

An unexpected gap with unexpected restrictions

Subject deletion in a south-west Swedish dialect*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to propose a syntactic analysis of a dialectal construction systematically displaying deletion of the subject, found in spoken south-west Swedish. The deletion appears in certain interrogative subordinated clauses and relative clauses, where standard Swedish requires a resumptive pronoun, which hence can be left out in the dialectal clause construction. The proposed analysis takes as its point of departure the assumption that the construction exemplifies a special kind of Topic drop. As a consequence, the syntactic analysis requires an elaborated C-domain, and a Split CP analysis is proposed. It is claimed that Spec,TP must be phonetically realized in standard Swedish but not in the dialect counterpart.

1 Introduction

This article focuses on a dialectal construction found in south-west spoken Swedish, characterized by systematic deletion of the subject, an element which is otherwise an obligatory part of a Swedish clause. The dialectal construction appears in certain interrogative subordinated and relative clauses, where a resumptive pronoun representing the subject of the clause is obligatory in standard Swedish but

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not in the dialect: in the dialect the subject is optional and found only occasionally in private speech. Example (1a) illustrates the standard Swedish unbounded extraction construction with the obligatory resumptive pronoun *han*, and (1b) illustrates the dialectal variant of unbounded extraction focused on in this article. The star (*) indicates that the construction is grammatically incorrect in written as well as spoken standard Swedish; the incorrectness is due to the lack of a visible subject. Note that (1b) is considered grammatically correct in the dialect, as marked in bold throughout the article.

- (1) a. Kalle_i vet du ju var han_i bor.
 Kalle know you mod.prt where he lives
 ‘Kalle, you know where he lives, right?’
- b. * Kalle_i vet du ju var e_i bor. = **Dialect OK**
 Kalle know you mod.prt where lives
 ‘Kalle, you know where he lives, right?’

The examples in (2) illustrate the corresponding construction when part of a relative clause, where (2a) is the standard Swedish construction and (2b) the dialectal counterpart.

- (2) a. Kalle_i, som_i du ju vet var han_i bor.
 Kalle who you mod.prt know where he lives
 ‘Kalle, who you know where he lives, right?’
- b. * Kalle_i, som_i du ju vet var e_i bor. = **Dialect OK**
 Kalle who you mod.prt know where lives
 ‘Kalle, who you know where he lives, right?’

The examples in (3) below illustrate another variant of the construction found in the same dialect and accepted by the same informants, but not by standard Swedish speaking informants. Example (3a) illustrates the basic structure, where (3b) corresponds to the constructions in (1a) and (2a) above, which is well-formed in standard Swedish as well. Examples (3d,e) correspond to the constructions in (1b) and (2b), which are ungrammatical in standard Swedish but accepted in the dialect. For the ease of reading, I have marked the crucial parts in bold. Note that the English translation is the same in all four cases (3b–e), although presented only in the (3b) example.

- (3) a. Jag vet var universitetet ligger. →
 I know where university.def lays
 ‘I know where the university is situated.’
- b. Universitetet_i, det_i vet jag var det_i ligger.
 university.def it know I where it lays
 ‘The university, I know where it is situated.’
- c. Universitetet_i e_i vet jag var det_i ligger.
 university.def know I where it lays
- d. * Universitetet_i, det_i vet jag var e_i ligger. = Dialect OK
 university.def it know I where lays
- e. * Universitetet_i e_i vet jag var e_i ligger. = Dialect OK
 university.def know I where lays

The examples in (3) differ from the ones (1) and (2) above with respect to the presence of the resumptive pronoun *det* ‘that’, indicating that its antecedent, *universitetet* ‘the university’ is posited in the so-called annex of the clause (Teleman et al 1999, part IV:438ff), according to Platzack (2011b) adjoined to CP. Note that impersonal *det* ‘it’ is used as a resumptive pronoun with several types of referents/antecedents. The omission of an explicit subject of the interrogative, subordinated clause is however the same phenomenon as in example (1b) and (2b).

As stated earlier, this paper focuses on the type illustrated in (1b) and (2b), but examples like (3d,e) are also interesting since they display the same syntactic pattern (an omitted subject of the subordinated clause, introduced by the *wh*-word). The examples are well-formed in the dialect under investigation, but ungrammatical in standard Swedish.

1.1 Outline of the article

After a presentation of the informants and the method for collecting empirical data, I present the dialect construction in (1b) and (2b) more thoroughly in section 2. Different aspects of the dialectal clause structure are discussed, and furthermore the construction is presented in the light of similar constructions in the other mainland Scandinavian languages Danish and Norwegian. This discussion is not exhaustive, however, but serves as background; a more thorough investigation of corresponding constructions in the other mainland Scandinavian languages and

possibly other south-west Swedish dialects as well is beyond the aim of this article, but the results presented here can be seen as prerequisites.

Section 3 is devoted to some crucial points in the chosen theoretical framework. These concepts will prove important for the proposed analysis of the dialectal clause construction. In section 4, I present a Split CP-analysis, which I propose is the basis for the syntactic structure of the dialectal clause construction. In section 5, I discuss some crucial restrictions in order for the dialect construction to be grammatically correct according to the informant. Since there are questions regarding the dialect clause construction that need to be addressed more thoroughly, I also propose a subject for further research. In section 6, finally, I give some concluding comments.

