

Arguments with adjectives

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Outline of talk

- some assumptions about adjectives
- relations and realizations
- case and prepositions
- Old Swedish vs Latin
- paths of change
 - Latin > Romance
 - Old Swedish > Modern Swedish
- theoretical implications

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Assumptions about adjectives 1: relations to other categories?

- in terms of syntactic features (Chomsky X-bar, Baker)
- in terms of semantic properties (Croft)
- in terms of argument structure (Jackendoff)

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Categorial status of adjectives

	X-bar	Jackendoff	Baker
Noun	[+ N, - V]	[+ subj, - obj]	[+ ref, - pred]
Verb	[- N, + V]	[+ subj, + obj]	[- ref, + pred]
Adjective	[+ N, + V]	[- subj, - obj]	[- ref, - pred]
Adposition	[- N, - V]	[- subj, + obj]	—

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Categories and case assignment

- X-bar theory drives Case assignment
- verbs and preps [- N] assign structural Accusative/Objective case
- nouns and adjectives [+ N] do not assign Acc/Obj case
- hence insertion of *of* (Chomsky 1981: 50-1)

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Adjectives as both nominal and verbal

- squares with typological differences between languages (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2004)
- and within languages — contrast Romance pre- and post-nominal adjectives (Demonte 2008, Vincent 2007) or Russian long and short forms (Corbett 2004, Rießler this conf)
- squares with the semantics of Siegel (1976)

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Adjectives as neither nominal nor verbal

- Adjectives do not have referential indices [-N]
- Adjectives do not assign a Θ -role to a Spec [-V]
- the [-V] property means adjectives do not have external arguments
- question of the internal arguments of adjectives is not addressed
- adjectives treated as a default category within UG

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Adjectives as universal

- adjectives are the default in a universal set of categories
- yet not all langs evidence adjective as a separate category
- and for some languages it is a closed class (cf Dixon)

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Assumptions about adjectives 2: adjectives are always adjectives

- a) *The French decision to withdraw*
[*French* is an underlying noun]
- b) *French wine*
[*French* is an underlying adjective]
- [Alexiadou & Stavrou 2011]

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Arsenijević *et al* (2011) argue that 'ethnic adjectives are proper adjectives' since:

- a) they do not exclusively fill the external argument role (cf *the French arrival*, *the Italian fall from grace*, etc)
- b) they do not bind antecedents
(cf *the UK's/*British criticism of itself*)

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Assumptions about adjectives 3: the semantics of adjectives

- traditional distinction between 'intersective' and 'non-intersective' readings
- hence ambiguity of *a beautiful dancer*
- hence different categories, e.g. for Siegel following Montague CN/CN and t//e

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Larson on adjectives

- introduces an event variable into the noun, so we have *dancer* (x, e)
- an adjective like *beautiful* can then modify either the event (= *dances beautifully*) or the individual (= *a beautiful person who dances*)

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Larson on adjectives

“We ‘recapture’ the adjective. No semantic division of the category AP arises; they’re all predicates, but they are predicated of different things.”

[Larson 1998: 11]

Assumptions about adjectives 4: argument structure

- if adjectives are always predicates then their first argument will be what they are predicated of
- second arguments are less frequently discussed (though see Dixon 2004)
- in what terms are these arguments to be couched?

General issues

- what are the links between GFs and syntactic categories?
- what are the links between GFs and cases?
- what arguments can adjectives take?
- in particular what are the possibilities for the second (or internal) argument of adjectives?

GF vs case

Assuming the link OBJ-acc is unmarked, if an adjective takes an accusative, is that:

a) a violation of the principle that adjectives do not normally take OBJ?

OR

b) a violation of the principle that complements of adjective (OBL?) do not normally go in the accusative?

GF vs category

‘... there is something essentially correct about the idea that it is less natural for A and N to take NP complements than for V and P to do so ...’

Maling 1983:254

Welsh

mae Siân yn fyr ei thymher
is S PRED short her temper

‘Siân is short-tempered’

(Mittendorf & Sadler 2008: *thymher* analysed as OBJ of *byr* ‘short’ and *Siân* as SUBJ)

Arabic

imraʔ-at-un ḡamī-l-at-u -l-waḡh-i
woman-F-NOM beautiful-F-NOM the-face-GEN

'a woman with a beautiful face'

(Al Sharifi & Sadler 2009)

-l-waḡh-i is OBJ of ḡamī-l-at-u and is realized as GEN
of archaic English *fair of face*)

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Old Swedish

Adjectives can take DAT (a), GEN (b) or Prep (c):

a. at i ärin **guþi** lyboghe
COMP 3PL be.PRS.PL **God.DAT** obedient
'that you are obedient to God'

b. **päs** är iak vis
that.GEN be.PRS.SG 1SG sure
'of that I am sure'

c. värðoghir **til himerikis löna**
worth to heaven.GEN reward
'worth heaven's reward'

