

A Topicalization analysis of Icelandic Quirky case word order facts

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April 11th, 2014



Outline

- ① Introduction
- ② Agr-Based Approach
- ③ 'Light' Tense Phrase (τ P) Approach
- ④ V2 Topicalization Approach
- ⑤ Conclusion

Quirky Case

- Quirky case is often generalized as non-NOM markings on subjects and non-ACC markings on objects (Schütze 1993).
- Quirky case is more aptly described as idiosyncratic lexical case marking (Thráinsson 2007).
- Icelandic is well-known for having Quirky case.

- (1) a. Mér líkar þessir bílar.
 me(DAT) likes these-cars(NOM)
 'I like these cars.'
- b. Mig vantar peninga.
 me(ACC) lacks money(ACC)
 'I lack money.'
- c. Ég saknadi hans.
 I(NOM) missed him(GEN)
 'I missed him.'

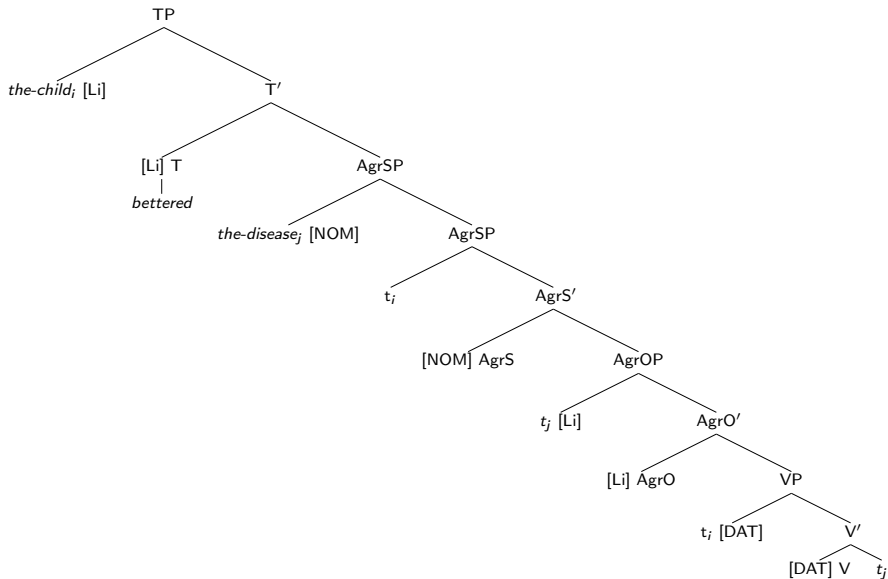
Approaches to Icelandic Word Order Facts

- Schütze (1993) uses an AgrXP-based approach to account for the Icelandic facts.
- After dropping these components from our syntactic theory, how might Minimalist syntax handle these Icelandic Quirky case sentences?
- I consider two potential analyses here:
 - The addition of a 'light' tense phrase τP
 - A V2 topicalization account
- I propose that the V2 approach is the better solution.

Schütze (1993)

- Schütze's approach is based in a system that includes AgrXPs.
- AgrS and AgrO are heads which check agreement features on the subject and object, respectively.
- In order to represent the Icelandic data, Schütze separates positional licensing from morphological case.
- Schütze also rearranges the tree structure by moving TP above AgrSP.
- In this system, [NOM] is checked by AgrS and the subject [Li] feature is checked by T.
- Both [ACC] the object [Li] feature are checked by AgrO.

