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Null objects under coordination in Yiddish and Scandinavian

Sten Vikner

Christer Platzack has always set an example that the rest of us can only try to live up to: Based on a solid local (i.e. Mainland Scandinavian) foundation, he has never been afraid to venture out into other languages, both those close and those less close to home, in order to gain fresh new perspectives and exciting viewpoints on the familiar and on the less familiar languages.

In this contribution, I will attempt something in the same vein, by comparing a particular phenomenon in Yiddish, namely missing objects in certain coordination structures, with what might seem to be a related phenomenon in Scandinavian. In a certain sense, my result will be negative, in that I shall conclude that the two phenomena are less related than might appear at first glance. I shall however try to show that this might provide support for what I take to be a more basic difference between Yiddish on one hand and the Scandinavian languages on the other, namely that Yiddish is an OV-language like German and Dutch, not a VO-language like English or the Scandinavian languages. For further arguments in favour of this, see also Vikner (2001).

The basic observations concerning missing objects in certain coordination structures in Yiddish are due to Sadock (1998), who also interprets such data as support for Yiddish being an OV-language, even if his own formulation is somewhat cautious: "Yiddish must be taken as still having verb-final syntax, at least to some extent and for some purposes" (Sadock 1998:225).

Below I will first discuss the Yiddish data in section 1, then reproduce Sadock's OV-analysis in section 2 and consider an alternative OV-analysis in section 3. In section 4, I will show both how evidence from Scandinavian might at first sight seem to undermine this conclusion, and then how the two phenomena can be told apart, supporting the view that Yiddish is OV like German and Dutch, not VO like English and Scandinavian.

1. Yiddish

In Yiddish, the object in the second conjunct in a coordination construction like the following may either be overt or covert:

```
(1) Yi. Di yidene hot aroysgenumen \underbrace{\text{eyn gandz}}_{\text{one goose}} ...
```

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```
a. ... un zi avekgeleygt af'n tish
b. ... un avekgeleygt af'n tish
... and (it) down-put on-the table
'The woman took out one goose and put it down on the table.'
((1b) from Isaac Bashevis Singer, cited in Sadock 1998:222, (3))
```

A parallel example comes from one of the anecdotes in Olsvanger (1947):

```
(2) Yi. Hot men gekhapt dem kit un aroyfgeshlept ___ oyfn shif has one caught the whale and on-dragged onto-the ship 'They then caught the whale and dragged it on board the ship.'

(Olsvanger 1947:66-67, Anecdote no. 101, standardised transcription)
```

The situation is exactly the same in German, the object in the second conjunct may optionally be left out:

```
(3) Ge. Die Frau hat eine Gans herausgenommen ...
the woman has one goose out-taken ...
a. ... und sie auf den Tisch gestellt
b. ... und ____ auf den Tisch gestellt
... and (it) on the table put
'The woman took out a goose and put it on the table.'
((3b) from Sadock 1998:225, (16))
```

Sadock (1998:223) gives two reasons why the pronouns missing in (1b) and (3b) should not be taken to be the same as the zero pronoun found in Chinese (which is discussed in a.o. Huang 1984:537ff). The first reason is that in Chinese, the object can be left out even when its antecedent occurs in a different sentence:

This is not the case in any of the Germanic languages:

```
(5) Speaker A: Yi. Ikh hob gekoyft a zeyger

Ge. Ich habe eine Uhr gekauft
Ic. Ég hef keypt úr
Da. Jeg har købt et ur
En. I have bought a watch

Speaker B: Yi. Vu-zhe iz der zeyger?
Ge. Wo ist die Uhr?
En. Where is the watch?
Da. Hvor er uret?
Ic. Hvar er úrið?

Speaker A: Yi. Ikh hob *(im) gegeben tsu Mirelen
I have it given to Mirelen (Sadock 1998:223, (8))
Ge. Ich habe *(sie) der Maria gegeben
I have it the.DAT Maria given
```

```
Ic. Ég gaf Maríu *(það)
I gave María.DAT it
Da. Jeg gav *(det) til Marie
En. I gave *(it) to Mary
```

Sadock's second reason why the missing Yiddish and German pronouns in (1b) and (3b) should not be taken to be the same as the zero pronoun found in Chinese is that in Chinese, the object can also be left out if the main verb is finite:

