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THE DIACHRONIC DISTRIBUTION
OF BARE AND PREPOSITIONAL INFINITIVES IN ENGLISH

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1 Introduction

In this paper I investigate constructions involving bare and prepositional infinitives in the history of English. I Based on the distribution of bare and prepositional infinitives in Romance (see Raposo 1986), I propose that English has a null infinitival head with the features [-V, +N], which needs to satisfy the Case Filter (see Chomsky 1981) in the same way the overt infinitival head in Romance does. I show that the preposition *to* is a dummy Case marker that allows the null infinitival head to comply with the Case Filter. Finally, I argue that the general replacement of bare infinitives by prepositional infinitives in the history of English is due to the loss of verb movement in infinitivals.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I briefly present Raposo's (1986) proposal to account for the distribution of bare and prepositional infinitives in Romance. In section 3 I propose that Raposo's analysis can be successfully extended to English. And finally in section 4 I discuss the history of some infinitival constructions: in section 4.1, perception and causative constructions; in section 4.2, ECM constructions; in section 4.3, 'split infinitives'; and in section 4.4, the distribution of sentential subjects.

2 Bare and prepositional infinitives in Romance

Raposo (1986) argues that infinitival clauses in Romance behave like nominal projections with respect to the Case Filter. He shows that bare infinitives can only appear in positions selected by Case-assigning elements, as exemplified by the Portuguese sentences in (1-3):

¹This is a revised and shortened version of the papers I presented at the Fourth Student Conference in Linguistics at Ohio State University (see Nunes 1992), and at the 11th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, at the University of California Los Angeles (see Nunes MS). I would like to thank Norbert Hornstein, David Lightfoot, Alan Munn, Ellen Thompson, and Juan Uriagereka for insightful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper. The remaining errors are my own responsibility.

- (1) *O rapaz receia [chambar o exame]*
the boy fears [fail-INF the exam]
"The boy fears failing the exam"
- (2) *O receio *(de) [chambar o exame]...*
the fear *(of) [fail-INF the exam]
"The fear of failing the exam ..."
- (3) *O rapaz está receoso *(de) [chambar o exame]*
the boy is fearful *(of) [fail-INF the exam]
"The boy is fearful of failing the exam"

In order to account for the data above, Raposo proposes that Romance infinitival clauses are partly characterized as a projection of a [-V, +N] element, namely, the infinitival morpheme. As a nominal element, the infinitival morpheme (or its projection) is subject to the Case Filter. Thus, the infinitival clause of (1) can be Case-marked by the verb *recear* and satisfy the Case Filter. On the other hand, the infinitival clause complement of a cognate noun, as in (2), or a cognate adjective, as in (3), requires the insertion of a dummy preposition (*de*) in order to be Case-marked.

In the next section I investigate how Raposo's analysis can be extended to English.

3 English infinitives

As is well known, before the phonological weakening of inflectional endings in its history, English had an overt infinitival morpheme, namely, *-an*. Roberts (1992) claims that from Old English to Modern English *to* was reanalysed as the head of the infinitival TP after the phonological weakening of *-an*. This proposal, however, does not provide an account for the distribution of bare infinitives and *to*-infinitives BEFORE the weakening of the infinitival TP. Crucially, not only did bare infinitives in *-an* coexist with *to*-infinitives in Old English, but infinitival morphemes preceded by *to* surfaced as *-anne* or *-ame*, exhibiting inflection for the dative Case assigned by *to* (see Callaway 1913).

Lightfoot (1979), on the other hand, claims that infinitives were nominal projections in Old English, but were reanalysed as VPs in Middle English. Alternatively, it seems reasonable to think that, other than phonological differences, the properties of both the infinitival morpheme and the preposition *to* remain constant throughout the history of English. Extending Raposo's (1986) proposal to Old English, I propose that the infinitival morpheme is still a nominal element, and *to* has always been a dummy Case-marker (see Stowell 1981:177ff.), used as a last resort in order for the infinitival morpheme

(*-an* in Old English and \emptyset in Modern English) to satisfy the Case Filter. In other words, the phonological weakening of *-an* gave rise in Modern English to an infinitival TP headed by a phonologically null infinitival morpheme. Furthermore, the fact that *to*-infinitives in general came to replace bare infinitives is related to the loss of verb movement in English, as will be shown below.

