However, Icelandic infinitives have neither person nor number agreement, and Thráinsson (1993:188), who assumes a checking based account of verb movement, states that it is unclear how "richness of agreement" can serve to explain the fact that there is verb movement across sentential adverbs in Icelandic infinitival clauses but not in Mainland Scandi-

navian ones.

2. The purpose of the present paper is to clarify how the movement seen in infinitivals can be accounted for by reference to the AGR-parameter. The analysis to be developed relies on two simple assumptions: (i) control infinitivals contain the functional domain AgrSP but not TP, and V-to-I movement in Icelandic embedded clauses and infinitivals alike is verb movement to AgrS; (ii) infinitives are members of the same morphological paradigm as finite verbs, i.e. they constitute one class.

These assumptions run counter to established beliefs, but I consider them quite well-founded on conceptual grounds.

As for the first assumption I argue that functional categories are correlated with quite specific semantic functions, and the function of T is to anchor the state-of-affairs denoted by the verb with respect to time. Given then the view (which admittedly may be disputed) that infinitivals do not receive a temporal anchoring of their own, it should follow that infinitivals do not contain T. On the other hand, I will argue that infinitivals do contain AgrS whose semantic function I take to be to anchor the state-of-affairs with respect to the most prominent participant, i.e. the subject. Although subjects are not overt in infinitivals, they are present referentially speaking.

As for the second assumption it provides the solution to the core problem of the paper. Given this assumption we may argue that it is not the detailed morphological information of the inflectional ending which triggers the movement, but rather the overall diversity of the paradigm (of which the infinitival ending is a part) which sets the parameter responsible for the movement. In other words, if the AGR parameter refers to a class of constituents and infinitives belong to the same class as finite verbs, infinitives should behave in the same manner as finite verbs. In language acquisitional terms what we argue then is that since Icelandic verbs on an overall account exhibit greatly "diversified" inflection, the AGR parameter is set positively, and since Mainland Scandinavian verbs exhibit no agreement the parameter is set negatively: the fact that only one infinitive form is found for each verb in both languages doesn't matter.

3. Although a number of details must be addressed (the status of the infinitival marker; the placement of negation in the various Mainland Scandinavian varieties; differences between control infinitivals and other infinitivals etc.) the question how verb movement in Icelandic infinitivals can be related to verb movement in finite sentences is thus clarified. However, from a more general perspective it is desirable to consider the question *why* there is verb movement in Icelandic but not in Scandinavian, i.e. beyond the observation concerning the differences in the inflectional system. The answer provided will be that verb movement in Icelandic, but not in Mainland Scandinavian, suffices to meet the Extended Projection Principle on a par with what Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998) argue for Null Subject languages, the idea roughly being that the verb carries the necessary feature(s) (evidenced by the agreement). Still, this runs counter to what Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou argue for Icelandic: given the existence of expletives in Icelandic they argue that the EPP is met by expletive insertion as it is in Mainland Scandinavian. Several issues concerning the architecture of the theory assumed, including a formulation of the EPP, will therefore be outlined and explicated.

References

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