1.2 The informants

The investigation of the acceptance of the dialectal construction exemplified in (1b) and (2b) was performed in the landscape Halland in the south-western part of Sweden, more specifically in the small town Laholm and its vicinities. In all, 37 persons were asked to judge the grammatical correctness of 20 different sentences. One of the informants chose not to fill out the inquiry scheme with respect to all 20 sentences, and is therefore not included in the empirical material. The informants were between 30 and 64 years old and had lived at least their last 20 years in the area. Several of them had never lived outside the area at all.

The informants were asked to mark the grammatical correctness of the 20 sentences according to three different levels: “impossible” (*), “a bit strange but possible” (?), and “correct” (OK). Since none of the informants had taken part in an investigation like this before, I considered the three different answering possibilities enough. The informants got the instruction that focus is on spoken language only.

Based on the informants’ judgments, I also carried out 10 interviews. My purpose was to discuss their judgments further in order to get more information, e.g. with respect to the different verb types possible to use in the construction. As a consequence, the interviews cannot be described as structured or even semi-structured but as question based conversations aiming at focusing different aspects of the dialectal construction. In addition, these 10 interviewees were asked to fill out a second and later on also a third inquiry scheme with 10 specific following-up sentences, which they marked for grammatical correctness according to their lin-

guistic intuition. The second schematic investigation aimed at exploring patterns regarding different types of auxiliaries possible in the dialectal clause construction. The third schematic investigation focused on certain specific presumably acceptable word orders in the dialect, based on my proposed analysis of the dialectal clause construction.

To properly account for the syntactic and semantic restrictions regarding the dialect clause structure, further empirical data is needed. Hence, the proposed feature-based Split CP-analysis should in the first place be taken as a point of departure for a major investigation regarding the specific clause construction.

The overall result shows that there is very little variation within the informant group. The informants clearly display a matching linguistic intuition; one could claim that their mental grammars collectively display the same possibilities and limits in this respect, still deviating from the collective mental/internal grammar of standard Swedish speakers.

2 The dialectal clause structure

Teleman et al (1999, part IV: 428f) point out that language users differ with respect to their tolerance to omit resumptive pronouns. Furthermore it is stated that only in some cases a resumptive pronoun is more or less optional. The more deeply embedded the clause is, the more necessary is the resumptive part. Engdahl (1986: 98f) describes resumptive pronouns as pronouns that cannot refer freely, although they are morphologically and phonologically identical to personal pronouns. A resumptive pronoun is co-indexed with a relativized, topicalized, or questioned NP, which is also the case in the construction focused on in this article. The obligatory resumptive pronoun in Swedish is discussed also in for instance Zaenen & Maling (1982) and Lohndal (2007). Example (4) from Wessén (1965: 337) is discussed in Engdahl (1982: 154), who states that a gap in a position like the one in (4) is impossible in Swedish, hence a resumptive pronoun is obligatory.

- (4) Jag steg av vid en station som jag har glömt; vad;_i/*_{-i}
 I stepped off at a station that I have forgotten what
 heter _{-j}.
 is-named
 ‘I stepped off at a station that I have forgotten the name of.’

The construction in (4) is directly comparable to the dialectal construction under investigation, which, as stated, is considered grammatically correct by the south-west Swedish dialect speakers (35 out of 36). The informants were asked to judge the grammaticality of exactly this sentence in the first, schedule-based part of the inquiry.

The examples below in (5) are taken from Teleman et al (1999, part IV: 427ff) and illustrate some further cases where the resumptive pronoun constitutes the subject of a subordinated clause, introduced by a complementizer or a *wh*-phrase. Most speakers of Swedish need an explicit, resumptive pronoun in such cases (Teleman et al 1999, part IV: 427ff). Engdahl (1982: 154) claims that there are contexts “where there seems to be free variation between gaps and pronouns” and contexts where resumptive pronouns are either obligatory or impossible; the examples in (5) belong to the former category, where the resumptive pronouns are obligatory elements of Swedish subordinated clauses.

- (5) a. Rektorn_i trodde jag inte att hon_i skulle komma.
headmaster.def thought I not that she should come
'I did not think that the headmaster would come.'
- b. [Vilka elever]_i var det oklart om de_i skulle klara sig?
which pupils was it unclear if they should make refl.
'Which students was it unclear whether they should pass?'
- c. [Vilket ord]_i visste ingen hur det_i stavades?
which word knew nobody how it was-spelt
'Which word did not anybody know how it was spelt?'
- d. [Hans akt]_i visste ingen riktigt var den_i var.
his file knew nobody exactly where it was
'Nobody knew exactly where his file was.'
- e. Mauretanien_i vet jag var det_i ligger.
Mauretania know I where it lays
'I know where Mauretania is situated.'
- f. [En del av dessa förändringar]_i vet vi bestämt vad de_i
a part of these changes know we for-sure what they
beror på.
are-due to
'We know for sure what some of these changes are due to.'

In order to get the dialect speakers' judgment of the grammaticality of the sentences in (5), the informants were exposed to exactly the same sentences, with the resumptive pronoun/subject present, but also with the corresponding interrogative subordinated clauses with the subject omitted. The examples in (5c–f) with the subject omitted are repeated in (6). According to all informants (36 out of 36), the examples in (6) are grammatical and fully accepted. They all contain indirect questions, which seemingly is a requirement for the dialect construction to be considered grammatically correct. In standard Swedish they are all ungrammatical.

