

SOM OR NO SOM IN SCANDINAVIAN (LONG) A'-DEPENDENCIES

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 both relative clauses (1) and embedded *wh*-questions), whereas Icelandic does not show any such asymmetry in the distribution of SEM, which is found only in relative clauses and cannot be dropped (cf. also Taraldsen 1986, Allan et al. 1995, Faarlund et al. 1997, Teleman et al. 1999, Thráinsson 2007, and ref. Therein).

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| (1) | a. Jeg kjenner mannen *(som) kom hit
I know the man SOM came here | (Norwegian) |
| | 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 embedded *wh*-questions, whereas Icelandic does allow the sequence SEM AD in relative clauses.

SOM-insertion – similarly to the French *que/qui*-alternation – has traditionally been analyzed as a way to license extraction of the subject by checking the nominative features valued on the lowest complementizer position (cf. Taraldsen 1986, 2001; Rizzi 1990, 2006). The prediction that follows from this analysis is that SOM should always be 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 deeply 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).

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

e. SOM-insertion in long embedded wh-clauses in Swedish patterns like SOM-insertion in long relative clauses (3) (the distribution of SOM is slightly more restricted in Norwegian embedded *wh*-clauses).

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

Thus, generally in long extractions (both relatives and questions) no subject/object asymmetries regarding the distribution of SOM are attested.

f. Regarding the insertion of the declarative complementizer AT/ATT/AD in the lower clause of long extractions, we found that (i) 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 long object extractions), (ii) Icelandic shows no AD-trace effect (AD-insertion is optional), and (iii) Norwegian dialects fall into 3 different patterns with respect to AT-trace effects: 1. AT-trace effect (like Swedish); 2. no AT-trace effect: AT 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 *aboutness* (cf. Cardinaletti 2004, Frascarelli 2007). 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, an 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...]_[CP RelOP...VP]
 b. [...DP...]_[VP V...]

In compliance with Frascarelli's (2007) proposal, the feature-checking mechanism for [aboutness] fulfills the pragmatic requirement imposed by the Topic Criterion, i.e. the requirement that the subject of a predication be identified. In our analysis we argue that:

- (5) a. Scandinavian languages satisfy the subject requirement (EPP, or Subject Criterion, cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007) either with an overt subject (in IP) or with a [+aboutness] topic (in CP) (cf. Sigurðsson 2010): a [+aboutness] element licenses subject extraction/drop which otherwise triggers ECP effects.
 b. 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). 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 and *aboutness* is thus interpreted in the clause that contains the probe of OPERATOR movement.
 c. SOM is [-wh; +aboutness]: SOM is obligatory only in short subject extractions, and 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 (cf. 5a).
 d. [aboutness] is inherited via chain formation, which is sensitive to morphosyntactic clausal boundaries, such as the aspectif (and [-aboutness]) complementizer AT/ATT: the AT/ATT-trace effect is analyzed as an intervention effect, because AT/ATT creates a clausal boundary blocking the inheritance of the [aboutness] feature. The only way to rescue the derivation is insertion of elements that spell out agreeing features in some intermediate chain position (like expletives). This way of explaining the AT/ATT-trace effect accounts for (i) the absence of the string SOM AT/ATT in Norwegian/Swedish subject extractions, and (ii) the absence of an AD-trace effect in Icelandic: expletive *pro* can rescue the derivation (i.e. it inherits [aboutness] from an argument previously introduced in the discourse, on a par with other (partial) *pro*-drop languages)¹.

Our proposal receives additional morphosyntactic support: (i) complementizer AT/ATT lacks *D*-morphology, which is why it cannot inherit the [aboutness] feature (cf. German *dass* and Dutch *dat* which have *D*-morphology: generally there is no *dass/dat*-t effect in these languages); (ii) complementizer SOM originates etymologically as a comparative, which accounts for its featural endowment: *aboutness* rather than simply *nominative*. Time permitting, we will 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 for licensing the extraction of subjects in (long) A'-dependencies in these languages.

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¹The variation encountered in the strength of AT-trace effects in Norwegian arguably depends on reanalysis of the function of this complementizer in the different grammars.