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TWO SUBJECT POSITIONS IN IP IN MAINLAND SCANDINAVIAN

1. Introduction

Jonas & Bobaljik (1993) (henceforth J&B) claim that languages differ with regard to whether specTP is or is not an available landing site for the subject. Icelandic would be a language where a subject may use specTP as an intermediate or final landing site under A-movement, while English and Mainland Scandinavian (MSC) would be languages where this is not possible. J&B thus modify Chomsky's (1992) hypothesis that specTP is not available as an A-position and intermediate landing site at all (see also Branigan (1992)), and that the subject is checked by T only by virtue of T moving and adjoining to AGRs (by assumption T checks nominative case). J&B argue that specTP must be an available A-position in some languages, though not in others. Specifically, it must be available in languages which have overt Object Shift (A-motion to specAGR0P), like for instance Icelandic. The idea is, essentially, that in (1), representing the structure of a transitive clause following Object Shift, specAGR0PsP is too far away from specVP, the base position of the subject NPk, to be reached in just one step, and consequently, unless specTP is available as an intermediate landing site, the subject will be trapped inside VP, so that an ordinary subject-initial transitive sentence cannot be derived.

(1) [AGR0P ... [TP ... [AGR0P NP] [AGR0' V] + AGR0 [VP NPk [V e j e] ]] ]

In languages without Object Shift (in overt syntax) this problem does not arise, given that the specAGR0P position does not count for Relativized Minimality/Shortest Movement unless it is actually filled.

1 Many thanks to Gunlög Josefsson for her comments on the previous version of this paper.

2 According to the mechanics of the theory articulated in Chomsky (1992) and elaborated in J&B among others, having specTP available as an intermediate landing site in a language such as French, which has V-movement to AGRs but lacks Object Shift, will have the effect that the object may move across the subject to specAGR0PsP. Since this word order is not attested, the conclusion is that specTP cannot be available in such languages.
J&B show that the subject is actually realized in specTP in a certain construction in Icelandic, namely the transitive expletive construction (TEC) so-called.

(2) hán lásu sannilega einhverjir stúdentar bókina. (Icelandic)
there read probably some students the-book

J&B argue that the thematic subject in (2) is not in specVP, as a number of other writers have argued, including Holmberg and Platzack (in press) (henceforth H&P) and Vikner (1991), but in an A-position outside VP but lower than specAgrP, by hypothesis specTP. The structure of (2) would be (3).

(3)

This obviously strongly supports the hypothesis that specTP is generally available as a (usually intermediate) A-position in this language. The Mainland Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, henceforth MSc) do not allow the TEC.

(4) *Det läste troligen några studenter boken. (Swedish)
there read probably some students the-book

J&B take this to imply that specTP is not available in MSc. Another difference between Icelandic and MSc is that the latter do not have Object Shift of full NP (see H&P).

that the object may move across the subject to specAgrsP. Since this word order is not attested, the conclusion is that specTP cannot be available in such languages.

(5) a. hér lásu hana/bókina sannilega ekki allir. (Icelandic)
they read it/the-book probably not all
"They probably didn’t all read the book"

b. De läste den/boken troligen inte alla. (Swedish)
they read it/the-book probably not all

This, according to J&B, supports the hypothesis that specTP is available only in languages with Object Shift.

However, the fact that MSc, although it does not have Object Shift of full NP, does have Object Shift of weak pronouns (as seen in (5b)) is a potential problem for J&B. Following Deprez (1989) and Josefsson (1991), J&B assume that MSc pronoun shift is not A-movement to specAgrP but some kind of head movement/citization. Thus it would not interfere with subject movement from specVP to specAgrsP. This is a controversial hypothesis, though. Object Shift of pronouns does not have any properties of citization, apart from the fact that it applies strictly to weak (i.e. simple and unstressed) pronouns: In particular, unlike, say, clitics in Romance, they do not follow the inflected verb under movement to C, and do not undergo any kind of 'clitic climbing' which full NP objects could not also undergo.3 See H&P for discussion of the citization hypothesis. There is simply not enough independent empirical evidence that full NP shift and pronoun shift would be fundamentally different processes.

3 Josefsson (1991) notes that weak object pronouns may precede the subject under certain conditions, in Swedish (though not in any other Scandinavian language).

i. Varför gör mej Helge altå så irriterad? why makes me Helge always so irritated?
"Why does Helge always make me so irritated?"

She claims that constructions such as (i) is evidence that the weak pronoun is citized to I, following the inflected verb to C under V-to-I-to-C movement. Note, however, that the pre-subject pronoun need not be adjacent to C.

ii. a. Numeras gör mej altå inte längre Helge lika irriteras som förr. nowadays makes me thus no longer Helge as irritated as before.
"So nowadays Helge doesn’t any longer make me as irritated as before."
b. Numeras gör mej altå inte längre Helge lika irriteras som förr.
c. Numeras gör mej altå inte längre Helge lika irriteras som förr.
d. Numeras gör mej altå inte längre mej Helge lika irriteras som förr.