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Old Swedish

According to Platzack (1982a, b), unlike OE, OSw
had adjectives that combined with an NP [ACC]:

lönlīkin 'clandestine'

rätter 'suitable'

godher 'kind'

mögheliker 'possible'

þækkeliker 'delightful'

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Old Swedish

However, with few exceptions, Schwartz (1878)
lists them as taking dative:

(a) lifdhe länge **mannum** *lönlīker*
lived long man.PL.DAT hidden
'lived for a long time hidden from men'

(b) som **landeno** æro *rættast*
REL country.DAT be.FIN right.SUPERL
'which is best for the country'

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Old Swedish

Only pronouns such as *mik* / *thik*, where DAT/ACC
had merged at this stage:

(a) läth thz ware **mik** fulwāl rāth
let it be 1SG.ACC/DAT fully right
'let it be completely suitable for me'

(b) al thing äru **thik** möghelīkin
all things be.FIN 2SG.ACC/DAT possible
'all things are possible for you'

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Old Swedish

A small number of examples with true ACC:

(a) *thäkkelīkin* alla j *sina* *vmgango*
pleasant all.ACC in his surrounding
'pleasant to everyone in his surrounding'

(b) *fjärre* then orm (c) *qwitter* *skäiffuona*
far DET.ACC snake rid chills/temperature.ACC
'far from the snake' 'rid of the temperature'

(d) *eeth* *höns* wärt (e) *skyldogher*
a.ACK hen worth owing
'worth a hen'

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Latin

Adjectives take a range of cases often with some semantic similarity across the class:

- DATIVE *similis* 'like', *aequus* 'equal', *iunctus* 'joined', *aptus* 'suited', *gratus* 'pleasing', *carus* 'dear'
- ABLATIVE *natus* 'born', *dignus* 'worthy', *vacuus* 'free', *oriundus* 'descended'
- GENITIVE *plenus* 'full', *fecundus* 'fertile', *cupidus* 'greedy', *memor* 'mindful', *ignarus* 'ignorant', *peritus* 'skilled'

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- eos qui periti sint rerum rusticarum* (Varro 1.17.4) 'those who are skilled in things to do with farming'
- virum qui de agri cultura Romanus peritissimus existimatur* (Varro 1.2.10) 'a man who is considered to be the Roman most expert in agricultural matters'

Cf Bodelot (2011) who argues for a different status of the two complements here

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Latin

'Après adjectif, tous les cas ou tours prépositionnels sont possibles, à l'exception remarquable de l'Acc[usatif], qui est comme réservé au verbe.'

(Serbat 1996: 371)

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Latin

Adjectives of dimension such as *altus* 'tall', *longus* 'long', *crassus* 'fat' take a measure phrase in the accusative:

longus pedes binos

long.NOMSG foot.ACCPL two.ACCPL

i.e. traditional acc of extent not acc of OBJ
(Serbat suggests link to cognate acc)

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Latin participial genitive

Where a finite verb takes ACC, the participle may take either ACC or GEN:

laborem.ACC fugit 'he shuns work'

laborem.ACC fugiens 'shunning work'

laboris.GEN fugiens 'shunning work'

animus amantissimus rei publicae
mind.NOM.MSG love.PRSPT.SUP.NOM.MSG state.GEN.FSG
'a mind most loving of the state' (Cic *Cat* 4.17)

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Latin: participial genitive

"On voit finalement que, dans la conception esquissée ici, la fonction du génitif se définit comme résultant d'une transposition d'un syntagme verbal en syntagme nominal."

(Benveniste 1962: 18)

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Structure vs meaning (Pinkster 1990: 58-9)

- **Meaning** Arguments of V and A go in the same case according to the meaning of the predicate expressed
- **Structure** OBJ of V is ACC
OBJ of N or A is GEN

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Pathways of change

What are the options for a language if morphological case is lost?

