Weak & strong phases in infinitives: the case of Old Hungarian infinitival anti-agreement

Aims and claims: This paper focuses on the agreement patterns of Old Hungarian infinitives. Old Hungarian control infinitives could optionally show i) no agreement, ii) full ϕ-feature agreement, or iii) default 3SG agreement (anti-agreement) with their controlled subject. Agreeing infinitives are well known, and anti-agreement has been described in many languages and linguistic constructions, but anti-agreeing infinitives have not yet been discovered elsewhere. I argue that anti-agreeing infinitives support the view that the weak vs. strong phase distinction exists not only on the vP level, but also on the CP level (Basse 2008, Sevdali 2013).

The data: Old Hungarian infinitives bear the infinitival marker *-ni/ny/nÿ/n*. They must have a controlled PRO subject when the matrix clause contains a potential controller for the infinitive's subject (i.e. when the matrix predicate has at least one DP argument), e.g. (1a). In case there is no DP in the matrix clause that could potentially control the infinitival subject's reference (i.e. when the infinitive is the sole argument of the matrix predicate), then infinitives have a ϕ-feature independent, obligatorily overt subject that bears Dative case (Tóth 2011), as in (1b).

(1) a. èn èrèźt-ett-èlec tṻtọ́k-et [arat-**n-otok**]
I send-PST-1SG you.PL-ACC harvest-INF-2PL
'I sent you to reap' (Munich Codex 88rb)

b. Hewsag [**nekthek** wylaagh elewth **fel kel-n-ethek:**]
vanity you.DAT world in.front.of up get-INF-2PL
'it is vanity for you to stand up in front of the world' (Festetics Codex 85)

Control infinitives may be uninflected (2) or inflected (3). Inflected infinitives show full ϕ-feature agreement with their subject('s controller) (3a), or they bear a default 3SG ending regardless of what person and number features the infinitival subject has (3b). As shown by the contrast bw. (2) and (3), the presence of agreement is optional. (Note how this is different from the situation in European Portuguese, where inflected infinitives have a referentially independent subject, and uninflected infinitives have a controlled subject.) Furthermore, as shown by (3a) vs. (3b), it is also optional whether there is full agreement or default agreement on inflected infintives.

(2) Ne akar-y-atok ty **ffel-ny**
not want-IMP-2PL you fear-INF
'Do not want to be afraid.' (Jordánszky Codex 450)

(3) a. ne akar-i-atoc **fel-n-etèc**
not want-IMP-2PL fear-INF-2PL
'Do not want to be afraid.'
(Munich Codex 42ra)

b. Ne akar-y-atok **feel-ny-e**.
not want-IMP-2PL fear-INF-3SG
'Do not want to be afraid.'
(Jordánszky Codex 55)

Deafult agreement is found only with control infinitives in Old Hungarian; non-control infinitives (having a ϕ-feature independent subject) may only be uninflected or bear full agreement.

Background assumptions: I follow the standard position in the literature and take control infinitives to be CPs (cf. Stowell 1982, and for Hungarian Tóth 2000, Koopman and Szabolcsi 2000, Kenesei 2001, Dalmi 2005, and Szécsényi 2009). I also adopt the unanimous position of the Hungarian literature that the infintival suffix (*-ni/ny/nÿ/n*) sits in the T head. As for agreement, I follow Chomsky (1995 et seq) and assume that agreement features don't project their own phrase. Subject-predicate agreement involves uninterpretable ϕ-features on T; these features probe the subject's corresponding features.

Inflected vs. uninflected infinitives: I propose that the Old Hungarian infinitival T head, spelled out by *-ni/ny/nÿ/n*, is optionally endowed with agreement features for person and number

(uPers and uNum), which probe the infinitival subject. A T without agreement features yields uninflected infinitives, while a T bearing agreement features results in inflected infinitives.

Full agreement vs. anti-agreement: Control infinitives have a PRO subject, and T's agreement features probe this element. I propose that whether the Agree operation between T and PRO results in full agreement or default agreement depends on when PRO gets reference in the clause. If PRO gets reference at the time when subject-predicate agreement can still take place, we get full agreement, as in (3a). Anti-agreement (3b) ensues when PRO gets reference at the time when subject-predicate agreement is not possible any more. In this case the probing features are assigned a default 3SG value as a last resort. The difference between full agreement and anti-agreement is thus a matter of timing (of when PRO gets reference).

In the Minimalist Program the timing of operations is captured by phase theory and the PIC. I suggest that phasehood is at play in the fully agreeing vs. anti-agreeing infinitive distinction as well. The mainstream opinion is that infinitives aren't strong phases (i.e. weak phases or not phases at all, cf. Landau 2004, 2006, 2008, a.o). In a weak phase infinitive there is no strong phase boundary between PRO in the embedded specTP and its controller in the matrix clause. So when the controller is merged upstairs, it can enter into a grammatical relation with PRO in specTP, and PRO gets its reference. If the infinitival T has agreement features, PRO can now value them. This results in full agreement (3a). Weak phase infinitives thus yield either fully agreeing or uninflected infinitives, depending on whether T bears agreement features or not.

I propose that Old Hungarian infinitival CPs could optionally be strong phases (Sevdali 2013 argues that Anticent Greek infinitives can be strong phases; Sundaresan 2010 suggests that all infinitives are strong phases). Strong phase heads are endowed with an EPP feature (Chomsky 2001). When the strong phase head is merged to top off the infinitival clause, the EPP feature attracts PRO to specCP. With this PRO ends up on the phase edge, and is therefore accessible to further operations. When the controller is merged in the matrix clause, it can enter into a grammatical relationship with PRO on the phase edge, and PRO can get its reference. This, however, is too late for PRO to value the agreement features on the embedded T, because the embedded T is in the phase domain. The phase domain, with T and its agreement features, is shipped off to the interfaces when the embedded phase is completed, and it's inaccessible to further operations (due to the PIC). PRO thus doesn't get reference in time to value the uninterpretable ϕ-features on T. Uninterpretable, unvalued features cause a crash on the interfaces. To prevent this, the grammar assigns default 3SG value to T's agreement features as a last resort. This results in anti-agreeing infinitives (3b). Strong phase infinitives thus yield anti-agreeing or uninflected infinitives, depending on whether T bears agreement features or not.

No anti-agreement with non-control infinitves: Non-control infinitives have a lexical NP subject with independent reference and so a full set of interpretable ϕ-features. Such a subject is able to value T's agreement features immediately upon it is merger in the structure, therefore the last resort repair strategy of default agreement is not required. We can only get full agreement (if T has agreement features), or an ininflected infinitive (if T has no agreement features).

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