- (6) a. * [Vilket ord]_i visste ingen hur *e_i* stavades? = **Dialect OK**
 which word knew nobody how was-spelt
 'Which word did not anybody know how it was spelt?'
 b. * [Hans akt]_i visste ingen riktigt var *e_i* var. = **Dialect OK**
 his file knew nobody exactly where was
 'Nobody knew exactly where his file was.'
 c. * Mauretaniens_i vet jag var *e_i* ligger. = **Dialect OK**
 Mauretania know I where it lays
 'I know where Mauretania is situated.'
 d. * [En del av dessa förändringar]_i vet vi = **Dialect OK**
 a part of these changes know we
 bestämt vad *e_i* beror på.
 for-sure what are-due to
 'We know for sure what some of these changes are due to.'

However, none of my informants (0 out of 36) can omit the resumptive pronoun in example (5a,b), hence in these cases the dialectal rules correspond to the ones in standard Swedish. This is illustrated in example (7).¹

- (7) a. * Rektorn_i trodde jag inte att *e_i*
 headmaster-the thought I not that
 skulle komma. = **Not OK in dialect**
 should come

¹Note, however, that example (7a) is grammatically correct in standard Swedish as well as in the dialect with the subject *han* 'he' omitted if the complementizer *att* 'that' is omitted as well: *Rektorn trodde jag inte *e_i* skulle komma*, 'I did not think that the headmaster would come'. Omission of the complementizer *att* 'that' is common in spoken standard Swedish.

- b. * [Vilka elever]_i var det oklart om *e_i* skulle
 which pupils was it unclear if should
 klara sig? = Not OK in dialect
 make refl

To conclude so far: subordinated clauses introduced by *att* ‘that’ and *om* ‘if’ with the resumptive subject pronoun omitted are not accepted in standard Swedish and do not seem to be accepted neither in the dialect. If the subject is to be omitted in the dialectal construction, the subordinated clause in which deletion takes place has to be initiated by an interrogative *wh*-word.

The informants were also asked to judge the correctness of the ruled out constructions in (5a,b) with *skulle komma* ‘should come’, replaced by *kom*, ‘came’ and *skulle klara sig* ‘would make it’ replaced by *klarade sig*, ‘made it’, in order to avoid a potential impact of the auxiliary verb. The judgments did not change, however — this type of auxiliary seemingly did not make any difference in these constructions, and all informants (36 out of 36) marked (5a,b) as ungrammatical, regardless of the presence of an auxiliary.

2.1 The presence of *ju*

The modality marker *ju* indicates that the speaker and the listener share some common knowledge regarding a person, an object, or an event. The matrix relative clause of the *wh*-clause complement contains a verb like *veta* or *känna (till)*, ‘know’. Verbs of this type are often supported by the modal clause adverbial *ju* or other similar adverbials (Teleman et al 1999, part IV: 84f). In addition, *ju* is most commonly found in dialogues or when the speaker addresses the listener in retelling a story, when the speakers address each other with *du* ‘you’, hence creating a common ground for reference. The presence of the modality marker *ju* and the retelling of a story are not obligatory requirements for the dialectal construction to be considered syntactically correct by the speakers. They can, however, be seen as a kind of pragmatic reason for the possibility of omitting the subject of the clause, hence allowing for an unexpected gap in the structure. As we will see, this reasoning on pragmatics will prove important for the syntactic analysis where a kind of common of “givenness” seems to be a crucial restriction for the possibility to omit the subject.

Regardless of the verb type, the construction seems to include or presuppose a special kind of relation between – very simplified – the speaker and the listener of

the utterance, stating that they share a kind of common reference or topic, “about-who-ness” (see Mörnsjö 2002), which is related to the “givenness” of the omitted subjects in the dialect clause construction. The subject is the common ground of the speaker and hearer, and due to this fact it can be omitted. This fact, however, is important for the syntactic analysis of the construction, where givenness makes it easier to drop a clause subject.

2.2 The other mainland Scandinavian languages – a brief comment

Turning briefly to other Scandinavian languages, constructions with a non-explicit subject in an embedded *wh*-clause are well-formed in standard Danish, see example (8a,b). So are the Danish counterparts to the Swedish examples in (4d,e) above; see (8c,d), from Engdahl (1982:167).

- (8) a. Kalle ved du ju hvor bor.
 Kalle know you mod.prt where lives
 ‘You know where Kalle lives, don’t you?’
- b. Kalle, som du ju ved hvor bor.
 Kalle who you know where lives
 ‘Kalle, who you know where he lives, don’t you?’
- c. Universitetet, det ved jeg hvor ligger.
 university.def it know I where lays
 ‘I know where the university is situated.’
- d. Universitetet ved jeg hvor ligger.
 university.def know I where lays
 ‘I know where the university is situated.’

The examples in (8) indicate a match between the dialectal Swedish constructions and standard Danish. Like standard Swedish, Danish does not allow a subject gap after the complementiser *at* ‘that’, but the subject can be omitted in *om*-questions, ‘if’-, which is neither the case in the dialect under investigation nor in standard Swedish (Engdahl 1982:167).

Furthermore, the Danish constructions in (9) below (taken from Engdahl 1982:167) share similarities with the ones focused on in this article. My informants accept (9b) (36 out of 36), but not (9a) (0 out of 36), with the sentences orally and directly translated into Swedish. Note the difference between (9a) and (9b): the

former exemplifies an impersonal construction, which behaves differently from other constructions in several ways. Impersonals will not be discussed any further here.