- prepositions may take over case marking roles
- in particular, one default P may license arguments (e.g. Eng *of*, French *de*)
- head item may change category from A to P (e.g. Eng *worth, like*)
- 'transitive' adjectives may survive as marked options

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Latin > Romance

- GEN replaced by *de* + NP
- DAT replaced by *ad* + NP
- ABL replaced by *de* or *de ab* + NP
- ACC of extent is now unmarked:
 - *alto due metri* 'two metres tall'

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OE > Modern English

Of the adjectives that combined with NP[GEN/DAT] in Old English:

- almost all now take a PP complement OBJ/OBL
- *worth* and *like* are reanalyzed as prepositions (see Maling 1983)

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The problem of *near*

- *near* retains ability to take OBJ
- but not a preposition (*nearer, nearest*)
- treated by Maling as a historical remnant
- but cf Latin
 - *proximus mare Oceanum*.ACC 'near the ocean'
 - *prope amnem*.ACC 'near the river'
 - *propius* 'nearer' attested with both ACC and DAT

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Old > Modern Swedish

- Some adjectives that took NP[GEN/DAT] now take PP complement;
- Some adjectives that took NP[GEN/DAT] now take NP complement;
- Some adjectives that took PP in Old Swedish now take NP complement.

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Modern Swedish

Distributes like an adjective:

- a. en sin husse trogen hund
a POSS master faithful dog
'a dog faithful to its owner'
- b. Hunden är trogen sin husse
dog.DEF be.PRS faithful POSS master
'The dog is faithful to its owner.'
- c. sin husse trogen vägrade hunden att gå
POSS master faithful refuse.PST dog COMP go.INF
'faithful to its owner, the dog refused to leave'

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Modern Swedish

Inflects like an adjective:

- a. Verkligheten blev oss övermäktig.
reality.COM.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.COM
'Reality overpowered us'
- b. Livet blev oss övermäktig.
life.NT.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.NT
'Life overpowered us'
- c. Knotten blev oss övermäktiga.
gnat.PL.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.PL
'The gnats overpowered us.'

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Modern Swedish

Maling (1983): *near* is "historical residue"

In Swedish:

- not just an odd example
 - some that took NP or PP in OSw now take only NP
 - some A which take NP are not attested in OSw
- ⇒ it is a pattern of Swedish grammar

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Modern Swedish

Complement may uncharacteristically precede A, which suggests German influence:

- a. Regeringen är inte uppgiften vuxen.
government.DEF be.PRS NEG task.DEF adult
'The government is not up to the task.'
- b. Hunden är sin husse trogen
dog.DEF be.PRS POSS master faithful
'The dog is faithful to its owner'

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Modern Swedish

But:

- for most A, the NP can either precede or follow
 - for some A, the NP can only follow
 - A taking NP complements have entered the language over a long period of time
- ⇒ though in origin possibly borrowed, the pattern is part of Swedish grammar

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Other modern Germanic languages

The other Mainland Scandinavian and Dutch languages have A with NP complement, for instance with *schuldig*, *waard* and *kwijt*

- (a) Hij is me drie bierpjes schuldig
he is me three beers owing
'He owes me three beers.'
- (b) Die auto is het geld niet waard.
that car is the money not worth
'That car is not worth the money.'
- (c) Hij is zijn tas kwijt.
he is his bag rid
'He has lost his bag.'

Other modern Germanic languages

German has A+NP[ACC]:

(29) ... waren die ... Bürger ... **den arroganten Aktivismus** ... *leid*
were the citizens the.ACC arrogant activism fed up
'the citizens were fed up with the arrogant activism'

(30) Dann wird auch den **starken Regen** *gewohnt* Landwirten
then became also the strong.ACC rain accustomed farmers
der Boden zu nass.
the ground too wet
'Then the ground became too wet even for the farmers who were used to heavy rain.'

Theoretical implications 1

There is the full range of GFs not only for V, but also for N and A.

V takes OBJ or OBL:

- OBJ is structural and characterized by ACC
- OBL is semantic and characterized by an oblique case or a PP

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Theoretical implications 2

N takes OBJ or OBL:

- OBJ is structural and characterized by GEN or the PP replacing GEN for possession
- OBL is semantic (in origin) and characterized by an oblique case or a corresponding PP (cf Eng *his reliance on his brother*)

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Theoretical implications 3

A takes OBJ or OBL:

- OBJ is structural and characterized by GEN or by the PP replacing GEN for possession
- OBL is semantic (in origin) and characterized by an oblique case, or a corresponding PP

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Theoretical implications 4

- Realisations of GFs depend on the relations between case and prepositions in particular (stages of) languages
- Romance and Germanic provide an instructive minimal contrast

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Consequences for particular languages 1

- In languages without a full case system, A takes PP complements
- Romance does have OBJ with A, but marked by *de/di*
- English does have OBJ with A, but marked by *of*
- Influence of Old French *de*

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Consequences for particular languages 2

Swedish lost its case system but preserved the construction [A + NP]

- Swedish had some A with OBJ in ACC
- Swedish did not develop a single P to replace GEN across the board
- German influence

A final thought

Why is A + NP so uncommon in languages without a full case system?

- languages are left with NOM and ACC
- ACC is not a case for OBJ of A
- ACC with an A is possible, but then OBL

THE END