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 do not 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
   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 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
     I know the man SOM you hope SOM comes here
     (Swedish)

     b. Jag känner mannen (som) du hoppas *(som) Maria ska träffa imorgen
      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
     She wondered who SOM you hope SOM comes here
     (Swedish)

     b. Hon undrade vem *(som) du hoppas *(som) Maria ska träffa imorgen
      She wondered who SOM you hope SOM Maria shall meet tomorrow

f. Regarding the insertion of the declarative complementizer AT/ATT 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 licensor. 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...[OP RelOP...VP] b. [...]DP...[VP 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.