- (9) a. Det_i vet jeg ikke om _i gaar an. (Diderichsen 1966: 183)
 this know I not if goes alright
 ‘I don’t know if this is alright.’
- b. De tjente en mann_i som de ikke hviste vem_j _i var _j.
 they served a man who they not knew who was
 ‘They served a man they didn’t know who he was.’

Engdahl (1982:168) stresses the fact that resumptive pronouns, just like gaps, behave as if syntactically controlled by the preposed constituents (cf. also Hansen 1974). Platzack (2011a) claims that the difference between Swedish and the other Scandinavian languages seems to be that Danish and Norwegian allow the subject to be adjoined to CP in the same way as the object. To explain the difference between standard Swedish and the dialect variant, however, other tools and structures have to be used.

Norwegian, on the other hand, allows a subject gap both after the complementizer *at* ‘that’ and any clause initial *wh*-phrase, hence is less restricted. Norwegian cases corresponding to the Danish constructions in (8) are marked and dialectal to a certain extent, but more common and much wider spread than in Swedish. Furthermore, for many speakers of Norwegian also examples corresponding to (9) are syntactically correct. Lohndal (2007) distinguishes at least four construction types of *that*-trace variants, one of which is the use of resumption. Data from Löwenadler (2007) stresses the patterns found. The corresponding constructions in example (10) are syntactically well-formed also in Icelandic and in the Swedish dialects spoken in Finland. Neither of my informants (0 out of 36) accepts the constructions in (10) when the sentences are translated into Swedish, based on the previous judgments of the corresponding construction. This was to some extent an expected result.

- (10) a. Den här boka_i visste jeg at _i var bra.
 this here book.def knew I that was good
 ‘I knew this book was good.’

- b. Den här boka_i visste jeg inte om e_i var bra.
 this here book.def knew I not if was good
 ‘I didn’t know whether this book was good.’

It seems as though the construction under discussion in this article is connected to the *that*-trace effect. However, as has been shown in the previous section, the dialect construction displays stronger restrictions, hence is not as an example of the *that*-trace effect. Lohndal (2007) claims that the variation between the languages is due to the lexicon. In Swedish, the resumptive pronoun can obviously never be omitted in *that*-clauses (except in Finnish-Swedish), whereas in indirect *wh*-questions, this is fine in the dialect under investigation. Danish and Norwegian display constructions in several and different respects reminding on the dialectal construction type under investigation, but none of the other mainland Scandinavian languages seems to contain a construction type that matches the south-west Swedish dialectal one with respect to selection of verb.

Since it is beyond the scope of this article to present a thorough investigation of the corresponding constructions in the other mainland Scandinavian languages, at the moment it is seemingly enough to claim that there seems to be a question of gradability in at least Norwegian — and in Swedish dialects — when it comes to acceptance of omitted resumptive pronouns. In order to account for the syntactic structure of the varying degrees of acceptance in different languages and dialects, certain specific features seem to be needed.

3 Theoretical framework

In this section I present some relevant aspects of the theoretical framework, based in the relevant parts on the minimalist program (Chomsky 1995, 2008, also see Platzack 1998, 2011a). Some brief comments are also made regarding The Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH) and the Spurious topic drop analysis (Platzack 2011b), which to some extent constitutes the base of the analysis of the construction under discussing.

3.1 Features

According to the Minimalist Program, the computational system of human internal language is a feature driven system (see for instance Chomsky 1995: 22). The

computational system works on bundles of semantic, grammatical, and phonetic features. Pesetsky & Torrego (2001: 363ff, *passim*) furthermore argue that all features come in two guises, interpretable or uninterpretable, [F] and [uF] for the arbitrary feature F (see also Chomsky 2001, 2004, 2008). The uninterpretable must be deleted before the derivation reaches LF and PF by means of a matching of the interpretable feature and its uninterpretable counterpart.

The deletion of the uninterpretable features is formally accounted for by means of the operation Agree. The operation Agree is defined as a universal principle established between a probe and its goal when the probe has one interpretable feature and one uninterpretable, and the goal has the same set of features with the reverse interpretability (for instance Chomsky 2001, Pesetsky & Torrego 2001). If the probe c-commands the goal and there is no element closer to the probe with these features, the uninterpretable features are deleted.

The elements are put together by means of the operation Merge. Merge and Agree in combination drive the computational system. Chomsky (2001: 7ff, *passim*) distinguishes between internal and external Merge. In case of external Merge, a new, unbounded element is merged with what is already built, whereas in case of internal Merge, an already bounded element is merged with the already built-up structure. The θ -roles are assumed to be properties of a “first”, merged DP. A consequence of internal Merge is that reconstruction falls out directly, and hence is not seen as a special operation. In fact, also the copy theory per se can be seen as a direct result of the availability of internal Merge. I use both terms Move and internal Merge in this article, without implying any difference.

According to Chomsky (1995, *passim*), the copy of the moving element marks the presence of an element in different positions in a structure at the same time, although materialized in one position only. In this view, a trace is seen as withholding a position in the structure. In a more recent view (see for instance Platzack 2011a), the trace is instead regarded as a copy of the moved element, displaying an identical set of features, however without form.

