Circumventing the ban on improper movement in Icelandic*

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1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to account for a construction in Icelandic I call the Accusative Tough Construction (AccTC) which prima facie violates the ban on improper movement. As is well known (e.g., Chomsky 1973), movement from an A'-position to A-position does not seem to be allowed in natural language, see (1), whereas A-to-A, A-to-A' and A'-to-A' movement is allowed.

(1) *[TP Johni seems [CP ti (that) [TP ti is intelligent]]]

In the Icelandic construction, however, it looks like a DP A'-moves before it A-moves to SpecTP. An important notion for the present account of AccTC is feature inheritance. Chomsky (2007, 2008) proposes that φ-complete T does not inherently bear unvalued φ-features; rather, T inherits them from C.1 I propose that T over-inherits A'-features from C and that way the ban on improper movement is circumvented.

The Icelandic construction shown in (2d), where the DP þennan leik ‘this game’ moves from the object position of the infinitival clause to SpecTP of the matrix clause, is reminiscent of English tough movement.2 However, it differs with respect to case as structural accusative case is preserved. I therefore term this construction the Accusative Tough Construction (AccTC). Note that other cases are preserved as well in this construction, see Sections 3.1 and 4.3. Without exploring it further here, I posit a PRO subject (assigned nominative case in (2)) in the subject position of the infinitival clause.

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1See also, e.g., Richards (2007), Obata & Epstein (2011), Legate (2011).

2This construction has received little attention. See, however, at least Wood (2015a).
(2) a. Það var erfitt að PRO dæma þennan leik.
   ‘It was difficult to referee this game.’

   b. *Það var erfitt að PRO dæma þessi leikur.
   ‘This game was difficult to referee.’

   c. þennan leik var erfitt að PRO dæma __.
   ‘This game was difficult to referee.’

   d. Var þennan leik erfitt að PRO dæma __?
   ‘Was this game difficult to referee?’

In (2d), the DP þennan leik is located in SpecTP. This looks similar to (2c) but the key difference between the two examples is that in (2c) the DP is in SpecCP. It should be emphasized that not all speakers find the AccTC (2d) grammatical,\(^3\) where the DP moves to SpecTP, whereas examples like (2c) seem to be fine for all speakers. As it is not clear whether the DP moves through SpecTP in (2c), I am only calling cases like (2d) AccTC, that is, where the DP is located in SpecTP. Note that the AccTC judgments reported on in this paper are based on a grammar that can generate the AccTC as in (2d).

In the AccTC, the adjective (the ‘tough’ predicate) shows up in the neuter singular.\(^4\) Not all predicates can be used in this construction, the ones used in this paper are erfitt ‘difficult, tough’, hægt ‘possible’ and mikilvægt ‘important’.

It is important to note that the moved DP in the AccTC (þennan leik in (2d)) seems to be intonationally focalized or stressed; in some examples below, I use a context that calls for contrastive focus, which makes the examples much better. I take this to be an indication of an A′-feature, although I do not explore what kinds of A′-features can be involved (for different types of topics, see Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; also Benincà & Poletto 2004).

On my account of the AccTC in Icelandic, an A′-feature drives movement to SpecTP.\(^5\) Finite T does not only inherit ϕ-features from C as it also over-inherits an A′-feature. Therefore the A- and A′-features probe together for a goal; following van Urk (2015), I refer to this as a composite probe (he argues that C in Dinka Bor is a composite probe; see also Longenbaugh (2015) for v as a composite probe in English tough movement and Coon and Bale’s (2014) fused probe). The DP in the AccTC moves through an A′-position to SpecTP which is then a mixed A/A′-position. In this paper, I discuss the analysis of AccTC and its theoretical implications.

\(^3\) Anton Karl Ingason (p.c) does not like the AccTC whereas Hlíf Árnadóttir (p.c.), Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson (p.c) and I find it grammatical in general. Jóhannes notes that the AccTC sounds substandard. An anonymous reviewer for NELS 46 states that the AccTC deserves at least a question mark.

\(^4\) I gloss this DFLT (default) in (2). For space reasons I do not always gloss DFLT or INF in the AccTC.