Assuming that AgrP, when present, dominates a TP (see Belletti 1990), there are four logically possible ways for an infinitival TP to satisfy the Case Filter, as sketched in (4).

- (4)
- (a) The infinitival TP is subcategorized for by a Case-assigner.
 - (b) The infinitival TP moves to a Case-marked position.
 - (c) The infinitival head moves to a position where it can be Case-marked.
 - (d) As a 'last resort operation' (see Chomsky 1991), the infinitival morpheme is Case-marked after the insertion of a dummy Case-marker.

Below I will consider some specific constructions in which these possibilities are actualized.

4 Diachronic analysis

4.1 Perception and causative constructions

Infinitival complements of perception and causative verbs in Modern English present us with an interesting puzzle. In their active forms these verbs take bare infinitives as their complements, whereas in their passive forms they take prepositional infinitives (see Zagona 1982, Lightfoot 1991, among others):

- (5) (a) *Bill saw Mary (*to) eat*
(b) *Mary was seen *(to) eat*
- (6) (a) *Bill made Mary (*to) eat*
(b) *Mary was made *(to) eat*

As we can see in (7) and (8) below, perception and causative verbs in Old English subcategorize for a bare infinitival clause.² Under the plausible assumption that the phonological weakening of the infinitival morpheme did not lead to changes in the subcategorization features of perception and

²In his study of infinitives in Old English, Callaway (1913) counts 1512 instances of bare infinitives and 15 instances of *to*-infinitives as complements of perception and causative verbs (for discussion of Callaway's figures, see Russon 1980).

causative verbs, the complements of *see* and *make* in (5a) and (6a) should be taken still to be infinitival clauses, rather than 'bare VPs' as often assumed. The question that then arises is what the structure of the infinitival clause of (5a) and (6a) is, which allows both *Mary* and the null infinitival morpheme to satisfy the Case Filter.

- (7) *pa ba he geseah his fostromoder wegan*
 "then he saw his foster mother weep"
 (Gregory's *Dialogues* (C) 97.14; apud Lightfoot 1991:82)
- (8) *swa du dydest minne broder his god farlætan*
 "as you made my brother forsake his god"
 (Ælfric, *Homilies* I, 468, 21; apud Lightfoot 1991:82)

Assuming the standard view that perception and causative verbs trigger 'S-deletion' (see Chomsky 1981), we need to determine whether the infinitival clauses of (5a) and (6a) are AgrPs or TPs, and how the nominal elements of the infinitival clauses satisfy the Case Filter. Some of the logical possibilities are listed in (9)–(11), where the null infinitival morpheme is represented by \emptyset :

- (9) *Bill saw/made* [Agr' Agr [TP *Mary* [γ^r \emptyset [VP *eat*]]]]
- (10) *Bill saw/made* [AgrP *Mary* [*Mary*'Agr [TP γ^r [γ^r \emptyset [VP *eat*]]]]]
- (11) *Bill saw/made* [TP *Mary* [γ^r \emptyset [VP *eat*]]]

In order to choose among these structures, I will rely on the recursive definition of government proposed by Raposo and Uriagereka (1990), as stated in (12) and (13):

- (12) α (= X^0) governs β iff: (a) α is a sister of β , or (b) α governs δ , and there is no γ , γ a barrier for β , such that γ excludes δ ; and there is no μ , μ a closer governor of β than α , where μ is a closer governor of β than α , iff μ governs β by fewer steps than α does.
- (13) α is a barrier only if α is an X^r (a specified functional projection).

According to (12), the matrix verb in (9) does not govern either *Mary* or the infinitival morpheme, because there is an intervening barrier (TP) and a closer governor for these elements (Agr). Therefore, (9) is ruled out by the Case Filter: both *Mary* and the infinitival morpheme do not receive Case.