```
(6) Ch. wŏ măi-le zhi biăo érqiĕ gĕ-le măli

I buy-ASP CLTIC watch and give-ASP Mary (Sadock 1998:223, (9))
```

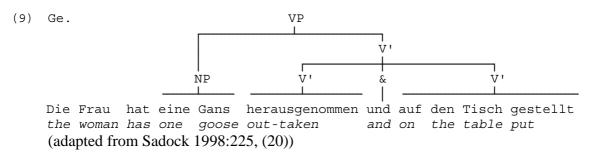
In Yiddish and German, however, the second object cannot be left out if the main verb is finite:

```
(7) Yi.
        Di yidene nemt aroys eyn gandz un
                                             leygt zi
    b.??Di yidene nemt aroys eyn gandz un leygt
                                                         avek af'n
         the woman takes out one goose and puts (it) down on-the table
         'The woman takes out a goose and puts it down on the table.'
         ((7a) from Sadock 1998:224, (10))
(8) Ge.
        Die Frau nimmt eine Gans heraus und stellt sie auf den Tisch
    a.
       *Die Frau nimmt eine Gans heraus und stellt
                                                            auf den Tisch
                                                        (it) on the table
         the woman takes one goose out
                                            and puts
         'The woman takes out a goose and puts it on the table.'
         (Sadock 1998:225, (17))
```

Once again, Yiddish and German are parallel.

2. V'-coordination

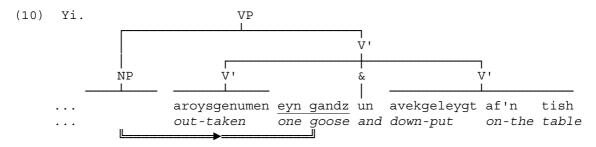
Sadock (1998:225) suggests that the two parallels above, (1) & (3) and (7) & (8), show that both German and Yiddish are OV, at least with respect to this particular construction. He essentially suggests the following analysis of the German (3b):



This kind of analysis is clearly not available for (7b) and (8b), hence their ungrammaticality: Because they are in C°, *nemt/nimmt* 'takes' and *leygt/stellt* 'puts' can not be taken to be coordinated in (7b) and (8b) in the way that *herausgenommen* 'taken' and *gestellt* 'put' are in (9). In other words, (7b) and

(8b) cannot be analysed in such a way that the two finite verbs are both coordinated and have completely parallel relationships with the object *eyn* gandz/eine Gans. Such a situation is not impossible as such, it just does not look like (7b) and (8b), cf. (13) and (14) below.

The Yiddish version of (9), i.e. the analysis of (1b) would then have to be something like the following, i.e. basically like (9) except that there is one additional step, the movement of the object from the left to the right of the first verb, *aroysgenumen*:



This would of course mean that Yiddish, like German, is an OV-language.

It would also mean that extraposition is movement to a **prosodically** defined position, i.e. the position immediately before an intonational break, which would mean that it is a movement where c-command etc. does not have to hold (*eyn gandz* does not c-command the position that it moved out of in (10)).

Notice incidentally that it is not impossible to have a coordination of finite verbs in C° , the result will just be very different from (7b) and (8b); in fact (7b) and (8b) are not amenable to an analysis as a coordination of the type [$_{V^{\circ}}$ V° & V°] because their verbs are particle verbs. If we consider the same construction with verbs that do not require any particles, we find both coordination of the type [$_{V^{\circ}}$ V° & V°]:

```
(11) Ge. Der Hund hat Johann [v_0] [v_0] erschreckt] und [v_0] gebissen]] the dog has Johann frightened and bitten
```

(12) Yi. Hot men im $[v_0]$ $[v_0]$ genumen un $[v_0]$ gefirt] tsum ofitser has one him taken and lead to-the officer. They took him and lead him to the officer. (Olsvanger 1947:62, Anecdote no. 93, standardised transcription)

and coordination of the type [$_{C^{\circ}}$ V $^{\circ}$ & V $^{\circ}$]:

```
(13) Ge. Der Hund [_{\text{C}^{\circ}} [_{\text{V}^{\circ}} erschreckte] und [_{\text{V}^{\circ}} biss]] Johann the dog frightened and bit Johann
```

(14) Yi. Der YIVO, farshteyt zikh, [co [vo drukt] un [vo shraybt]] the YIVO, understands REFL, prints and writes zeyere arbetn in a literarishn yidish their works in a literary Yiddish 'YIVO, of course, prints and writes their papers in a literary Yiddish.' (Kiefer 1995: Interview 32, part 15)

3. VP-coordination

The conclusion reached in section 2, that Yiddish has a kind of extraposition that does not obey any c-command requirement, would also hold if the coordinated constituents in (9) and (10) were seen not as V's but as VPs (in accordance with the view that only XPs and X°s may undergo syntactic operations such as coordination). Under such a view, (9) could be an instance of an across-the-board movement (Williams 1978), i.e. *eine Gans* would be adjoined to a VP that consists of two coordinated VPs, as a result of scrambling into this position out of two different base positions, namely the two object positions inside the two conjoined VPs:

(15) Ge. ...
$$[v_P]$$
 eine Gans $[v_P]$ $[v_P]$ herausgenommen] und $[v_P]$ auf den Tisch gestellt]]]

This would also apply to Yiddish, where such a step would precede the extraposition illustrated in (10). In other words, in (10)/(1b) there would first be across-the-board scrambling out of the two object positions inside the two VPs into the position adjoined to the VP, as illustrated in (15). Subsequently, there would be extraposition from this adjoined position to a position which is not final but which immediately precedes the conjunction, as illustrated in (10) but with all three nodes labelled V' in (10) now being interpreted as VP.

If this scrambling-based reanalysis of (10) were assumed, rather than the V'-conjunction actually illustrated in (10), it would not necessarily follow that the word order inside the two conjoined VPs would have to be OV, and so this analysis might be compatible both with Yiddish being VO and with Yiddish being OV.

I would nevertheless like to claim that even under this analysis of the data, it would be simpler to assume that Yiddish is OV than that Yiddish is VO. The point is that as both OV- and VO-sequences are found in Yiddish, taking VO to be the basic sequence will necessitate further assuming a kind of object movement towards the left across the main verb not found in any other Germanic language (as in (17b)) whereas taking OV to be the basic sequence will necessitate assuming a movement of the object towards the right (namely the extraposition in (18b)):

```
(16) Yi. a. Ikh hob gezen Moyshn b. Ikh hob Moyshn gezen

I have seen Moyshe
I have Moyshe seen
(den Besten et al. 1986:125, (43))

(17) Yi. a. Ikh hob gezen Moyshn
b. Ikh hob Moyshn gezen
(leftward object movement)
```

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```
(18) Yi. a. Ikh hob Moyshn gezen (OV as basic order)
b. Ikh hob gezen Moyshn (extraposition)
```

Under either of the two analyses of (10) discussed above, it has to be assumed that Yiddish has extraposition, irrespective of whether Yiddish is VO or OV.

If (10) is really V'-coordination, as assumed in section 2, then taking Yiddish to be VO will require a type of leftward object movement across the verb not otherwise found in Germanic, whereas taking Yiddish to be OV will not require any leftward movement at all.

If (10) is VP-coordination, as assumed in this section, then taking Yiddish to be VO will (still) require a type of leftward object movement across the verb not otherwise found in Germanic, whereas taking Yiddish to be OV will only require a leftward scrambling identical to that found in e.g. German and Dutch, as shown in (15) (in an across-the-board-fashion) and as discussed e.g. in Vikner (1994) and in Haider and Rosengren (1998).

I shall therefore take Yiddish to be OV, as this requires fewer and simpler auxiliary assumptions than taking Yiddish to be VO.

Further support for the existence of extraposition in Yiddish is found e.g. in Santorini (1993:231, 243, n3), where it is argued that irrespectively of whether Yiddish is OV or VO, examples like the following three all show that Yiddish has extraposition:

- (19) Yi. a. Geveyntlekh hot ongehoybn esn der balebos normally has begun eat the host 'Normally, the host would be the one who took the first bite.'
 - b. Durkh a kleyn shtetl hot gedarft durkhforn <u>der keyser</u> through a small town has must through-drive the emperor 'The emperor had to drive through a small town.'
 - c. Hot men derlangt oyfn tish <u>fish</u>
 has one served on-the table <u>fish</u>
 'Fish was put on the table.' (Santorini 1993:231, (1a), (2a,b))

The point is that the subject would normally have occurred immediately after *hot* 'has' in both (19a,b). As it is here in the sentence final position, it must have undergone extraposition, irrespective of whether Yiddish was OV or VO. As for (19c), the object *fish* would normally have occurred immediately before *derlangt* 'put' if Yiddish was OV and immediately after *derlangt* if Yiddish was VO, and in either case it would have to have undergone extraposition, to get to its actual position, the sentence-final position.