\(^5\) For somewhat similar approaches, see Miyagawa (2010) who argues for topic/focus-driven A-movement and Klingvall (2012) who argues that movement in Swedish pseudo-passives is triggered by topic/focus.
2. A note on accusative subjects

Besides AccTC, structural accusative subjects are found in a few constructions in Icelandic (H.Á. Sigurðsson 1989, Wood 2015a, 2015b). Wood (2015a, 2015b) argues that accusative case subjects in Fate Accusative and Existential Accusative (EA) constructions are structural (receiving dependent case on his account). For EA in (3), he proposes an improper movement account via smuggling (cf. Collins 2005) in the spirit of Hicks (2009); other properties play a role, such as L-selection (cf. Bianchi 2000 for relative clauses).

(3) Ólaf var hvergi að PRO finna ___.
Ólafur.ACC was nowhere to find.INF
‘Ólafur was nowhere to be found.’ / ‘It wasn’t possible to find Ólafur anywhere.’

Note that the example in (3), where the DP moves from the infinitival clause, cannot be part of the same construction as AccTC with a silent adjective hægt ‘possible’, even though the meaning seems to be similar. First of all, hægt cannot be omitted in examples like (4).

(4) Af hverju þessa kenningu ekki *(hægt) að afsanna?
why this.ACC theory.ACC not possible.DFLT to disprove.INF
‘Why is it not possible to disprove this theory?’

Second, the accusative case DP in EA cannot stay low, it must move to subject position (whereas it can — and very frequently does — in AccTC, see (2a)). Third, and finally, Wood (2015a) argues that an adverbial phrase like hvergi ‘nowhere’ is obligatory in (3), but it is not needed in AccTC. I conclude that a different analysis is needed for AccTC.

3. Properties of AccTC

3.1 Case preservation

As we have seen, structural accusative case is preserved in AccTC. The same is true for at least dative case (5b).6

(5) a. Ég treysti þessum manni ekki.
I trust this.DAT man.DAT not
‘I don’t trust this man’

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6It should be mentioned that another similar construction, where neither accusative nor dative case is preserved, is grammatical for some speakers (Thráinsson 2007, 431, Wood 2015a), see (i). I call this the Nominative Tough Construction. I will not discuss it further in this paper.
I discuss the possibility of moving a nominative DP to SpecTP in AccTC in Section 4.3.

3.2 Subjecthood: Movement to SpecTP

The DP that moves from the infinitival clause to the matrix clause in AccTC passes well known subject tests, as I will now demonstrate. However, as discussed above, intonational marking seems to be needed on the DP that moves to SpecTP.

First, yes/no-questions are a good subject test for Icelandic as the finite verb moves to C and the DP below the finite verb to SpecTP. This is shown in (6a) where the DP þessa konu presumably moves to SpecTP. The question in (6b) shows the same, where af hverju is in SpecCP, er in C and þennan misskilning is in SpecTP ((6b) taken from Wood 2015a).

(6) a. Context: A says to B: “You said that it was important to avoid this woman over there, but...” (pointing to another woman)
   ... er þessa konu ekki mikilvægara að forðast?
   is this.ACC woman.ACC not more.important to avoid.INF
   ‘...isn’t this woman more important to avoid?’

b. Af hverju er þennan misskilning svona mikilvægt að forðast, why is this.ACC misunderstanding.ACC so important.DFLT to avoid
   að þínu mati?
   in your opinion
   ‘Why is this misunderstanding so important to avoid, in your opinion?’

Second, the moved DP in AccTC is possible in Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) environment. This is shown below with the ECM verb telja ‘believe’.

(7) Ég hef alltaf talið þennan mann vera mikilvægt að forðast.
   I have always believed this.ACC man.ACC be.INF important.DFLT to avoid.INF
   ‘I have always believed this man to be important to avoid.’

Third, Wood (2015a) points out for the AccTC that when an expletive is used, which is a place-holder in the left-periphery, Definiteness Effect (DE) obtains, suggesting that the definite DP is in SpecTP (A-position), see (8a). When the DP is indefinite, see (8b), there is no DE violation ((8) taken from Wood 2015a).

(8) a. *Það er þennan misskilning mikilvægt að forðast.
   EXPL is this.ACC misunderstanding.ACC important.DFLT to avoid.INF
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b. Það er suma menn mikilvægara að forðast en aðra.
EXPL is some.ACC men.ACC more.important to avoid than others.ACC
‘Some people are more important to avoid than others.’

I conclude that the accusative case DP can move to subject position (SpecTP) in AccTC.

Since the moved DP passes various subject tests we might expect PRO infinitivals to be grammatical as well in AccTC. However, speakers in general find examples like (9) ungrammatical (I seem to find them slightly better than my informants).