(iii) is perhaps the least marked alternative, but the other alternatives are all more or less acceptable, too. This seems incompatible with the hypothesis that the pronoun is a clitic on I following I under movement to C. A possibility which suggests itself, given the theory of Swedish sentence structure to be proposed in the text, is that the pronoun in (i) and (ii) has shifted as usual but that the subject (Helge) is in a lower subject position in this construction. I will not discuss this possibility here.
Recently Jonas (1993) has shown that there is a variety of Faroese which has TECs but still does not have full NP Object Shift, only Object Shift of pronouns, just like MSc. This confirms the view that absence of full NP Object Shift has no implications for the availability of specTP.

In the following I will argue that subjects occur in two distinct spec-positions between C and VP, in MSc, too. Tentatively, I identify these two positions as specAGRsP and specTP.

2. Two negation/adverb positions

In Swedish and Norwegian the negation and certain (other) sentence adverbs, typically epistemic adverbs such as möjligen 'possibly', troligen 'probably' etc. can occur in two distinct positions relative to the subject, preceding it or following it. In Danish, on the other hand, the possibility of having the negation and sentence adverbs precede the subject are much more limited. Thus (7a,b) are possible in Swedish and Norwegian as alternatives to (6a,b), while in Danish (6a,b) represents the only acceptable ordering of subject and sentence adverb/negation:

(6) a. *Har någon student möjligen läst boken?*  
   has some/any student possibly read the-book
   
   b. (Det är märkligt) att Johan inte gillar princesstårtan.  
   (It is odd) that Johan not likes princess cake

(7) a. Har möjligen någon student läst boken?  
   has possibly some/any student read the-book
   
   b. att inte Johan gillar princesstårtan.  
   that not Johan likes princess cake

The standard view is that the negation and the adverb/negation in (6) are adjoined to VP. As for (7a,b) it has been proposed that the adverb/negation is adjoined to IP, in a framework assuming only one sentential head and projection, namely IP; between C and VP: see H&P. It has also been proposed that they are adjoined ("citicized") to C; see Platszack (1986). The latter analysis is highly implausible at least in cases like (8):

(8) Därför har möjligen eller till och med troligen någon student läst boken.  
   therefore has possibly or even probably some student read the-book

Clearly we do not expect a complex adverbial construct such as the one underlined in (8) to criticize to a head.

It has also been noted (Faarlund (1977), Holmberg (1990)) that the negation/adverb cannot precede a weak (i.e. simple and unstressed) subject pronoun. Compare (7) and (9):

(9) a. (*)Har inte du läst boken?  
   have not you read the-book
   
   b. (*)att möjligen han gillar princesstårtan.  
   that possibly he likes princess cake
   
   c. "Jag tror att inte det är bra att vara så envis.  
   I think that not it is good to be so stubborn

(9a,b) are perfectly well formed if and only if the subject pronoun is contrastive, indicated prosodically. In (9c) the embedded subject pronoun, being nonreferential, cannot be contrasted, and therefore the sentence is ill formed with any prosodic pattern.4

3. Adjunction to VP and TP but not AGRP

The facts above are accounted for under the following four hypotheses:

(10) A. In Swedish and Norwegian the negation and certain adverbs can adjoin to TP or to VP, while in Danish they can only adjoin to VP. Other adverbs/adverbial categories can only adjoin to VP.

   B. No adverbs/adverbials can adjoin to AGRP, neither to AGRsP or to AGRoP.

   C. Weak pronouns move obligatorily to specAGRP (in overt syntax), specAGRsP in the case of subject (nominative) pronouns, specAGRoP in the case of object pronouns.

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4 This is true of many, but not all, varieties of Swedish and Norwegian There are dialects where at least (9a) is perfectly well formed (as discussed by Faarlund (1977)). All observations reported in the literature, as well as my own informal observations, have just the negation preceding the pronoun. This suggests that in these dialects the negation (and possibly some additional "light" adverbs) are indeed adjoined to C.
D. All subjects move obligatorily to specTP in overt syntax. Weak pronoun subjects must move on to specAGRsP (according to C), other subjects do so optionally.

The argument and adverb positions and their contents as permitted by this theory are shown schematically in (11) (NPs = full NP subject, WPs = weak subject pronoun, NPo = full NP object, WPo = weak object pronoun).

