

The phenomenon of Complementizer Agreement: new data from South-Tyrol

Introduction

As is well known, Complementizer Agreement (= CA) describes the occurrence of agreement morphemes on the elements that are merged in the C head, in particular complementizers and other subordinating items. This morpho-syntactic phenomenon has been reported mainly for spoken varieties of West Germanic languages (cf. 1a and b):

- (1) a. ..., ob-**sd** mog-**sd** oda ned (Bavarian, from Weiß & Strobel 2018: 20)
if-CA.2S like-FL or not
'..., whether you want to or not'
- b. ..., ob-**m** se och woln (Upper Saxon, from Baumgärtner 1959: 102)
if-CA.1P they also want
'..., whether they, too, want'

A large number of studies has been dedicated to the origin of CA suggesting the enclitization of the subject pronouns on the C elements (see Altmann 1984, Fuß 2005, Weiß 2005, Zwart 2006, Axel & Weiß 2011, Bayer 2012, Weiß 2012, 2018, among others) which seems to be true for forms such as (1a), lesser for those in (1b), see also Weiß (2018) for an explanation of non-pronominal CA. Generally, CA has been assumed to be very old as both the enclitization of subject pronoun on C and the phenomenon of double agreement can be traced back to the Old High German time (see Weiß 2012: 27).

Empirical data

In the South-bavarian varieties spoken in South-Tyrol, CA has hardly been investigated (see Alber 1994). Recently, within the European AthEME project (<http://www.atheme.eu>) new data concerning CA have been collected in some of these dialects. The areas for which data have been provided are the followings: (a) Upper Vinschgau nearby the Stilfserjoch, more precisely the villages Trafoi and Sulden; (b) the dialects of the so-called German Nonsberg, in particular, Laurein und Proveis in Upper Fischbach-Valley and (c) the city dialect of Meran.

The data indicate that the phenomenon is spreading in all investigated areas (see Barera 2016 for the area a, Pigarella 2018 for area b and Bassighini 2018 for area c), nevertheless the results of these researches provide a very differentiated picture of the CA, as the three investigated areas display completely different situations.

In area (a), the phenomenon is attested very robustly for the second person plural (-[t]/s). Besides, there is a clear distinction between the older and the younger generation, as the former realizes the agreement morpheme -(t)s overtly only on the finite verb in the second position, i.e. in matrix clauses (cf. 2), and on the complementizer, i.e. in dependent clauses (cf. 3a), but, crucially, not on the finite verb, when it shows up at the end of the clause, i.e. in dependent clauses (cf. 3a), while the latter regularly realizes it in all three positions (cf. 2 and 3b):

- (2) Brumhob-s eis in Meran a Haus kaft?
why have-CA.2P you in Meran a house bought
'Why did you buy a house in Meran?'
- (3) a. I erinner mi nu, brum-s (eis) in Meran a Haus kaft hob
I remember REFL now, why-CA.2P (you) in Meran a house bought have-∅

- b. I erinner mi nu, brum-s (eis) in Meran a Haus kaft hob-s
 I remember REFL now, why-CA.2P (you) in Meran a house bought have-FL
 'I remember now, why you bought a house in Meran'

These data confirmed Weiß' (2012, 2018) hypothesis on the diachronic path of the phenomenon, as they prove that the agreement morpheme has become part of the inflectional paradigm for the speakers of the younger generation.

In area b), the phenomenon is not attested, since the dual form *e(i)s* 'you' has never found its way into this territory. The dialect of this part of South-Tyrol still preserves the original form *ir* 'you'. Interestingly enough, the CA is going to be imported into the area by younger speakers who study or work elsewhere in South-Tyrol.

Area c) displays a non-consistent picture. The sociolinguistic dynamics of language use in a town such as Meran seems to counteract the expansion of the phenomenon. In fact, the older urban population rejects CA, at least for the most part, as unnatural and 'rustic', i.e. specific for people who live in the country in opposition to those of the city area. Nevertheless, higher acceptance of CA by the younger speakers can be observed.

Theoretical relevance

Weiß & Strobel (2018: 21) discovered for some German dialects a robust correlation among the syntactic phenomena of CA, wh-extraction from a subordinate clause, and doubly-filled COMP. They showed that the occurrence of both wh-extraction and doubly-filled COMP increases substantially when the speakers also have CA in their syntax. Their crucial observation is that CA improves the permeability of the clause for movement ("[das Phänomen der flektierten Konjunktionen] scheint die Bewegungsdurchlässigkeit tatsächlich zu erhöhen").

The aim of our presentation is threefold: first, we will present the new data about CA from the South-tyrolean varieties; in a second step, we will discuss whether the correlations observed by Weiß & Strobel (2018) for some German dialects also holds for the varieties of South-Tyrol or not. The different situations of realization of the phenomenon allow us to verify it consistently. Third, we will propose an explanation for the „*Bewegungsdurchlässigkeit*“ the presence of CA seems to induce. We propose that, in sentences with CA, the C head does not inherit its agreement features to T and, therefore, it does not assign the Nominative case to SpecTP allowing the extraction from the embedded clause. To support this explanation we will also provide evidence from other languages in which extraction is possible only when the Nominative case is not transferred from C to T, as confirmed by following examples from Fiorentino (cf. 4a versus 4b) (see Brandi & Cordin 1989) and from Veneto (cf. 5a versus 5b):

- (4) a. Quante ragazze tu credi che e' sia venuto?
 how-many girls you believe that EXPL be.3S come.ø
 'How many girls do you believe have come?'
 b. *Quante ragazze tu credi che le siano venute?
 how-many girls you believe that they be.3P come.FL
- (5) a. Chi credi=to che gabia leto el libro?
 who believe=you that ø has red the book
 'Who do you believe has red the book?'
 b. *Chi credi=to che 'I gabia leto el libro?
 who believe=you that he has red the book

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