(9) *Ólafur var úrskurðaður láttinn þrátt fyrir að PRO, vera hvergi hægt að finna t.
Ólafur was ruled dead despite to be nowhere possible to find

Intended: ‘Ólafur was ruled deceased despite being impossible to find.’

The reason why (9) is ungrammatical in the AccTC may be that PRO cannot be intonationally marked.

3.3 A′-movement

The fact that the DP in subject position in AccTC is in the accusative case (or, e.g., dative) seems to support a movement analysis, as the case seems to be assigned by a verb in the infinitival clause. I argue that the DP in subject position moves there from the object position of the infinitival clause. However, whereas the subject tests above point to A-movement, various other properties of AccTC point to A′-movement.

3.3.1 Reconstruction

If binding of the DP external to the infinitival clause is grammatical, then it behaves like it is within the clause, bound by PRO.

(10) Context: It is easy to trust one’s friends but...
?... ég tel óvini sínum vera erfitt að PRO treysta __.
I believe.DAT enemy.DAT self.DAT be.INF difficult.DFLT to trust.INF
‘...I believe it is difficult to trust one’s enemy.’

Even though binding of the moved DP (by PRO) is not perfect in AccTC, see (10), it is not ungrammatical. Interestingly, whereas the subject tests above suggested A-movement, the reconstruction effect in AccTC (10) points to A′-movement.

3.3.2 Preposition stranding

Maling & Zaenen (1985) point out that in Icelandic preposition stranding, the complement of a preposition can be topicalized but it cannot move to the subject position. Icelandic therefore does not have a pseudo-passive, as (11) (from Maling & Zaenen 1985) shows.
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(11) *Ég tel Vigdísi vera oftast talað vel um __.
    I believe Vigdísi ACC be INF most often talked well of

That is, preposition stranding in Icelandic involves A′-movement but not A-movement. In AccTC, the complement of a preposition in the embedded infinitival clause can move to SpecTP of the matrix clause. This indicates that AccTC involves A′-movement.

(12) Ég tel Vigdísi vera mikilvægt að tala vel um __.
    I believe Vigdísi ACC be INF important DFLT to talk INF well of

‘I believe it is important to talk well about Vigdísi.’

Similarly, as preposition stranding does not allow A-movement, the following AccTC example suggests A′-movement; it may either contain a parasitic gap (PG) or ATB movement (see Wood 2015a for Existential Accusatives (EA) in Icelandic). It should be noted that (13) (adapted from Wood 2015a) is considerably worse than typical AccTC examples.

(13) ??Af hverju var þessa fugla ekki hægt að sjá __ eða heyra í __?
    why was these ACC birds ACC not possible to see or hear in __

‘Why wasn’t it possible to see or hear from these birds?’

If (13) contains a PG it may not be surprising that many speakers will find it ungrammatical as standard examples of PGs are generally not accepted in Icelandic (Wood 2015a).

3.3.3 Locality

If the DP in SpecTP in AccTC would end up there by simply A-moving from the infinitival clause, then we would expect other arguments higher up in the tree to be interveners for movement. Under A′-movement, on the other hand, a lower argument can move past a higher argument to an A′-position, such as SpecCP. The subject of the infinitival clause is PRO on the present account, meaning that the object must move past it. That suggests A′-movement rather than A-movement.

Also, using ditransitives works well to figure out what kind of movement is involved in AccTC. In the active, for the verb skila ‘return’, the indirect object is obligatorily higher than the direct object (14) (cf. Collins & Thráinsson 1996, 417, 421).7

(14) a. Ég skilaði ykkur þessari bók í fyrra.
    I returned you DAT PL this DAT book DAT last year
    ‘I returned this book to you last year.’

b. *Ég skilaði þessari bók ykkur í fyrra.
    I returned this DAT book DAT you DAT PL last year

This works the same in the passive (15) (cf. Thráinsson 2007, 135).

7Thanks to Dave Embick for reminding me of the importance of various examples, including ditransitives.
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(15) a. Var okkur ekki skilað þessari bók í fyrra?
    was us.DAT not returned this.DAT book.DAT last.year
    ‘Wasn’t this book returned to us last year?’

    b. *?Var þessari bók ekki skilað okkur í fyrra?
    was this.DAT book.DAT not returned us.DAT last.year

In AccTC, if the direct object of skila ‘return’ A-moves directly to SpecTP of the matrix clause, we expect ungrammaticality because of locality violations. However, the same restrictions as in the active (14) and the passive (15) do not hold in the AccTC (16) as B, in reply to A, shows (thanks to Hlíf Árnadóttir for discussing (16) with me).