3.2 Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH)

A strong hypothesis with respect to the correspondence between thematic roles and syntactic structures is that the argument structure of a verb determines the different θ -roles it may assign (after Williams 1981, see for instance Chomsky 1995:30, Platzack 1998). For instance, a verb like *see* must have a subject EXPE-

RIENCER and a THEME direct object, and a verb like *give* under normal circumstances must assign an AGENT θ -role to its subject, THEME to its direct object, and GOAL/RECIPIENT to its indirect object.

A particular implementation of this hypothesis is Baker's (1988, 1997) Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH) which suggests that there is uniformity with respect to θ -role assignment. Simplifying, UTAH is a universal thematic hierarchy that determines the merging order of arguments in syntactic positions, where structural relations underlie identical thematic relationships. A rather thorough discussion on UTAH is relevant here, since well-formed dialectal cases of embedded *wh*-clauses with a subject copy immediately after the *wh*-word, must have a non-AGENT subject.

According to UTAH, an EXPERIENCER subject DP has its origin in a lower position than an AGENT subject DP (Grimshaw 1990), suggesting that the AGENT is externally, first merged in Spec, ν P and the EXPERIENCER in Spec,VP. The EPP-feature in ν° however still requires a filled Spec, ν P in either case, hence when only an EXPERIENCER is present in Spec.,VP, it must move to Spec, ν P. Per se, V cannot assign the AGENT θ -role.² In the dialectal construction at hand, it seems as if the auxiliary verb is responsible for the θ -roles involved, as suggested by Wurmband (1999).

3.3 A split CP analysis

Since the complementizer layer — the C-domain — with its anchoring of the clause in reality with respect to discourse, the speaker's here and now, point of view etc. is crucial for the dialectal construction under investigation, some additional comments are called for. The C-domain is dual in its nature in relating the propositional content of the clause with the linguistic as well as non-linguistic context. The dual function of the C-domain is discussed by Rizzi (1997, 2004a, 2004b), who proposes a split-up in (at least) two functional projections. The top-most projection is referred to as Force Phrase and faces outwards to a higher clause or to the discourse. ForceP links the sentence to the rest of the clause by means of features indicating clause type. The lowermost projection of the C-domain is labelled the Finite Phrase, facing inwards to the propositional content in the lower

²The reasoning is the same with respect to unaccusative verbs, where the subject DP is externally merged in the complement of V but forced to Spec, ν P to satisfy the EPP-feature in ν° .

layers TP and VP.³ Between ForceP and FinP is situated a Focus phrase. Furthermore, in Rizzi's (1997) Split CP proposal, there are two Topic positions. The higher one is situated above FocusP (i.e. between ForceP and FocP) and the lower one below FocusP (i.e. between FocP and FinP), and the lower of the Topic positions can be interpreted as concerning givenness. As will be seen, the concept of givenness of the omitted subjects in the dialect construction will prove important.

In order to account for the syntactic structure of the dialect clause construction, an elaborated CP is necessary. Platzack (2011b) argues in favour of two [Spec,CP]:s of a clause, where a first merged, usually stressed element is situated in the higher [Spec,CP] and a less stressed, internally merged element in the lower one. The element in the lower [Spec,CP] is dropped in a construction containing the specific kind of Topic drop referred to as "Spurious Topic drop" (Platzack 2011b). Platzack's (2011b) Spurious Topic drop analysis will prove important for the syntactic analysis of the dialectal subject deletion construction and is illustrated in example (11) from Platzack (2011b). A full DP or a stressed pronoun, posited clause initially, may be followed by a co-referent unstressed pronoun, whereas the reverse is not possible. In example (11) the co-referent, unstressed pronoun is the object of the clause, whereas in the dialect construction a similar reasoning is applied to the subject of the clause.

- (11) CYKELN / Cykeln / DEN / den ställde han i köket.
 bike.def bike.def it it put he in kitchen.def

Platzack (2011b) argues that the higher, first [Spec,CP] contains a first merged and usually stressed element and the lower, second [Spec,CP] contains internally merged and usually unstressed elements. The weaker element, which constitutes the object for topic dropping, targets the lower [Spec,CP]. In the dialectal construction focused on here, there are reasons to believe that there are two [Spec,CP]:s involved, which allow Topic drop in the lower one, as in Platzack (2011b).

4 The dialectal clause structure – a proposal

As pointed out, the dialect structure represents a subordinated clause introduced by a *wh*-word. The construction is well-formed in the dialect in focus of this article,

³A split C-domain is discussed also by for instance Rizzi (1997), Mörnjö (2002), Benincà & Poletto (2004), and Poletto & Pollock (2004).

whereas it deviates from standard Swedish due to the lack of an obligatory overt subject, here in the guise of a resumptive pronoun.

The proposed syntactic analysis of the subordinated clause *Kalle vet jag var e bor* ‘I know where Kalle lives’ is presented below. As has been pointed out, the construction is syntactically incorrect in standard Swedish, whereas it is fully accepted in the dialect under investigation. My proposal is based on the split CP hypothesis (after Rizzi 1997, 2004a,b), as well as Platzack’s analysis of Spurious Topic drop (2011b).

$$(12) \quad \dots [{}_{CP} Q = \text{var } {}_{C^0} (\text{som}) [{}_{CP} \text{han} [{}_{TP} \text{han} [{}_{VP} \text{han bor}]]]]$$

The diagram consists of three horizontal arrows pointing upwards. The first arrow starts under the *han* in the *[VP han bor]* position and points to the *han* in the *[TP han [VP han bor]]* position. The second arrow starts under the *han* in the *[VP han bor]* position and points to the *han* in the *[CP han [TP han [VP han bor]]]* position. The third arrow starts under the *han* in the *[VP han bor]* position and points to the *han* in the *[CP Q = var C⁰ (som) [CP han [TP han [VP han bor]]]]* position.