(2) the-child(DAT) bettered the-disease(NOM)



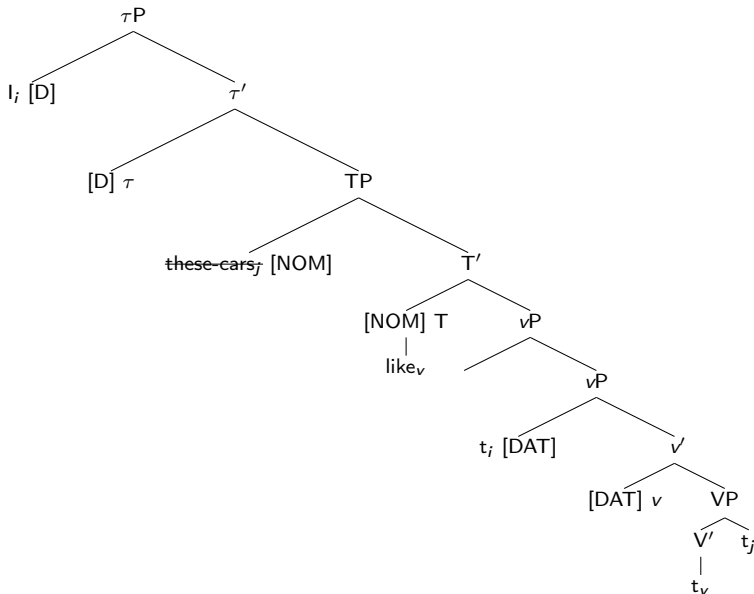
Schütze (1993)

- The direct object checks [NOM] because of the Accusativity Parameter, which states that if the direct object can only check one of either [NOM] or [ACC], it must check Nominative case.
- In this instance, [NOM] on the direct object is not Quirky, since it is structural rather than lexical.
- Schütze's analysis works with the components it has, but outside motivations suggest that AgrXPs and [Li] features are semantically vacuous and unnecessary to the theory.

τ P Approach

- Multiple verbal, nominal, and prepositional shells are well-established. Why not tense?
- I suggest expanding the standard minimalist tree structure by adding a 'light' tense phrase τ P above TP.

(3) I(DAT) like(3sg) these-cars(NOM)



τ P Approach

- The subject checks its Quirky case with v , then moves to Spec- τ P to check τ 's [D] feature.
- The direct object moves to Spec-TP where it checks [NOM].
- The verb moves up to T.
- This works for Quirky as well as non-Quirky sentences.

Problems with τ P

- This could also be potentially addressed by adding a second specifier of T. However, extended minimal domains would make the subject and object equidistant from T, rendering this approach useless.
- It is based on 'incomplete' prior work on Icelandic, which only covers SVO ordered sentences.
- τ P may be as semantically vacuous as the previous AgrXPs.

Verb-Second in Icelandic

- Icelandic is usually classified as a V2 language (Thráinsson 2007).
- The finite verb is the second element in the clause, moving up to Top (in Icelandic).
- The first element moves to Spec-TopP to check an unchecked [Top] feature (Rizzi 1997). This element may vary.

(4) 'Someone bought the book yesterday.'

a. Einhver **keypti** bókina í gær.

S V O AD

b. Bókina **keypti** einhver í gær.

O V S AD

c. Í gær **keypti** einhver bókina.

AD V S O

Quirky Agreement & V2 Interaction

- There is an interesting asymmetry when we compare subject- and object-initial Quirky sentences.

(5) 'I like these cars.'

a. **Mér** líkar þessir bílar.

S V-3sg O

b. **Mér** líka þessir bílar.

S V-3pl O

(6) 'I like these cars.'

a. ?* Þessir bílar líkar **mér**.