(16) Context: B comes to a bookstore to return five books she got for her birthday. The bookstore clerk, A, accepts the first four but when it comes to the last one, he says:

    A: Nei, þessari bók er ekki hægt að skila okkur __.
        no this.DAT book.DAT is not possible to return us.DAT
        ‘No, it’s not possible to return this book to us.’

    B: ?Og af hverju er þessari bók ekki hægt að skila ykkur __?
        and why is this.DAT book.DAT not possible to return you.DAT.PL
        ‘And why is it not possible to return this book to you?’

This suggests that the DP A′-moves. I will propose that the DP moves successive-cyclically from the infinitival clause to SpecTP, which is a mixed A/A′-position in this construction.

3.4 Interim summary

The data above suggest that the DP can move to SpecTP in AccTC. I argue that the DP in AccTC moves from within the infinitival clause to the subject position of the matrix clause. Whereas the subject tests suggest A-movement to SpecTP, the reconstruction, preposition stranding and locality facts discussed above point to A′-movement. If the DP in AccTC A′-moves to the edge of the infinitival clause before A-moving to SpecTP we seem to have an instance of improper movement. That is in need of an explanation.

4. Analysis

4.1 Improper movement in AccTC

Looking at the examples in Section 3.2, it is not clear whether the accusative DP A-moves directly or A′-moves first before moving to SpecTP. Direct A-movement, see (17a), should be blocked by PRO of the infinitival clause (see also Section 3.3.3). A′-moving first and then A-moving, see (17b), should also be banned as that would be improper movement.
If the DP $A'$-moves first, it should move successive-cyclically through phase boundaries (CPs and vPs; I focus on CPs here). That is indeed the case, see (18)–(19).

(18) Af hverju er þessa kenningu ekki hægt why is this.ACC theory.ACC not possible.DFLT

[CP $t_i$ að PRO reyna [CP $t_i$ að PRO afsanna $t_i$]]? to try.INF to disprove.INF

‘Why is it not possible to try to disprove this theory?’

(19) Af hverju er þessa kenningu ekki hægt why is this.ACC theory.ACC not possible.DFLT

[CP $t_i$ að PRO sannfæra neinn um [CP $t_i$ að PRO prófa $t_i$]]? to convince.INF anyone.ACC about to test.INF

‘Why is it not possible to convince anybody to test this theory?’

The complement of hægt ‘possible’ in (18) is an infinitival clause (CP) whose main verb is reyna ‘try’. Reyna in turn takes an infinitival clause (CP) whose main verb is afsanna ‘disprove’. It therefore looks like the object of afsanna, þessa kenningu ‘this theory’, $A'$-moves before $A$-moving (improper movement). The same goes for (19), where the object of prófa ‘test’ moves successive-cyclically. Here, the DP also moves past the object of sannfæra ‘convince’, neinn ‘anyone’, suggesting $A'$-movement as neinn should block $A'$-movement of þessa kenningu.

4.2 Over-inheritance

Chomsky (2007, 2008) proposes that T inherits its $\phi$-features (A-features) from C; this captures the fact that T is only $\phi$-complete when it is selected by C. It is usually only a

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8Speakers who find the AccTC grammatical seem to find the AccTC in (18)–(19) grammatical as well.

9I assume in these examples that reyna ‘try’ and sannfæra ‘convince’ are not restructuring verbs. This needs further inspection, even though, e.g., long passives are not possible in Icelandic, see (i) below. This matter is also important for examples like (25) in Section 5.1 It should be noted that Ingason & Wood (2014) argue that reyna, for example, can be a part of a restructuring structure in Stylistic Fronting.

(i) *Snjórinn, var reyndur að PRO moka $t_i$. the.snow.M.NOM.SG was tried.M.NOM.SG to shovel.INF (H.Á. Sigurðsson 1989, 60)
subset of C’s features that T inherits as T does normally not inherit A'-features from C. However, sometimes T seems to inherit C’s A'-features as well, see (20) (from English).

(20) What kinds of gifts, are there rules about \([\text{CP } t_i \text{ who can give } t_i \text{ to whom}]\)?