In (10), on the other hand, the matrix verb governs AgrP by the base step of the definition (12), as well as governing *Mary* by the induction step, since there is no barrier for *Mary* that excludes the projection governed by the

matrix verb, and Agr is not closer as a governor. However, the matrix verb does not govern the infinitival morpheme, because TP is an intervening barrier for the infinitival morpheme and Agr is a closer governor. Hence, (10) also yields a Case Filter violation.

In (11) the matrix verb governs the TP by the base step, as well as governing *Mary* and the head of TP by the induction step. If the matrix verb assigns its Case to TP, the Case percolates down to the infinitival head, which allows both *Mary* and the infinitival head to satisfy the Case Filter by 'sharing' this Case through Spec-head agreement. Since the infinitival TP in (11) is a complement of a Case assigner (cf. (4a)) and the infinitival morpheme can satisfy the Case Filter, the last resort rule of *to*-insertion is not triggered (cf. (5a), (6a), (7) and (8)).

By contrast, if the matrix verb is passivized and consequently loses its ability to assign Case, as in (5b) and (6b), both the embedded subject and the infinitival morpheme will have to find alternative ways to be Case-marked. The embedded subject undergoes the familiar NP movement, being assigned nominative by the matrix Infl. The infinitival morpheme, in turn, is Case-marked by the last resort process of *to*-insertion (cf. (4d)). This then derives the fact that the active and passive forms of perception and causative verbs apparently differ in terms of their subcategorization features.³

The fact that the general replacement of bare infinitives by *to*-infinitives in the history of English did not extend to perception and causative verbs (in their active forms) lends support to the structure proposed in (11). Once the infinitival TP is subcategorized by a Case assigner (cf. (4a)), the last resort rule of *to*-insertion is not activated.

4.1.1 Moving the infinitival TP

Assuming the analysis presented in the previous section, we may ask why a sentence like (14a) below is ungrammatical: the embedded subject and the infinitival morpheme could satisfy the Case Filter by sharing the Case

³The unacceptability of (i) below is apparently problematic for the present approach, because the embedded subject and the infinitival morpheme should be able to share the case assigned by *to*. Nunes (1993) proposes that Case Theory should be relativized in terms of both the Case Filter and the Visibility Condition, yielding a system with four kinds of structural Case: [+PF, +LF], [-PF, -LF], [-PF, +LF] and [+PF, -LF]. Based on this proposal, Nunes (MS) suggests that the Case assigned by *to* is of the kind [+PF, -LF]. Thus, if *Bill* and the infinitival morpheme share the Case assigned by *to*, both elements will comply with the Case Filter; however, a violation of the Visibility Condition will arise, because *Bill* receives a θ -role, but not a [+LF] case.

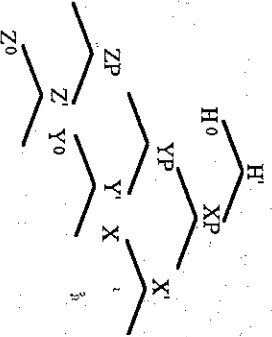
(i) **There was made Bill to leave*

assigned by the matrix Agr through Spec-head agreement, along the lines of the account proposed for (11).

- (14) (a) **Bill leave was seen*
 (b) *[TP *Bill* [_r ∅ [VP *leave*]]]i was seen _ti

My claim is that the ungrammaticality of (14) can be accounted for if we rely on Raposo and Uriagereka's (1990) recursive definition of government (cf. (12) and (13)). Assuming that Case assignment takes place under government, it is natural to think that an element that shares the Case assigned by X to Y must also be governed by X. This condition captures the fact that Case assignment can resort to Spec-head agreement only once, as shown below.

