

## A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON (LONG) A'-DEPENDENCIES

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**The topic** Our paper aims at showing that traditional analyses of subject/object asymmetries in embedded A'-dependencies cannot account for the patterns of complementizer drop/insertion in long embedded A'-dependencies in Mainland Scandinavian (Norwegian and Swedish; Danish is taken into consideration for comparative purposes only). Previous analyses of subject/object asymmetries are primarily based on facts regarding *short* subordinate A'-dependencies, such as relative clauses (e.g. the equivalent of the following English sentences: *I know the man that came*, vs. *I know the man that Mary met*) and embedded Wh-questions (e.g. *I wonder who came* vs. *I wonder who Mary met*).

**The survey** In our survey (personal fieldwork and ScanDiaSyn database), we tested subject and object long A'-dependencies, namely long relative clauses (e.g. the equivalent of the following English sentences: *I know the man that you said came* vs. *I know the man that you said Mary met*) and long embedded Wh-questions (e.g. *I wonder who you said came* vs. *I wonder who you said John met*) in Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish varieties. We investigated the distribution of complementizers *SOM* (Norwegian and Swedish) and *SEM* (Icelandic) and the presence or absence of *AT/ATT/AD*-trace effects (Norwegian *AT*, Swedish *ATT*, and Icelandic *AD* = *that*) both in short and in long A'-dependencies.

**The results** With regard to short extractions, we observed that:

a. Norwegian and Swedish display a subject/object asymmetry in the distribution of *SOM* (in relative clauses as in (1), and in embedded Wh-questions), whereas Icelandic does not show any such asymmetry in the distribution of *SEM*, which is found only in relative clauses (cf. also Taraldsen 1986, Allan et al. 1995, Faarlund et al. 1997, Teleman et al. 1999, Thráinsson 2007, and ref. therein).

- (1) a. Jeg kjenner mannen \*(som) kom hit (Norwegian)  
I know the man *SOM* came here  
b. Jeg kjenner mannen (som) Maria skal møte i morgen  
I know the man *SOM* Mary shall meet tomorrow

b. Norwegian and Swedish do not allow the multiple complementizer sequence *SOM AT/ATT* in relative clauses or Wh-clauses, whereas Icelandic allows the sequence *SEM AD* in relative clauses.

*SOM*-insertion has traditionally been analyzed as a way to license subject-extractions by checking the nominative features valued on the lowest complementizer position, similarly to the French *que/qui*-alternation (cf. Taraldsen 1986, 2001; Rizzi 1990, 2006). The prediction following from this analysis is that *SOM* is always inserted in the clause from which the subject is extracted. This prediction is borne out for French *qui*. However, with regard to long extractions, we observed that:

c. *SOM*-insertion in the most embedded clause is generally ungrammatical.

d. *SOM*-insertion in both Norwegian and Swedish is optional in the higher clause of long relative clauses, regardless of whether we are dealing with subject or object extraction, as in (2).

- (2) a. Jag känner mannen (som) du hoppas (\*som) kommer hit (Swedish)  
I know the man *SOM* you hope *SOM* comes here  
b. Jag känner mannen (som) du hoppas (\*som) Maria ska träffa imorgon  
I know the man *SOM* you hope *SOM* Maria shall meet tomorrow

Thus, no subject/object asymmetry is detected in long extractions.

e. The pattern for *SOM*-insertion in long embedded Wh-clauses is the same for long relative clauses in Swedish (3) (the distribution of *SOM* is slightly more restricted in Norwegian embedded Wh-clauses), i.e. there is no subject/object asymmetry regarding *SOM*-insertion in long embedded Wh-questions.

- (3) a. Hon undrade vem (som) du hoppas (\*som) kommer hit (Swedish)  
She wondered who *SOM* you hope *SOM* comes here  
b. Hon undrade vem (som) du hoppas (\*som) Maria ska träffa imorgon  
She wondered who *SOM* you hope *SOM* Mary shall meet tomorrow

f. Regarding the insertion of the declarative complementizer *AT/ATT/AD* in the lower clause of long extractions, we found that Swedish in general displays an *ATT*-trace effect (i.e. *\*ATT* in the lower clause of long subject extractions, but *ATT* is optionally present with object extractions), Icelandic shows no *AD*-trace effect (*AD*-insertion is optional), and Norwegian dialects fall into 3 different patterns with respect to *AT*-trace effects: 1. *AT*-trace effect (like Swedish); 2. no *AT*-trace effect: *ATT* is generally dropped; 3. anti-*AT*-trace effect: *AT* is always inserted.

