

Clauses as objects. Manipulability-driven agreement in Albanian

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In Albanian, the preverbal accusative clitic index may appear with nominal and clausal arguments, see *e* in (1) and (2).

(1) *Atypëraty e_i ndërroi [planin e tij]_i*
 immediately ACC.3SG change.AOR.3SG plan.M.NOM.ACC.DEF LNK his
 he changed his plan immediately (ANC)

(2) *e_i di [se ata janë të gatshëm]_i*
 ACC.3SG know.PRS.3SG that NOM.M.3PL are LNKready.M.NOM.PL
 s/he knows that they are ready (ANC)

Differently from previous approaches (e.g. Kallulli 2016), we propose a unified analysis for (1) and (2) in terms of discourse-pragmatically driven object agreement, arguing that ACC-agreement in Albanian is not restricted to nominal and fully nominalised clausal arguments, but extends to finite clausal arguments of *verba dicendi* and verbs conveying the speaker's epistemic, evidential, or evaluative stance.

This approach does not need to assume different underlying syntactic structures for direct and indirect object agreement, for which agreement in number and person is obligatory, (3), nor the ACC-clitic, but not the DAT-clitic, to instantiate an expletive D-head.

(3) *Unë *(i_i) thërrita motrës_i.*
 I DAT.3SG call.PST.1SG sister.F.SG.DAT.DEF
 I called (to) my sister. (Kapia 2012: 902)

Morphological evidence for the object agreement analysis is provided by the fact that the index immediately attaches to the verb, not allowing any additional material to intervene. Analysing clauses as agreement controllers is supported by cases as (2). Since *e* with *di* 'know' is singular, it cannot represent long-distance agreement with the plural NP in the argument clause. Instead, the whole complement qualifies as controller, functioning in parallel to SG-NP controllers in the ACC.

Functional evidence derives from the fact that the presence of the agreement marker is sensitive to particular triggers, namely discourse-pragmatic factors (e.g. Kallulli 2016; Kapia 2012; Friedman 2008). For nominal objects, definiteness marking and the concomitant referential properties are central: definite and indefinite accusative arguments may exhibit agreement marking, (4a), bare indefinites ones, i.e. those not introducing an individualised referent, disallow it, (4b).

(4) a. *(E_i) botoi librin_i / një libër_i [...]*
 ACC.3SG publish.PST.3SG book.M.SG.ACC.DEF a book.M.SG.ACC
 S/he published the book / a book. (Kallulli 2016: 164)

b. *(*E_i) botoi libër_i [...]*
 ACC.3SG publish.PST.3SG book.M.SG.ACC
 S/he published a book. [i.e. 's/he did bookpublishing'] (Kallulli 2016: 164)

The clausal parallel to definiteness-marking for nominal object consists in the distinction of proposition vs. state of affairs denoted by finite clausal complements, indicated by the element linking them to their matrix verb. The linked clauses marked by *të*, *që* and *se* in (5) differ in veridicality, increasing from *të* over *që* to *se* (e.g. Joseph 2016; Asenova 2002). Moreover, they differ in semantic and syntactic independence, increasing from *të*-clauses (SUBJ) that are integrated as part of a complex predicate, towards *se*-clauses introducing a fact.

- (5) a. *kur dëgjojmë të thuhet*
 when hear.PRS.1PL SBJ say.SBJ.PRS.3SG
 when we heard him/her say (ANC)
- b. *Ai dëgjoi vetëm derën që u mbyll me shul.*
 he hear.AOR.3SG only door.DEF COMP PASS close.AOR.3SG with gate_bar
 He only heard that the door was closed with a gate bar. (Asenova 2002: 157)
- c. *Natën kisha dëgjuar se ato ulërinin.*
 at_night have.IPF.1SG hear.PTCP that they howl.IPF.3PL
 at night I heard that they howled (ANC)

As our corpus investigation reveals, object agreement is barely attested with verbs selecting the complementation type in (5a); with verbs combining with *që* and *se*, however, agreement is much more common. This suggests that these subordinators play a role similar to definiteness-marking on nominals (*se*≈DEF; *që*≈INDEF; *të*≈bare). Agreement with clausal arguments thus correlates with nominal controllers with respect to the triggering discourse-pragmatic conditions. Judging from (4b) and (5a), the dispreference for object agreement correlates with the tight incorporation of the object and the concomitant low degree of ‘manipulability’ (Hopper & Thompson 1984) of the object referent, i.e. the degree to which it is presented by the speaker as possessing a continuous identity in the discourse.

In a nutshell, Albanian exhibits object agreement with nominal and clausal object arguments conditional on the object referent’s degree of manipulability. The degree of manipulability also mediates the use of determiners and complementation strategies, respectively. Interestingly, this agreement type is only partly represented in the languages of the Balkan area (Friedman 2008: 51–52), for which nominal object agreement is said to be constitutive, albeit subject to different conditions. Thus, the type of clause agreement discussed here opens up further areal perspectives.¹

Abbreviations

ANC Marija S. Morozova (2018). *Albanian National Corpus*. URL: <http://web-corpora.net/AlbanianCorpus> (visited on 01/02/2018)

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¹ Abbreviations used in glosses: 1 = first person, 3 = third person, ACC = accusative, AOR = aorist, COMP = complementizer, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, F = feminine, INDEF = indefinite, LNK = linker, M = masculine, NOM = nominative, PASS = passive, PL = plural, PRS = present, PST = past, PTCP = participle, SBJ = subject, SG = singular, SUBJ = subjunctive.

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