If XP in a configuration like (15) below receives a Case from H⁰ and this Case percolates down to X⁰, X⁰ and YP can share the Case assigned by H⁰ because both of them are governed by H⁰ (notice that in terms of (12), X⁰ is as close to YP as H⁰). By assumption, the Case assigned to YP percolates down to Y⁰. However, Y⁰ cannot further share this Case with ZP because H⁰ (the potential source of Case) does not govern ZP: YP is an intervening barrier for ZP that excludes the nodes governed by H⁰, and Y⁰ is a closer governor.



Thus, the nominative Case assigned by the matrix Agr in (14) to the infinitival TP and, consequently, to the infinitival head, cannot reach the subject of the infinitival clause, because the Agr head does not govern it: the TP is a barrier for *Bill* that excludes the nodes that the matrix Agr governs and T⁰ is a closer governor than the matrix Agr. Hence, *Bill* is not Case-marked, violating the Case Filter. This approach is further confirmed by the ungrammaticality of gerundive TPs and infinitival AgrPs (cf. section 4.2) in subject position, as respectively illustrated in (16):

- (16) (a) **Bill leaving*i was seen _ti
 (b) **Mary to be intelligent*i was believed _ti by everyone

To sum up, movement of an infinitival TP to a Case-marked position (cf. (4b)) is itself not ungrammatical. The problem is that after such movement takes place, the subject of the infinitival clause will not be in an accessible position for Case-marking, yielding a Case Filter violation.⁴

4.2 ECM constructions

One difference between perception and causative verbs, on one hand, and the other verbs of 'exceptional Case-marking', on the other, is that the former select a bare infinitive, as discussed above, and the latter select a *to*-infinitive, as shown in (17):

- (17) *John expected* [*Mary* **(to) leave*]

Given the analysis of causative and perception constructions outlined in section 4.1, *expect* in (17) cannot subcategorize for a TP. Otherwise, *Mary* and the infinitival morpheme could share the Case assigned by the matrix verb through Spec-head agreement, and *to*-insertion would not be required. Hence, ECM verbs like *expect* plausibly subcategorize for an AgrP, as shown in (18):

- (18) *John expected* [_{AgRP} *Mary*] [_{AgP} Agr [TP _ti [_r ∅ [VP *leave*]]]]

Evidence showing that the structure of the infinitival complement of ECM verbs is more complex than the structure of the infinitival complement of perception and causative verbs is provided by modification with temporal adverbs, as illustrated in (19):

- (19) (a) **John saw/made* [*Mary leave tomorrow*]
 (b) *John expected* [*Mary to leave tomorrow*]

According to Hornstein's (1990) theory of tense, the tense structure of the infinitival complements of perception and causative verbs includes just an E-

⁴The fact that PRO cannot be licensed in the Spec of a moved TP, as shown in (1), may follow if PRO cannot be assigned a null Case (in Chomsky & Lasnik's (1991) terms) or a [-PF, +LF] Case (in Nunes's (1993) terms) by the head of the infinitival TP.

(1) *[TP PRO *leave*] was seen by everybody

point (the time of the event), which is linked to the matrix E-point, whereas the tense structure of the complement of ECM verbs includes an E-point and an R-point (the reference time), which is linked to the matrix E-point. Hence, independent temporal modification is allowed in the complement of ECM verbs, as in (19b), but not in the complement of perception and causative verbs, as in (19a). Under the assumption that complexity in tense structure is reflected in syntactic structure, the contrast in (19) indicates that ECM verbs involve more structure than perception and causative verbs.

Let us now return to (18). According to the definitions of government and barrier in (12) and (13), *expect* governs *Mary* but not the infinitival morpheme (\emptyset). Thus, as it stands, (18) yields a Case Filter violation. There are, nevertheless, two strategies to save a structure like (18). Under the first one, the verb raises to Agr, picking up the infinitival morpheme on its way, as represented in (20) below. This V-to-T-to-Agr movement yields a configuration where the embedded subject and the infinitival morpheme can share the Case assigned by the matrix verb through Spec-head agreement; cf. (4c). If such a movement cannot occur, *to*-insertion is triggered as a last resort device; cf. (4d).