Furthermore, as shown in Vikner (1995), Yiddish does not require extraposed constituents to be particularly heavy, (21b), as opposed to e.g. English and Scandinavian, exemplified by Icelandic in (21a):

```
(20) a. Ic. ... að það
                           hefur einhver borðað
    b. Yi.
             ... as es
                           hot
                                 emetser gegesn an epl
             ... that there has someone eaten an apple
             (Vikner 1995a:189, (43b,c))
(21) a. Ic. *... að
                     það
                           hefur borðað
                                          epli einhver
    b. Yi.
             ... az
                     es
                           hot gegesn an epl
                                                emetser
             ... that there has
                                 eaten an apple someone
             (Vikner 1995a:200, (75b,c))
```

(20) shows that both Icelandic and Yiddish allow transitive expletives, and (21) shows that only Yiddish allows extraposition of a subject which is not heavy. Finally, like Icelandic and unlike Yiddish, also German only allows extraposition to a rather limited extent:

```
(22) Ge. a. ?Dann ist da noch angekommen ein gewisser Herr Meier, then is there also arrived a certain Mr Meier, Vertreter einer namhaften Firma aus München representative of a well-known firm in Munich (based on Wöllstein-Leisten et al. 1997:64, (24b))

b.?? Dann ist da noch angekommen Peter then is there also arrived Peter

c. *Dann ist da noch angekommen jemand then is there also arrived someone
```

In this section, I have tried to show that irrespectively of whether (1b) is assumed to involve conjunction of two V's or of two VPs, assuming that Yiddish is OV will require fewer and simpler auxiliary assumptions than assuming that Yiddish is VO.

4. Scandinavian

Both Sadock's (1998) analysis from section 2 and the reanalysis in section 3 might seem to be undermined when Scandinavian versions of (1b) and (3b) are considered. The Scandinavian languages also allow such structures, whereas English does not:

```
(23) a. Ic. Konan hefur tekið út gæs og lagt hana á borðið b. Ic. Konan hefur tekið út gæs og lagt _____ á borðið c. En. The woman has taken out a goose and put it on the table d. En. *The woman has taken out a goose and put ____ on the table
(24) a. Da. Kvinden har taget en gås frem og lagt den på bordet b. Da. Kvinden har taget en gås frem og lagt ____ på bordet c. En. The woman has taken a goose out and put it on the table d. En. *The woman has taken a goose out and put ____ on the table
```

(The difference between (23) and (24) only concerns the position of the particle *out*).

If Icelandic and Danish also allow this construction, the fact that Yiddish is like German in (1b) and (3b) becomes much less of an argument for OV, as Icelandic and Danish are very unlikely to be OV-languages.

However, there are various indications that the Scandinavian and the Yiddish/German constructions are completely different:

In (23) and (24), the verbs *taken* and *put* were non-finite and therefore in V° , parallel to the well-formed Yiddish (1b) and German (3b), analysed as in (10) and (9). Consider now parallel sentences in the present tense, i.e. where Danish and Icelandic have the verbs *took* and *put* in C° , parallel to the ill-formed Yiddish (7b) and German (8b):

```
(25) a. Ic.
            Konan
                     tók út
                               gæs
                                     og lagði hana á borðið
                               gæs
    b. Ic.
            Konan
                     tók út
                                     og lagði ____ á borðið
    c. En. The woman took out a goose and put
                                                   on the table
    d. En. *The woman took out a goose and put
                                                   on the table
(26) a. Da. Kvinden tog en gås
                                  frem og lagde den på bordet
    b. Da. Kvinden tog en gås
                                 frem og lagde ___ på bordet
    c. En. The woman took a goose out and put it on the table
    d. En. *The woman took a goose out
                                      and put
                                                   on the table
```

(7b) and (8b) were impossible in Yiddish and German, but (25b) and (26b) are perfectly possible in Scandinavian.¹