In the proposed analysis, the requirement of a parallel movement of the subject is satisfied, hence also the request for Spurious Topic drop. This is indicated by the arrows, representing parallel movement of *han*, ‘he’ from *[Spec,VP]*. The difference between standard Swedish and the dialect would be that there is a Split CP in both cases, but whereas *[Spec,TP]* must be spelled-out in standard Swedish this is not the case in the dialect: *[Spec,TP]* does not have to be phonetically realized in the dialect. This is my base assumption and proposal.

In the structural proposal, the question operator *Q* is posited in *[Spec,CP]*. According to Platzack (2011a:110), *C* has a non-valued feature with EPP that forces the *wh*-word to *[Spec,CP]*. In general, the edge feature requires semantic meaning or phonetic form, or the two of them combined, i.e. the feature of the element moving to *[Spec,CP]* is not specified. In the dialectal structure, however, the element has to be a visible first merged question operator in the guise of a *wh*-word. The head *[C⁰]* is the position for a potential complementizer *som*, glossed SOM, ‘that.rel’, used in embedded *wh*-questions and relative clauses as illustrated above.

In Platzack’s (2011b) analysis the question marker is situated in the higher *[Spec,CP]*. The *wh*-word is first merged in this position. The resumptive pronoun is situated in the lower *[Spec,CP]*, and does not have to be phonetically realized (i.e. the subject that can be omitted in the dialectal construction). Like in the Platzack (2011b) proposal, the element in the lower *[Spec,CP]* can be considered weak. Taking into account also the thoughts in Rizzi (1997), the omitted subject would be situated in a lower topic position, hosting “givenness” elements, which is in line with the proposed syntactic analysis of the dialect construction. The topic and focus phrases are however not presented in the analysis above.

Presumably *som* cannot be spelled out when immediately preceding an empty subject copy, whereas it may be spelled out when the subject pronoun *han*, ‘he’ is spelled out as well, see example (13) below. Note that (13a) is neither accepted in standard Swedish nor in the dialect, whereas (13b) is accepted in standard Swedish, though it is to some extent a marked construction.

- (13) a. *Där kommer Kalle_i som du ju vet var som *e_i* bor.
 there comes Kalle who you mod.prt know where SOM lives
 ‘There comes Kalle, who you know where he lives, right?’
- b. Där kommer Kalle_i som du ju vet var som han_i
 there comes Kalle who you mod.prt know where SOM he
 bor.
 lives
 ‘There comes Kalle, who you know where he lives, right?’

The unexpected subject gap in the dialectal construction appears at the left periphery or the upper layer of the clause structure. As is claimed, my base assumption is that we are dealing with a special type of Topic drop. Topic drop is usually defined as a drop of a weak element which heads an A-bar-chain in [Spec,CP]. Hence, [Spec,CP] is not pronounced in a Topic drop construction. According to Mörn sjö (2002) the subject is fronted (see below), and deletion takes place at PF under recoverability. Mörn sjö (2002) suggests the same analysis in connection with fronted and deleted Frame Topics.

Independent arguments in favor of a Spurious Topic drop analysis would be, for instance, that a *wh*-adverb is situated higher in the structure in the dialect than in standard Swedish. Example (14a), corresponding to the standard Swedish construction in (14b), is marked as “a bit strange but possible” (?) by 9 of the 10 interviewees asked to judge the grammatical correctness of the construction (in the third schematic inquiry). The fact that the construction in (14a) is not directly ruled out can possibly be taken as an argument in favor of the proposed analysis. In this case, the *wh*-word is posited in the lower [Spec,CP] in standard Swedish (according to Platzack 2011b), and the reverse word order in the dialect is acceptable due to the fact that the *wh*-word is posited in the higher [Spec,CP] in the dialect.

- (14) a. *Jag känner till platsen var där som han bor. = **Dialect OK**
 I know of place.def where there SOM he lives
 ‘I know the place where he lives.’

- b. Jag känner till platsen där var som han bor.
 I know of place.def there where SOM he lives
 ‘I know the place where he lives.’

With the structural analysis proposed above, we turn to crucial restrictions for the gap in the dialect construction to appear, which results in a request for a more elaborated proposal.

5 Restrictions regarding the dialect construction

In the dialectal variant of Swedish under discussion, one finds restrictions on different levels regarding the presence of a subject gap in embedded clauses. In this section I will present and discuss some additional restrictions regarding when, how, and where a gap is allowed.

In the relevant construction, the indirect *wh*-clause is the complement of a main verb; this verb may in turn appear inside a main clause or a subordinated clause. It seems as though only a verb category taking an EXPERIENCER as its subject/first argument allows a *wh*-clause complement in the relevant construction. As shown by Engdahl (1986), a group of non-mental verbs also take interrogative arguments, e.g. *avgöra* ‘decide’, *bero på* ‘depend on and *påverka* ‘have impact on’, together with a category of adjectives like *viktigt*, ‘important’. In the empirical material no such matrix verbs are included, but one could assume that the dialect speakers would accept a construction like (15) below, whereas the construction is considered grammatically incorrect by speakers of standard Swedish.