- (20) *John expected* [_{AGR} *Mary*]_{AGR} [[*leave*]_i]_{AGR} [_{TP} *t_i*]_{AGR} [_{VP} *t_i*]]]]



The choice between these two strategies will depend on the availability of long verb movement within infinitivals in the language in question. Given that movement of V to infinitival Agr is not available in Modern English (see Pollock 1989, Belletti 1990), *to*-insertion is triggered in (18), in order for the infinitival morpheme to satisfy the Case Filter (cf. (17)).

This approach makes the following prediction for a diachronic analysis of ECM constructions: ECM constructions with a *to*-infinitive could not have existed while verb movement was still available in English. Verb raising to the head of the infinitival TP and further up to the head of AgrP would not trigger *to*-insertion, because the embedded subject and the infinitival morpheme could share the Case assigned by the ECM verb via Spec-head agreement.

In fact, ECM constructions either with bare or with *to*-infinitivals were not productive in Old English. The small number of instances in this period may certainly be attributed to literal translations of Latin *accusativus cum infinitivo* constructions. ECM constructions without Latin influence are believed to have appeared only in Middle English (see Fischer 1988,

Lightfoot 1991). Thus, while Old English, a language with canonical verb movement, neither confirms nor falsifies our prediction, it seems that we cannot account for the fact that ECM constructions with *to*-infinitivals arose in Middle English, a period in which verb movement was still productive.

This, nonetheless, can be explained if we recall that the relevant movement here is verb movement to a non-finite rather than to a finite Infl. Cross-linguistically, verb movement to an infinitival Agr seems to be a costly alternative. This is presumably due to the inherent morphological weakness of the infinitival Agr head in the majority of languages. Thus, we should expect that a language that undergoes a process of weakening of its agreement inflection and, consequently, loss of verb movement, first loses verb movement to an infinitival Agr.

This process can be exemplified by verb movement in French. In Modern French, all verbs move to Agr in finite sentences, but in infinitival clauses only auxiliaries can move to the infinitival Agr (see Pollock 1989, Belletti 1990). In earlier stages of French, however, main verbs could move to infinitival Agr, as exemplified in (21) (apud Hirschbühler & Labelle MS), where the infinitive precedes the negative marker *pas*:

- (21) *Ce qui est difficile, c'est de ne s'abandonner pas au plaisir de les suivre*
(Mme. de la Fayette, Clèves 1678:94)

With this in mind, I propose that although verb movement to finite Infl was still productive in Middle English, the loss of movement to infinitival Agr had already started by then. This explains why ECM constructions with verbs like *expect* take *to*-infinitives even in Middle English: once the infinitival morpheme could not move to the head of AgrP to share with the embedded subject the Case assigned by the governing verb, *to*-insertion was triggered.

Two pieces of evidence confirm the hypothesis that the loss of verb movement to infinitival Agr preceded the one to finite Agr: the appearance of 'split infinitives' and the change in the distribution of infinitival sentential subjects. I discuss these changes in the following two sections.

4.3 The appearance of 'split infinitives'

Pintzuk (MS) argues that by the year 1000 the percentage of 'Infl-medial' structures (Infl VP) in English reaches 100% in matrix clauses and 60% in subordinate clauses. The change from Infl-final to Infl-medial allows us to investigate verb movement within infinitivals, by checking the position of the

verb with respect to adverbs.

Consider (22), the representation of an infinitival clause (-*an* stands for the infinitival morpheme) with the new Infl-medial structure:

- (22) [AgrP [Agr^{-I}TP [I^{-an} [VP adverb [VP ... V ...]]]]]

Now suppose that the dummy Case-marker *to* is adjoined to the head of TP. If the verb raises (at least) to T⁰, the surface order will be *to* + verb + *an* + adverb; if the verb remains in situ, the surface order (after affix lowering) will be *to* + adverb + verb + *an*. Hence, examples of the latter constitutes evidence for the loss of verb movement in infinitivals.

