

Relative subordination or pseudo-coordination?

Complementizer-free constructions reminiscent of relative clauses in spoken South Swedish dialects

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Modern Swedish is characterized by a strong subject position marking constraint, which oftentimes requires the insertion of expletive elements, even though these seem to carry little or no information. Such is the case for *det* ‘it’ as non-referential subject, but also for *som* ‘that’ as complementizer in subjectless relative clauses. South Swedish dialects, however, allow for constructions that are reminiscent of subjectless relative clauses while lacking an overt complementizer, as shown in (1) and (2).

- (1) Där är ingen bor nuförtiden
there is no one live these days
- (2) Hon har en dotter bor i samma hus
she has a daughter live in the same house

In this talk, I will discuss these constructions. A fundamental question is, of course, if they can be analyzed as relative clauses, as they have been traditionally (Lech 1925; Ingers 1955; Ejsskjær 1964) since they can be replaced by a relative clause opened by the complementizer *som* ‘that’:

- (1’) Där är ingen [som bor nuförtiden]
- (2’) Hon har en dotter [som bor i samma hus]

However, this traditional approach has been put into question, and instead, it has been suggested that the construction type represents instances of serial verb constructions (Pedersen 2007). In this talk, I will argue that both analyses are justified, but that they apply in different environments. The South Swedish structures in question appear in two varieties, depending on the matrix verbs. If the matrix verb is *ha* ‘have’ the construction must be analyzed as involving a serial verb construction. The use of matrix *vara* ‘be’, however, warrants a relative clause analysis. The consequences of the dual approach are that (i) subjectless, yet unheaded relative clauses in South Swedish do indeed exist, and that (ii) the subject marking constraint in Swedish is not as rigorous as has been claimed in the literature. In other words: There are several strategies available to make syntactic structure visible, not solely by way of expletive elements.

Literature

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