- (15) * Det nya biblioteket måste vi avgöra var e ska ligga.
 the new library must we decide where should situated
 ‘The new library, we must decide where it should be situated.’

As we have seen, the dialect only allows a subject gap if the complement of the matrix clause is a *wh*-clause; subject gaps in *att*- ‘that’ and *om*-clauses ‘if’ are ruled out, although they are allowed in Danish or Norwegian. The fact that a gap is not under any circumstances allowed in the dialect when the subordinated clause is introduced by *att* ‘that’ was taken as an argument in favor of the dialectal construction not being directly related to the *that*-trace effect.

Furthermore, the results from the first inquiry showed a tendency for subject gaps with locative *wh*-words, but also examples like (16) were considered grammatically correct by the vast majority of the informants (35 out of 36).

- (16) * Jag steg av vid en station som jag har glömt vad e heter.
 I got off by a station that I have forgotten what called
 ‘I got off at a station that that I have forgotten the name of’

In the second, interview-based inquiry a majority of the informants (9 out of 10) without doubt accepted constructions like (17).

- (17) * Bussen vet jag inte när e kommer.
 bus.def know I not when comes
 ‘I don’t know when the bus arrives.’

It thus seems that the introducing complementizer affects the possibility of a subject gap: in constructions introduced by *att* ‘that’ and *om* ‘if’, neither standard Swedish nor the dialect allows a subject gap. In clauses introduced by a *wh*-word, however, the dialect allows a subject gap. The pattern is clear in this respect and needs to be commented upon. In the construction under discussion, the subordinated clause is an obligatory element of the clause, constituting the direct object of a superordinate verb. Subordinated clauses constituting direct objects can be introduced by *att* ‘that’ and *om* ‘if’ as well as by *wh*-words in Swedish. The difference between the accepted and non-accepted categories is hence a question of interrogation: only subordinated clauses introduced by pure interrogative adverbials allow a non-explicit resumptive pronoun/subject, whereas subjuncts like *att* ‘that’ and *om* ‘if’ do not. In order to account for this fact in the syntactic analysis, the feature bundle [\pm interrogative] is added in the higher [Spec,CP], distinguishing between the accepted and the non-accepted dialectal clause construction.

Turning to the lexicon, the predicate of the subordinated clause must be either a STATE-verb (*bo* ‘live’), a verb reminding of a light verb (*bruka* ‘use to’, *komma* ‘come’, *gå* ‘go’, *ligga* ‘lay’, *sitta* ‘sit’), or a copula verb type (*vara* ‘be’, *bli* ‘become’, *heta* ‘be named’, *kallas* ‘be called’). The light verbs and the copula verbs here function as STATE verbs. Transitive verbs seemingly never appear in the embedded clause, and the subject in the embedded clause is never an AGENT but rather a PATIENT or a THEME or sometimes an EXPERIENCER (Baker 1997). Note that these are all internally merged elements. The situation is illustrated in

example (18), where (18b) is neither well-formed in standard Swedish nor is considered grammatically correct in the dialect (0 out of 36). The incorrectness is probably due to the AGENT θ -role of *springa* ‘run’.

- (18) a. * Kalle_i vet jag var e_i bor. = **Dialect OK**
 Kalle know I where lives
 ‘I know where Kalle lives.’
- b. * Kalle_i vet jag var e_i springer. = **Not OK in dialect**
 Kalle know I where runs
 Intended: ‘I know where Kalle runs.’
- c. * Kalle_i vet jag var e_i brukar springa. = **Dialect OK**
 Kalle know I where use-to run
 ‘I know where Kalle usually runs.’
- d. * Kalle_i vet jag var har e_i sprungit. = **Not OK in dialect**
 Kalle know I where have run
 Intended: ‘I know where Kalle has been running.’

On the other hand, *springa* ‘run’ is the main verb of the subordinated clause in (18c) as well, but example (18c) is still considered grammatical by all informants (36 out of 36). This needs to be commented upon, since the situation indicates that the auxiliary verb rather than the main verb assigns a θ -role to the subject, which is not at all expected. According to Wurmbrand (1999), however, modal verbs have a θ -role of their own, which would explain why (18c) but not (18d) is considered grammatical. According to the informants answering the first following-up inquiry scheme, constructions in the supine, like example (18d), were considered grammatically incorrect (10 out of 10). The auxiliary in this case does not assign a θ -role to the subject. Consequently, the presence of an auxiliary of a special kind “modifes” the agentivity of a verb. It should be obvious that the auxiliary has some kind of impact on the verb construction, since its presence suddenly allows an AGENT-verb like *springa* ‘run’ to be used in the dialectal construction. The phenomenon can be considered an example of coercion, via which process AGENT-verbs receive a more or less habitual reading.

As a consequence, a similar reasoning is valid for EXPERIENCER-verbs like *se* ‘see’, or *höra* ‘hear’. According to several informants (35 out of 36), examples with EXPERIENCER verbs *se* ‘see’ and *höra* ‘hear’ are ruled out, whereas the remaining informant (1 out of 36) claims that he presumably would consider the

construction “OK” if he would hear anyone else use it, but also that he would not use these verbs himself in such a construction.