(11)

As regards subjects the effect of (10A-D) is that NPs may precede all adverbs, or alternatively precede some adverbs (the VP-adjoined ones) and follow other adverbs (the TP-adjoined ones), while WPs must precede all adverbs. Thus (9) is ruled out, while (6) and (7) are ruled in. As regards objects the effect of (10A-D) is that WPo must precede all adverbs adjoined to VP (obligatory pronominal Object Shift).5 Nothing is said about NPo in (10A-D), but as indicated by (5) above there is cross-linguistic variation regarding NPo: in Icelandic NPo moves optionally to specAGRoP (thus it parallels NPs, which as claimed, moves optionally to specAGRsP), while in MSc NPo remains inside VP.

Hypothesis (10A) seems relatively uncontroversial (see also J&B). The adverbs which can be adjoined to TP (i.e. can precede NPs) are mainly epistemic adverbs and the negation. For instance manner adverbs and other traditional 'VP-adverbs' can only be adjoined to VP. With regard to time and frequency adverbs there is cross-linguistic/dialectal variation. 6 7

Hypothesis B (no adjunction to AGRP) is proposed by Koizumi (1993).8 Consider first AGRPs: Hypothesis B in conjunction with hypothesis C (weak subject pronouns all move to specAGRsP) has the effect that no adverb can intervene between C and a weak subject pronoun. That is to say, (9a,b,c) are ruled out. Now consider AGRoP: Assume, following Mahajan (1990), Chomsky (1992) and related work, that there is a head AGRo projecting a phrase AGRoP between TP and VP, and that the landing site of Object Shift in Icelandic and MSc is specAGRoP. As discussed in Holmberg (1988), Vikner (1991), and H&P weak object pronouns shift to a position preceding all sentence adverbs and other predicate adjuncts (except in Swedish; see below). In the works mentioned, since they assume no AGRo/AGRoP, this is described in terms of Object Shift being always to the leftmost periphery of VP, and the explanation proposed is that the shifted object must be adjacent to I, being Case-licensed by I under government and adjacency. In a theory assuming AGRo/AGRoP the requirement that the object be shifted across all adjuncts follows from the the prohibition against adjunction to AGRoP.

A problem is that the theory predicts that a shifted object pronoun could still be preceded by the class of adverbs which can adjoin to TP. This prediction is possibly correct for Swedish, but not for Norwegian.9 (12a) is Norwegian, (12b) Swedish.


they read (it) probably (it) with-pleasure (it) all (it)

6 For instance, in Norwegian the adverb ofte 'often' may precede NPs, i.e. it may be adjoined to TP, while this is not good in (standard) Swedish.
(1) Linguistisk snakker ofte om. (Norwegian)
linguistic talks often Per about
7 As mentioned Danish is highly restrictive as regards word order C-Adv-subject, I suggested above that this is because no adverbs can adjoin to TP in Danish. Another possibility is that, for some reason, NP cannot remain in specTP in Danish.
8 See also Hagegheim (1993), who claims that there is no adverb adjunction to projections headed by cleft pronouns in West Flemish.
9 If it is the case that adverbs cannot in general adjoin to TP in Danish we predict that we will never find adverbs preceding a shifted object in this language, which seems to be correct.
b. Dom läser (den) trolligen (den) gärna (den) alla (?den).

We account for Norwegian if we assume that adverbs can adjoin to TP only if specTP is filled. If not, all the relevant adverbs will be adjoined to VP, and will thus follow a shifted object. Note that since T moves to AGRs in any case (see Chomsky (1992)), a TP projection without a realized specifier will have no visible content, and is therefore, plausibly, not a good adjoinment site. The question remains what to do about Swedish. An alternative is to parametrize the prohibition against adjoinment to a TP without a specifier, allowing it in Swedish but not in Norwegian. On the other hand (12b) indicates that a weak object pronoun can be preceded also by adverbs and other categories which do not adjoin to TP. The adverb gärna cannot precede the subject, nor can a floated quantifier (except as part of the subject NP), which is to say, they do not adjoin to TP.

(13) *att gärna Johan läser den boken.
    that with-pleasure Johan reads that book

Thus it seems to be the case that there are several landing sites for a shifted object pronoun in Swedish, outside as well as inside VP, if we take the quantifier in (12b) to mark the left periphery of VP. See H&P and Collins and Thrainsson (1993) for a discussion of VP internal landing sites.

I conclude that the prohibition against adjoinment to AGRsP has quite straightforward empirical support while the prohibition against adjoinment to AGRsP is more difficult to support empirically, I will assume it nevertheless.

