

Left Periphery and Locality. A Case Study in Sicilian

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Sicilian allows infinitival clauses like that contained in (1).

- (1) Pi ttu diri chistu, u manciari avia a esseri na purcaria veru
For you_{NOM} to say that, the food had to be a muck really
“If you say that, the food must have been really muck”

In Rizzi (2002) the idea is expressed that local relations must be satisfied in a minimal configuration, the smallest configuration in which they can be satisfied. His definition is given in (2).

- (2) Y is a Minimal Configuration (MC) with X iff there is no Z such that
(i) Z is of the same structural type as X, and
(ii) Z intervenes between X and Y.

Statement (2) gives a definition of the minimal configuration which must hold in local relations, eliminating reference to the spurious notion “Antecedent government” and generalizing the notion to all local relations. As for “sameness” of structural type, if one assumes a theory not allowing phrasal adjunction, the relevant potential interveners will be heads or specifiers. So, heads are of the “same structural type” as other heads; as for specifiers, the subject does not determine a minimality effect. According to (2), (3) can be given as a definition of chain.

- (3) (A_1, \dots, A_n) is a chain iff, for $1 \leq i < n$
(i) $A_i = A_{i+1}$
(ii) A_i c-commands A_{i+1}
(iii) A_{i+1} is in a MC with A_i

Configuration (3iii) can be observed in West Flemish (Haegemann 1993) and is exemplified in (4).

- (4) Mee (?gisteren) zie nie te kommen...
“With yesterday she not to come...”

Here the subject of the infinitive is not Case-dependent on the complementizer, as it presumably receives Case IP-internally. In this construction, adverb interpolation is possible.

A more minimal pair is provided by Brazilian Portuguese (Figueiredo 1994; Miotto 1999): the subject of the infinitive may receive IP-internal nominative case, or accusative assigned by the prepositional complementizer; only in the latter case is adverb interpolation forbidden.

- (5) a. Ela me deu o livro pra (amanha) eu ler
“She gave me the book for tomorrow I to read”
b. Ela me deu o livro pra (*amanha) mim ler
“She gave me the book for tomorrow me to read”

As (1), (6) and (7) show, a similar situation is to be found in Sicilian.

- (6) Pi ura tu diri chistu...
 For now you_{ACC} to say that...
 “If you now say that...”
- (7) *Pi ttia diri chistu...
 For you_{ACC} to say that...

Our tentative suggestion admits that left periphery only exists in infinitival clauses with a subject in the nominative. Comparing Sicilian with Romance languages and/or dialects allows us to conclude not only that case is IP-internally assigned to the subject overtly or covertly but also that movements of non-finite verbs to the left of the subject (shown by Rizzi 1982) are related to the necessity to activate positions of left periphery.

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