O V-3sg **S**

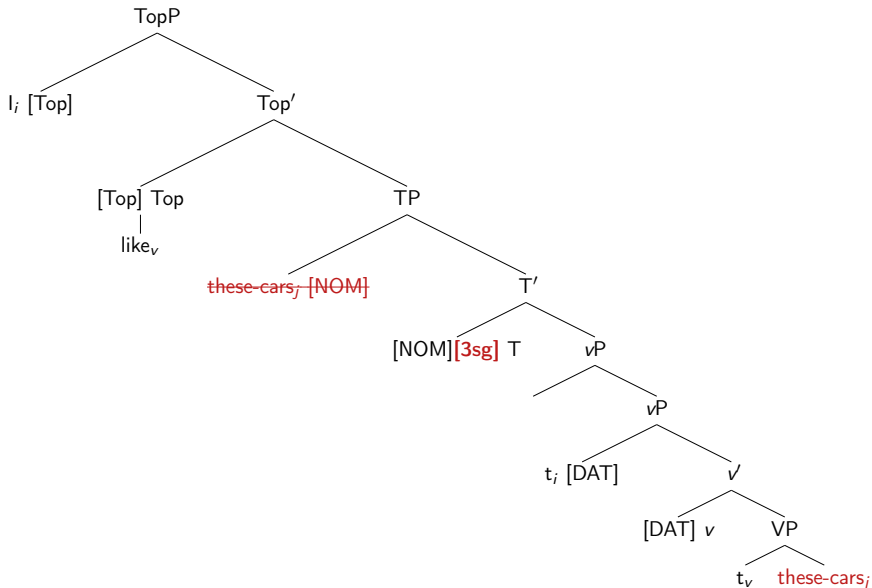
b. Þessir bílar líka **mér**.

O V-3pl **S**

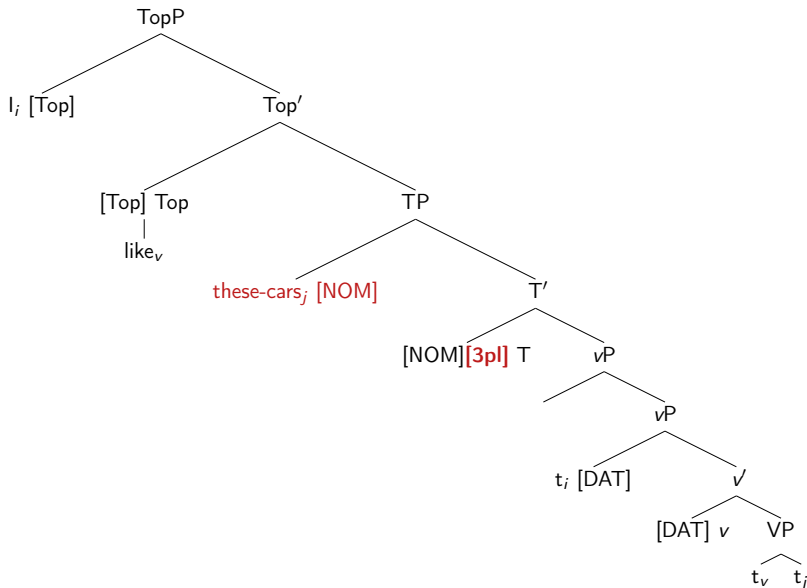
Quirky Agreement

- In Arabic, full agreement obtains when the subject moves overtly to Spec-TP, and partial agreement obtains when it moves there covertly (Hornstein et al 2005)
- With the subject Topic, 3sg or 3pl agreement is available on the verb:
 - 3sg is partial (or default), with the object moving to T covertly
 - 3pl obtains when the object moves to Spec-TP overtly
- When the object is Topicalized, only 3pl agreement is allowed:
 - To move to Spec-TopP, the nominative object **must** move through Spec-TP, causing full agreement
 - This obligatory step prevents partial/default agreement with the object