As for why adverbs cannot adjoin to AGR, I assume, following Koizumi (1993), that this is because agreement is a semantically empty category. In this it differs not only from lexical heads like V, but also from its fellow inflectional categories tense, mood, and aspect, which do contribute to the temporal and modal interpretation of the sentence (although it could be argued that the function of tense and mood is sometimes purely formal, as in certain sequence-of-tense constructions). It seems not implausible that the semantic invisibility of AGR makes AGRP invisible as an adjoinment site for adverbs/advbials, which are categories which modify the semantic interpretation of their host projection.

Hypothesis (10C) (weak pronouns move obligatorily to specAGRP) can be viewed as a consequence of pronouns and AGR sharing some feature(s) not shared with other categories. One feature which only pronouns and AGR have is person. In the spirit of Chomsky's (1992) checking theory, say that the person feature of weak pronouns must be checked in overt syntax. The only head which can check person is AGR. Hence weak pronouns move obligatorily to specAGRP in overt syntax.

Hypothesis (10D) (all subjects move to specTP in overt syntax) is controversial in at least two respects: To begin with, it entails that subjects always move out of VP. J&B have argued that this is the case, if not universally, at least for the type of languages to which the Germanic languages belong, while Bobaljik & Carmie (1992) have argued that it is the case in Celtic languages, too (contra a suggestion made by Chomsky (1992)). Second, it presupposes that specTP is available as a landing site for moved subjects not only in Icelandic, as claimed by J&B, but in MSc, too. Adverb placement facts, as laid out above, indicate that the subject NP may appear in specTP in s-structure, not only in Icelandic but also in MSc. If there is a negation or adverb adjoined to TP, the result is a sentence like (7a,b), repeated here as (14a), would be (14b) (omitting details such as the AGRs projection).

(14) a. Har möjligen någon student läst boken?
    has possibly some student read the-book

b. [C
    AGRs
    AGRs'
    TP
    T
    VP
    V
    NP
    har
    möjligen
    någon
    stud.
    ej
    ej
    läst
    boken]
If it is correct that MSc (and Faroese) object pronoun shift is basically the same rule as Icelandic full NP Object Shift, the landing site being specAGRpP in both cases, it can be maintained that there is a connection between availability of specTP and Object Shift, essentially as proposed in J&B and Jonas (1993).

8. On the nature of the subject positions

How do we know that the two postulated subject positions are specAGRsp and specTP, respectively? The evidence is obviously highly theory-bound and indirect. As already discussed, the fact that weak pronouns have a special relation to the higher argument position, in the case of subject as well as object pronouns, suggests that the head is AGR. The hypothesis that the lower position is specTP has (even) less support. The word order C-Adv-subject, as in (7), is used primarily, perhaps exclusively, when the subject is focused contrastively. The effect can be quite subtle, but it seems that some degree of contrast is required for this word order to be natural. Weak pronouns and expletive pronouns cannot be contrastively focused, which in a sense explains why they are not well formed in postadverbial position, if this is a position of contrast. This suggests that the position of the postadverbial subject may not be specTP but rather the spec of a functional head encoding contrast, situated, perhaps, between AGRs and T.

However, in the absence of independent evidence of a 'Contrast-head' and ditto projection I assume that the relevant spec-position is specTP. Note that a full NP subject can be contrastively focused in the higher position, too (e.g. in (6a,b)). This suggests that contrastive focus (in the sense discussed) is the unmarked case. Some positions are specially marked to allow (specAGRsp) or require (specAGRop?) nonfocused content. This is not as unintuitive as it might appear at first. Consider, for instance, the fact that a focused category may occur alone, forming a complete expression (for instance as an answer to a constituent question), which a nonfocused category cannot do. That is to say, it takes more structure to license nonfocused categories than it takes to license focused ones.

9. Why does MSc not have TECs?

If specTP is available in MSc, how come (4) is not well formed the way (2) is in Icelandic? One possibility, explored in Holmberg (1993), is that the contrast between (2) and (4) is due to a difference in the nature of the expletive pronoun, which in turn is related to a difference in the "strength" of AGRs. Very briefly, the idea is that languages differ with regard to whether AGRs is nominative ("strong") or caseless ("weak"). In MSc AGRs is weak (note that AGRs is phonetically empty in MSc; see H&P). By hypothesis, this means that the expletive pronoun in impersonal constructions must be nominative. On the assumption that nominative is checked by T, this entails that the expletive must head a chain including specTP. This excludes the TEC, as analyzed in J&B. In Icelandic AGRs is nominative. This, by hypothesis, means that the expletive is, or can be, nonnominative (i.e. it can be a there-type expletive), and thus need not bind a trace in specTP, making it possible for a thematic subject to move to specTP, if other conditions are met.

References


10 Cardinaliatti (1992) has argued that object pronoun shift uses specAGRop as an intermediate landing site, but then undergoes further movement, somewhat in the fashion of Flemish clitics according to Haegeman (1993).