Although this construction has been discussed extensively in the literature, including for Old Norse: Nygaard (1906:16), for Danish: Mikkelsen (1911:699), for Norwegian: Western (1921), Creider (1986), Åfarli and Creider (1987), and for Icelandic: Rögnvaldsson (1990), little more has been said about this than was said already in the earliest treatment that I have found, Falk and Torp (1900). Here the construction is taken to underlie pragmatic conditions: A coreferent object may be left out from the second conjunct "where the two actions are very closely connected such that the first forms the basis for or the introduction to the second" (Falk and Torp 1900:268). Using this, it is possible to construct examples that disallow the leaving out of the object in the second conjunct, because the first verb, *frighten*, does not describe a basis for or a preparation of the second verb, *bite*:

```
(i) a. Ic. Ég elskaði hana áður, en hata ____ núna b. Da. *Jeg elskede hende før, men hader ___ nu __ now ((ia) from Rögnvaldsson 1990:375, (35))
```

¹ It seems that Icelandic and Old Norse are more tolerant than the modern Mainland Scandinavian languages as to the pragmatic licensing of the missing object in the second conjunct:

² All the well-formed omissions are made impossible when og `and' is changed to $både \dots og$ 'both ... and' (Creider 1986:9), presumably because it makes the interpretation impossible where the first verb is the preparation for the second:

⁽i) Da. a. Kvinden tog en gås frem og lagde på bordet

woman-the took a goose out and put (it) on table-the

b. *Kvinden tog både en gås frem og lagde på bordet

woman-the took both a goose out and put (it) on table-the

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```
(27) a. Ic. Hundurinn hræddi Magnús og Jón og beit þá
b. Da. Hunden forskrækkede Magnus og Johan og bed dem
c. En. The dog frightened Max and John and bit them

(28) a. Ic. *Hundurinn hræddi Magnús og Jón og beit
b. Da. *Hunden forskrækkede Magnus og Johan og bed
c. En. *The dog frightened Max and John and bit
```

If the two finite verbs had been locally coordinated, they could have shared an object:

```
(29) a. Ic. Hundurinn [hræddi og beit] Magnús og Jón
b. Da. Hunden [forskrækkede og bed] Magnus og Johan
c. En. The dog [frightened and bit] Max and John
```

Also here the judgments do not change in a different tense. If the object is left out, they are ungrammatical not only in the simple past tense, (28) above, but also in the perfect tense, (31):

```
(30) a. Ic. Hundurinn hefur hrætt
                                   Magnús og Jón
                                                   og bitið
           Hunden
    b. Da.
                   har forskrækket Magnus og Johan og bidt
    c. En. The dog
                  has
                         frightened Max
                                        and John and bitten them
(31) a. Ic. *Hundurinn hefur hrætt
                                   Magnús og Jón
                                                   og bitið
    b. Da. *Hunden har forskrækket Magnus og Johan og bidt
    c. En. *The dog has frightened Max and John and bitten
(32) a. Ic. Hundurinn hefur hrætt
                                og bitið Magnús og Jón
    b. Da. Hunden har forskrækket og bidt Magnus og Johan
    c. En. The dog has frightened and bitten Max
                                                    and John
```

In Yiddish and German, (28) would be ungrammatical, whereas (31) would be grammatical.

5. Conclusion

Firstly, it was established (following Sadock 1998) that all the Germanic languages are different from e.g. Chinese as far as empty objects are concerned. Secondly, it was argued that Yiddish and German are different from Scandinavian. In Yiddish and German, the construction is syntactically conditioned. Only the position or form of the verb counts for whether the second object can be left out: non-finite verbs always allow this. In Scandinavian, on the other hand, the construction is not syntactically conditioned. The position of the verb never plays any role, only the pragmatic circumstances do.

One possible approach would be to follow Sadock (1998), as discussed in section 2. The fact that the verb whose object is missing may not occur in C° allows an analysis where this verb is locally coordinated with the first verb, so that the two main verbs may share an object, whose base position precedes both verbs, cf. (9) and (10). All this is only possible if the base position of the

object in Yiddish is the same as in German, i.e. preceding the verb. In other words, Yiddish is an OV-language like German and Dutch, not a VO-language like English or Danish.

Even if one does not completely agree with the assumptions in Sadock (1998), and instead assumes that the coordinated constituents in (1b) are VPs rather than V's, the data would seem to support Yiddish being an OV-language. A VP-coordination analysis might seem to also be compatible with Yiddish being VO (given that the object undertakes two movements under this analysis, first movement out of the VP to a position c-commanding both VPs (as in (15)), and then movement to a position immediately preceding *un* `and´ (as in (16)). Although VO is thus possible under this analysis, it was argued that also under these assumptions, assuming that Yiddish is OV would require fewer and simpler auxiliary assumptions than assuming that Yiddish is VO.

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