(23) below exemplifies the innovative construction. According to Visser (1963-73:1035), the earliest examples in which the infinitival verb is separated from *to* (or *for**to*) by a word date back to the thirteenth century. Although Visser observes that the number of examples in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries is rather small, the appearance of 'split infinitives' in this period and subsequent variation suggests that loss of verb movement within infinitival clauses had already started by then.

- (23) *What movede the pope of Rome to thus accepte mennes persons*
(c.1382 Wyclif, *Sel. Wks.* II, 303, apud Visser (1963-73:1041))

4.4 Sentential subjects

Lightfoot (1979) points out that from the tenth to the fourteenth century subject *to*-infinitivals occur only in 'extraposed position'. In the fourteenth century they also begin to appear in subject position, but only in the fifteenth century does this become a productive variant position.

Let us consider how the infinitival morpheme of a sentential subject in subject position like (24) below could be assigned Case in Old English and Early Middle English. Assuming that infinitival subjects are CPs and that verb movement inside an infinitival clause was allowed in Old English and Early Middle English, the verb of an infinitival subject in subject position could move to the head of CP, as roughly represented in (25) below, where the infinitival morpheme could be assigned nominative by the matrix Agr. Thus, the fact that there seems to be a ban on *to*-infinitives in subject position in Old English and Early Middle English follows from the possibility of verb movement within an infinitival clause in these periods.

- (24) *rihten hire & smeden hire is of each religium... þe god & alde strengde*
(c.1225 Ancr R. (EETS 1952) ii 18; apud Visser (1963-73:949))

- (25) [IP [C' [III V]_i + *-an*]_j + Agr]_k [AgrP PRO_m [Agr^{-I} [IP [I_m [I⁻ [VP [I_j ...]]]]]] Infl VP]_k

In 'extraposed' subject constructions like (26) below, however, the matrix Infl assigns its Case to the expletive *hit* in subject position. Thus, given that verb movement cannot provide a way for the infinitival morpheme of (26) to be Case marked, *to*-insertion is triggered as a saving strategy.⁵

- (26) *hit is swide earfoðe enigm to downize swan hlafordum*
(c.1000 Hexamerion St Basil, 36 apud Lightfoot 1979:201)

The reasons for the subsequent change in Late Middle English toward allowing *to*-infinitives to appear also in subject position are by now familiar. As soon as English started losing verb movement to infinitival Agr, the infinitival morpheme of a sentence like (24) could no longer be assigned nominative via V-to-T-to-Agr-to-C movement. Thus, from the fourteenth century on, the last resort rule of *to*-insertion begins to be triggered before infinitivals in subject position.

5 Conclusion

The analysis developed above provides evidence that the nominal properties of the infinitival morpheme in English remain constant despite its phonological weakening. The infinitival morpheme can be Case-marked (and, therefore, satisfy the Case Filter) either if its projection is selected by a Case assigner, or if it moves to a position where it can receive Case. If neither of

⁵Bare infinitives could also appear in the 'extraposed position' when there was no expletive in subject position, as schematically represented below. The definition in (12) and (13) above allows the matrix Infl to assign nominative Case to the infinitival morpheme in C⁰ (see Raposo & Uriagereka 1990 for their analysis of long distance Case assignment, as well as for the role of overt expletives in blocking such an assignment). Since the complement clause as a whole in (i) (the C') does not have an element in its Spec, it does not count as a barrier for government of the infinitival morpheme. Given that the matrix Infl is as close a governor as the matrix verb from C⁰, nominative Case can be assigned, and the infinitival morpheme can satisfy the Case Filter. In the absence of verb movement to C, on the other hand, *to*-insertion is required, for the matrix Infl is not able to govern the infinitival morpheme, because AgrP now does count as a barrier:



these alternatives is available, the last resort rule of *to*-insertion is triggered. The fact that *to*-infinitives came to replace bare infinitives in all the contexts where the infinitival morpheme is not governed in situ by a Case assigner is thus attributed to the loss of verb-movement to infinitival Agr in the history of English.

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