(Chung & McCloskey 1983, 708)

(20) is not ungrammatical even though we would expect two of the wh-constituents to be competing for the embedded SpecCP position. We would expect who to move to SpecCP (superiority). However, the DP object of give, what kinds of gifts, moves out of the lower CP and therefore who in the embedded CP cannot be in SpecCP. This can be analyzed as T over-inheriting features from C as a wh-phrase, who, is located in SpecTP (Legate 2011).

Turning back to Icelandic, in an example like (6b), repeated as (21) (slightly modified), SpecCP is filled and the only way to move the DP higher in the clause is if T inherits an A'-feature from C. This makes the DP move to SpecTP but not SpecCP.

(21) Af hverju er pennan misskilning svona mikilvægt að forðast?

‘Why is this misunderstanding so important to avoid?’ (Wood 2015a)

Recall that the DP in SpecTP in AccTC needs to be intonationally focalized or stressed. This, I argue, reflects the fact that T does not only inherit A-features (φ-features) from C, but also an A'-feature, a topic or focus feature. T with an A'-feature should show some A'-properties and we have seen such properties in Section 3.3 above.

Icelandic is a V2 language where multiple specifiers in the CP domain are usually not allowed (see, however, Jónsson 2010). Over-inheritance makes use of the specifier below C (or below the lowest head in a split CP), namely SpecTP, when the DP cannot move to SpecCP (such as in (21)). SpecTP is therefore a mixed A/A'-position, where T serves as a composite probe (cf. van Urk 2015). This way the ban on improper movement is circumvented as the movement to SpecTP (from an A'-position) is (partly) an A'-movement.

4.3 A note on the composite probe

As I argue that T inherits both φ-features and A'-features in AccTC, T is a composite probe where the features select a goal together (cf. van Urk 2015). In the examples looked at above, the moved DP is assigned case (accusative or dative) within the infinitival clause. When the composite probe looks for a goal and finds an accusative or dative case DP, T gets default values (3. SG) as a DP in the accusative or dative case cannot value T’s φ-features — only nominative case DPs can do that. It would therefore be interesting to see what happens when we have a nominative case DP in the AccTC.

In (22)–(24), the verb in the infinitival clause is leiðast ‘bore, find boring’, which takes a dative subject (here PRO\textsubscript{DAT}) and a nominative object. The context for these examples can be that two speakers are discussing how boring long meetings tend to be. Speaker A points out that certain long meetings are such that it is difficult to find them boring. Then speaker B asks why these meetings (in contrast to other meetings) are that way. In (22)
the nominative case DP þessir lögðu fundir does not move, whereas in (23) it moves to SpecTP. In (24), where the example has been changed slightly, the DP moves to SpecCP.

(22) Af hverju (?)er/*eru erfitt að PRO leiðast þessir lögðu fundir? 
why (?)is/*are difficult to bore.INF these.NOM long meetings.NOM 
‘Why is it difficult to find these long meetings boring?’

In (22), the finite verb of the matrix clause cannot find the nominative DP when it probes for a goal and it gets default valuation (3SG). When, however, the nominative case DP A′-moves to an embedded phase edge, it becomes visible to the composite probe. Even though the nominative DP in SpecTP in AccTC is quite bad, see (23), it makes a difference whether the finite verb agrees with it or not. That is, the example is better, though far from perfect, when the DP values T’s φ-features than when there is no agreement between the DP and the finite verb.

(23) Af hverju *er/*eru þessir lögðu fundir erfitt að PRO leiðast __.
why *is/*are these long meetings.NOM difficult to bore.INF 
‘Why is it difficult to find these meetings boring?’

Since unvalued A′- and φ-features are located on the same probe, T, the DP, which has an A′-feature, values also T’s φ-features as the DP is in the nominative case.

When the DP moves to SpecCP, however, non-agreement is better (again, it is far from being perfect), see (24).

(24) Þessir lögðu fundir *er/*eru erfitt að PRO leiðast __.
these.NOM long meetings.NOM *is/*are difficult to bore.INF 
‘It is difficult to find these meetings boring.’

I take this to suggest that when the DP moves to SpecCP, it does not move first to SpecTP. In (24), unvalued A′-features and φ-features are located on separate probes, C and T, respectively, and therefore the DP which moves to SpecCP cannot value the φ-features on T. That is, the DP does not value T’s φ-features in (24) and T gets default values (3SG).