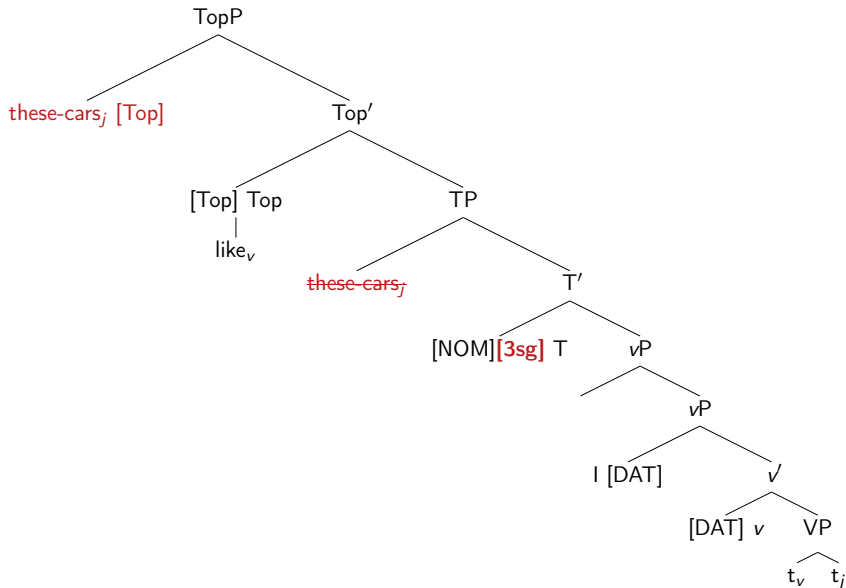
Singular Agreement with Subject Topic



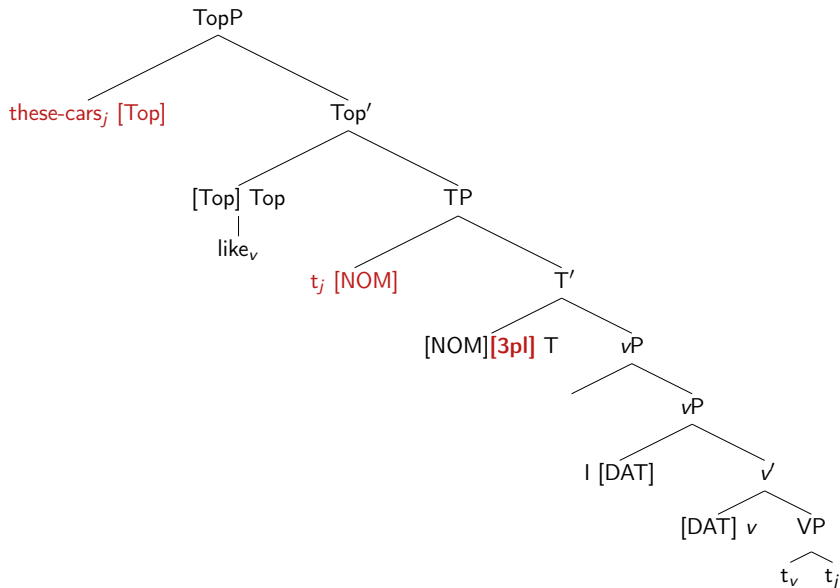
Plural Agreement with Subject Topic



* Singular Agreement with Object Topic



Plural Agreement with Object Topic



Problems with the Icelandic V2 Approach

- What motivates the optional nature of moving the object overtly or covertly?
- How exactly does partial agreement obtain?

Summary

- Older analyses of Icelandic Quirky case data, such as Schütze's 1993 analysis, require AgrXPs, which are no longer used in Minimalist syntax.
- Two Minimalist alternatives for Icelandic Quirky case word order:
 - τP
 - V2

Conclusion

- The V2 approach explains the Icelandic word order facts better than the τ P approach.
- This approach is more in line with other discussions of Icelandic (Thráinsson 2007).
- Treating Icelandic as V2 also brings it more in line with the other Germanic languages, which (with the exception of English) also exhibit V2 phenomena.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Aaron Kaplan and his Fall 2013 formal research methods class, Dr. Aniko Csirmaz, and members of the Speech Acquisition Lab for their helpful comments and questions.

My Icelandic informants Ívar Finnbogason and Hlif Arnadottir for their generally helpful judgements.

The Marriott Library for buying *The Syntax of Icelandic* when I requested that they do so (even though it's the non-user-friendly electronic version).

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