

Särtryck/Offprint: Sten Vikner

Null objects under coordination in Yiddish and Scandinavian

Vol. 2: Sida/Page 365-375

Grammatik i fokus

*Festskrift till Christer Platzack
den 18 november 2003*

Volym 1

Grammar in focus

*Festschrift for Christer Platzack
18 November 2003*

Volume 1

Redaktörer/Editors

Lars-Olof Delsing, Cecilia Falk, Gunlög Josefsson & Halldór Á. Sigurðsson

Institutionen för nordiska språk, Lunds universitet
Department of Scandinavian Languages, Lund University

Grammatik i fokus/Grammar in focus

Redaktörer/Editors: Lars-Olof Delsing, Cecilia Falk, Gunlög Josefsson &
Halldór Á. Sigurðsson

Omslag/Cover: Lars Emilsson, Malmö

Översättning av förord/Translation of foreword: Alan Crozier, Skatteberga

Foto/Photo: Kennet Ruona, Lund

Porträtt/Portrait: Siri Ekberg, Lund

ISBN 91-631-4570-7

Institutionen för nordiska språk, Lunds universitet, Lund

<http://www.nordlund.lu.se>

© 2003 Författarna/The authors

Wallin & Dalholm, Lund 2003

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 eyn gandz ...
 the woman has out-taken one goose ...

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. wǒ mǎi-le zhi biǎo érqiě gěi-le māli
 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.
 a. Di yidene nemt aroys eyn ganz un leygt zi avek af'n tish
 b. ??Di yidene nemt aroys eyn ganz un leygt ___ avek af'n tish
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.
 a. Die Frau nimmt eine Gans heraus und stellt sie auf den Tisch
 b. *Die Frau nimmt eine Gans heraus und stellt ___ auf den Tisch
the woman takes one goose out and puts (it) on the table
 '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):

(9) Ge.

Die Frau hat eine Gans herausgenommen und auf den Tisch gestellt
the woman has one goose out-taken and on the table put
 (adapted from Sadock 1998:225, (20))

This kind of analysis is clearly not available for (7b) and (8b), hence their ungrammaticality: Because they are in C^0 , *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

- (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 irrespective 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 der keyser
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 fish
has one served on-the table fish
 '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 epli
 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
 b. Ic. Konan tók út gæs og lagði _____ á borðið
 c. En. The woman took out a goose and put it 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"² (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*:

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:

- (i) a. Ic. Ég elskaði hana áður, en hata _____ núna
 b. Da. *Jeg elskede hende før, men hader _____ nu
I loved her earlier, but hate now
 ((ia) from Rögnvaldsson 1990:375, (35))

² All the well-formed omissions are made impossible when *og* 'and' is changed to *både ... 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

- (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 þá
 b. Da. Hunden har forskrækket Magnus og Johan og bidt dem
 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^o 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.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson, Ramona Römisch-Vikner, Jerry Sadock, and Carl Vikner for comments, discussion, and judgements, and to Beatrice Santorini for making Olsvanger (1947) available in electronic form.

References

- Áfarli, Tor and Chet Creider. 1987. Nonsubject Pro-Drop in Norwegian. *Linguistic Inquiry* 18.2: 339-345.
- den Besten, Hans and Corretje Moed-van Walraven. 1986. The Syntax of Verbs in Yiddish. In *Verb Second Phenomena in Germanic Languages*, ed. Hubert Haider and Martin Prinzhorn, 111-135. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Creider, Chet. 1986. Missing Constituents in Second Conjuncts in Norwegian. *Trondheim Working Papers in Linguistics* 3: 1-14 (University of Trondheim).
- Falk, Hjalmar and Alf Torp. 1900. *Dansk-Norskens Syntaks*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug.
- Haider, Hubert and Inger Rosengren. 1998. Scrambling. *Sprache und Pragmatik* 49: 1-104.
- Huang, C.-T. James. 1984. On the Distribution and Reference of Empty Pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry* 15.4: 531-574.
- Kiefer, Ulrike. 1995. *Gesprochenes Jiddisch: Textzeugen einer europäisch-jüdischen Kultur*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Mikkelsen, Kristian. 1911. *Dansk Ordføjningslære*. Copenhagen: Lehmann & Stage. Reprinted 1975. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel.
- Nygaard, Marius. 1906. *Norrøn Syntax*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug.
- Olsvanger, Immanuel (ed.). 1947. *Röyte Pomerantsen*. New York: Schocken.
- Rögnvaldsson, Eiríkur. 1990. Null Objects in Icelandic. In *Modern Icelandic Syntax, Syntax and Semantics* 24, ed. Joan Maling and Annie Zaenen, 367-379. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Sadock, Jerrold. 1998. A Vestige of Verb Final Syntax in Yiddish. *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 90.2: 220-226 (University of Wisconsin).
- Santorini, Beatrice. 1993. Jiddish als gemischte OV/VO-Sprache. In *Dialektsyntax*, ed. Werner Abraham and Josef Bayer, 230-245. (Sonderheft 5, Linguistische Berichte). Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

- Vikner, Sten. 1994. Scandinavian Object Shift and West Germanic Scrambling. In *Studies on Scrambling*, ed. Norbert Corver and Henk van Riemsdijk, 487-517. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Vikner, Sten. 1995. *Verb Movement and Expletive Subjects in the Germanic Languages*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vikner, Sten. 2001. *Verb Movement Variation in Germanic and Optimality Theory*. Habilitationsschrift, University of Tübingen.
- Western, August. 1921. *Norsk riksmåls-grammatikk for studerende og lærere*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug.
- Williams, Edwin. 1978. Across-the-Board Rule Application. *Linguistic Inquiry* 9.1: 31-43.
- Wöllstein-Leisten, Angelika, Axel Heilmann, Peter Stepan, and Sten Vikner. 1997. *Deutsche Satzstruktur*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Sten Vikner
Department of English
University of Aarhus
DK-8000 Århus C, Denmark
engsv@hum.au.dk