**The proposal** The fact that *SOM* can be present in object extractions and the fact that we do not systematically find *SOM* in the clause from which the subject is extracted, strongly suggests that *SOM* is

not merely a nominative licenser. We propose a new analysis of subject/object asymmetries that is based on the notion of *aboutness* (cf. Cardinaletti 2004, Frascarelli 2007), a feature that is structurally encoded in the CP and may be checked by thematic subjects or by specific complementizers (like *SOM*). Because it is a criterial feature, [+*aboutness*] is interpreted in the main clause, which is where a morphological realization of the criterial position is imposed (cf. Rizzi 2004). We assume that [+*aboutness*] is a feature licensing the identification of one of the arguments present in the discourse, of which something is predicated. For instance, a referent given in the discourse can be identified in functional terms as the subject of a predication (cf. 4b) which is syntactically realized as a relative clause, (4a):

(4) a. [...DP...]<sub>CP</sub> RelOP...VP]] b. [...DP...]<sub>VP</sub> V...]]

If the information cannot be retrieved pragmatically, there is *SOM*-insertion, and *SOM*-insertion, if any, is only imposed as a selectional requirement of the matrix clause. *Aboutness* is thus interpreted in the clause that contains the probe of *OPERATOR* movement. This strategy enables subject extractions, which otherwise trigger ECP effects (cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007). We argue that *SOM* is [-*Wh*; +*aboutness*], which explains why *SOM* is obligatory only in short subject extractions. *SOM* spells out the criterial position where the [+*aboutness*] feature is interpreted and cannot be retrieved otherwise (*SOM*-drop would make the structure ambiguous with a declarative clause). At the same time *SOM* licenses the subject extraction. The ungrammaticality of *SOM* in the most embedded clause in long extractions is directly related to the presence of *AT/ATT*-trace effects: *AT/ATT* creates a separate clausal domain where the [*aboutness*] feature needs checking, and assuming that *AT/ATT* is a [-*aboutness*] complementizer, *AT/ATT* itself cannot do so. The *AT/ATT*-trace effect is thus analyzed as an intervention effect, because *AT/ATT* creates a clausal boundary blocking the inheritance of the [*aboutness*] feature. So, in case *AT/ATT* is inserted with subject extractions, the *aboutness* feature remains unchecked, unless additional elements are merged in the structure (e.g. expletive *pro* in Icelandic (no *AD*-trace effect), on a par with other (partial) *pro*-drop languages). This way of explaining the *AT/ATT*-trace effect also accounts for the fact that the string *SOM AT/ATT* is not attested in Norwegian/Swedish subject extractions. Support for this explanation comes from Danish, in which *SOM AT* is ungrammatical with subject extractions (but grammatical with object extractions), unless an additional expletive element *DER* is inserted (cf. Vikner 1991). The variation encountered in the strength of *AT*-trace effects in Norwegian arguably depends on the reanalysis of the function of this complementizer in the different grammars.

Our proposal receives additional morphosyntactic support. First, complementizer *AT/ATT* lacks *D*-morphology, which we claim enables checking of the [*aboutness*] feature (cf. German *DASS* and Dutch *DAT* which have *D*-morphology and generally there is no *DASS/DAT*-*t* effect in these languages). Second, complementizer *SOM* originates etymologically as a comparative, which accounts for its featural endowment: *aboutness* rather than simply *nominative*. In addition to the Scandinavian data hereby presented, we introduce some related comparative facts from German, (dialectal) Dutch, (sub-standard/dialectal) Italian, and French. Our proposal can be extended to cover the different strategies licensing the extraction of subjects in (long) *A'*-dependencies in these languages.

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