Both *se* ‘see’ and *höra* ‘hear’ are transitive verbs, which we have previously stated cannot function as the main verb of the subordinated clause with a subject gap. However, the interesting point is *not* that most informants (35 out of 36, as pointed out above) do not accept these verbs in their pure transitive use (as in **Lotta vet du ju var hör olika ljud*, ‘You know where Lotta hears different sounds’), but rather that just as many informants (35 out of 36, however not the same individuals) accept the same verbs with an auxiliary, as in the examples in (19):

- (19) a. **Lotta_i vet du ju var e_i brukar*
 Lotta know you mod.prt where uses
höra olika ljud. = **Dialect OK**
 hear different sounds
 ‘You know where Lotta usually hears different sounds, right?’
- b. **Linda_i vet du ju var e_i brukar*
 Linda know you mod.prt where uses
se på tv. = **Dialect OK**
 watch on tv
 ‘You know where Linda usually watches tv, right?’

Neither Wurmbrand’s hypothesis (1999) with auxiliaries assigning θ -roles nor the AGENT-hypothesis (UTAH, see Baker 1988, 1997) however captures or explains the pattern in the dialect. Consequently, the solution is to be sought somewhere else, and seemingly this is a question of (the presence of) habituals, here obtained by coercion. When the expressed event is a habit, the construction with the omitted subject is more likely to be accepted. I have not tested for this specifically in neither of the three schedules, but according to the eight dialect speakers I have been in touch with, the examples in (20) is perfectly fine in the dialect whereas it is not grammatically correct in standard Swedish.

- (20) a. **Kalle_i vet jag var e_i kommer ifrån.* = **Dialect OK**
 Kalle know I where comes from
 ‘I know where Kalle comes from.’
- b. **Lotta vet du ju var äter sin frukost.* = **Dialect OK**
 Lotta know you mod.prt where eats her breakfast
 ‘You know where Lotta eats her breakfast.’

This can be taken as an argument in favor of habituality being an important perspective when discussing the dialect construction, hence a predication expressed by STATIVES seemingly is the most important issue. The presence of an habitual reading also explains the difference in acceptance regarding auxiliaries like tense auxiliaries, on the one hand, and modal auxiliaries, on the other, where the former category is not accepted in the dialect under investigation, whereas the latter is. This was illustrated in example (18). The habitual reading is obvious also in example (20b), and it furthermore explains the difference in acceptability between the verb *komma* ‘come’ and *komma ifrån* ‘comes from’ (20a), where the adverbial also changes the predicate status.

According to UTAH (see Baker 1997), the subject of an EXPERIENCER verbs is base generated in Spec,VP, cf. the subject of an AGENT verb, base generated in Spec,vP. The same change in acceptability as regarding the AGENT-verbs, however, is at hand when adding the auxiliary *bruka* ‘use to’: all informants (36 out of 36) consider the construction *bruka* ‘use to’ combined with an EXPERIENCER-verb fully acceptable. Again, the adding of a deontic auxiliary affects the judgment of the informants — with the auxiliary present, also EXPERIENCER-verbs are considered well-formed. This is in line with the analysis in Platzack (2011a), where the EXPERIENCER-role is considered to be syntactically realized in the same place as the subject role of *springa* ‘run’, namely in the Specifier of a Root phrase. The crucial point here is that *brukar* ‘use to’ per se turns the situation into habitual, which in the present case actually rules out the discussion on changing theta-roles.

The pattern is clear in the dialect construction: if a gap/an omitted subject should be allowed, the processes must be STATIVES or eventives with an habitual reading as a result of coercion.

Taking into account the syntactic and semantic restrictions on the dialect construction where the subject is omitted in certain interrogative subordinated clauses, the analysis is modified and more elaborated in below. The [\pm interrogative] in [C^0] allows only *wh*-adverbials introducing subordinated clauses, which means that *att*-clauses ‘that’-clauses, are prevented from entering into the structure.

- (21) ... [_{CP} Q (= [\pm interrogative]) C^0 (som) [_{CP} han [_{TP} han [_{VP} han bor]]]]
-

In addition, there is a question about information structure that is to be taken into account here as well. If the dialect construction clauses are to be consideredthetic,

which some properties indicate, the analysis must be modified to some extent, sincethetic clauses do not have topics (cf Rosengren 1997, Sasse 1987). Furthermore, it is unclear whether questions and embedded questions have topic. With added empirical data, the structural analysis proposed hence presumably can be developed further and perhaps also modified.

6 Some concluding remarks

In this article I have proposed a syntactic analysis of a dialectal construction systematically displaying deletion of the subject in some interrogative subordinated clauses, found in spoken south-west Swedish. The empirical data is based on inquiries of a total of 36 speakers of the dialect, and some following up-inquiries. In addition, 10 interviews were carried out. The empirical data display clear patterns.

The deletion appears in certain interrogative subordinated clauses and relative clauses, where standard Swedish requires a resumptive pronoun, which hence can be left out in the dialectal clause construction. Based on a Split CP analysis, I have claimed that the difference between standard Swedish and the dialect is that in the former case [Spec,TP] must be phonetically realized, whereas this is not obligatory in the latter case. As a result, a subject gap can appear. A gap is possible only when the predicate/situation is expressed by a STATIVE predication, or an habitual reading is received by means of coercion. Furthermore, the dialect clause construction is possible only in subordinate clauses introduced by an interrogative *wh*-adverbial.

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