4.4 Defective C?

ECM examples, such as (7) which was discussed in Section 3.2 in relation to subjecthood, raise a potential problem for our analysis. Chomsky (2008) proposes that T in ECM infinitivals is not selected by C as it lacks φ-features and tense. If ECM constructions do not contain C at all, then T cannot inherit A′-features which motivate DP movement in AccTC, unless we say the features are inherited from another head, such as v.

Another possibility is that there is in fact a CP layer in ECM infinitivals but it is defective (cf. Gallego 2009 who argues for a defective C in Romance languages), such that it

10 Thanks to Hlíf Árnadóttir for judging examples (22)–(24). Our judgments are the same for these.
only has A′-features. On that approach, it is concerning that an overt að (which can serve as an infinitival marker and as a complementizer of finite embedded clauses) is not grammatical in ECM constructions in Icelandic. However, an indication that there may in fact be a CP layer in such infinitival constructions comes from Rögnvaldsson (2014), who observes that an overt að seems to have been grammatical for various speakers of Icelandic in the 19th through the middle of the 20th century in various infinitival constructions which we would not have expected to have a CP layer.

4.5 Interim summary

I have argued that in the AccTC a DP moves from an A′-position to SpecTP. That should not be allowed as movement from an A′-position to A-position is improper movement. However, the ban on improper movement is circumvented as T over-inherits an A′-feature from C, making SpecTP a mixed A/A′-position.

5. Implications

5.1 Over-inheritance in other constructions

I proposed above that improper movement is circumvented when T inherits A′-features from C. We expect to find such over-inheritance elsewhere. Consider the following observation for a different construction from AccTC, namely impersonal PP passive:

(25) Var þessa kenningu, ekki talað um [CP ti að reyna [CP ti að afsanna ti]]?
    ‘Wasn’t there a talk about trying to disprove this theory?’

As in the AccTC, a DP moves from an infinitival clause successive-cyclically through phase boundaries to SpecTP. T with φ-features only would not be able to attract the DP to its specifier as it would not be visible to it. T can do that when it inherits an A′-feature as well, and that is the case in (25), I argue. Let us also take a look at the following examples:

(26) a. ?Var þessa kenningu, ekki sagt einhverjum manni að reyna að afsanna?
    ‘Wasn’t some man told to try to disprove this theory?’

b. *Var þessa kenningu, ekki beðinn einhver maður
    ‘Wasn’t some man asked to try to disprove this theory?’

Most of my informants find (25) grammatical although Anton Karl Ingason (p.c.) and an anonymous NELS 46 reviewer find it ungrammatical. Gísli Rúnar Harðarson gives (25) a question mark.
In (26a), we have an indefinite dative indirect object of segja ‘tell’ which stays in situ; it cannot value T’s φ-features. A DP with a topic or focus feature, originating in an embedded infinitival clause, can move via phase edges and end up in SpecTP if T bears an A′-feature. Even though it cannot value T’s φ-features, the derivation does not crash (Preminger 2011). In (26b), on the other hand, T’s φ-features are valued by the indefinite nominative DP which stays in situ. This results in ungrammaticality as it looks like the composite probe cannot have its φ-features valued by one DP and its A′-feature valued by another DP.\(^\text{12}\)

However, a better understanding of when T can over-inherit features from C and which phrases it can attract to its specifier is needed. Why is it, for example, that pseudo-passives as in (11) are ungrammatical whereas preposition stranding as in (12) is fine? For some reason, the composite probe does not see the DP complement of a preposition in the same clause, see (11), which presumably has to do with the probe’s A-features and the PP being a phase but a DP that moves to the edge of a phase such as CP becomes visible to the probe. I leave this for future research.

5.2 Under-inheritance

Since the composite probe involves both A′- and φ-features, we might expect SpecTP to be available for DPs only. That is not the case, however, as PPs seem to be able to move there.

(27) (?)Ég tel um Vigdísi vera mikilvægt að tala vel __.
I believe of Vigdísi.ACC be important.DFLT to talk.INF well
‘I believe it is important to talk well about Vigdís.’

On a more fine-grained look at the left periphery (split CP, Rizzi 1997), it is possible that in the AccTC the DP (and PP) moves to a low projection within the CP, such as FinP.\(^\text{13}\)

On our composite probe analysis, we could then argue for under-inheritance (cf. Legate 2011) instead of over-inheritance, where the A-features on C are not passed down to T even though that is normally the case. This needs further research as well as how over-inheritance works within a split CP, that is, how an A′-feature from a higher head, like Top or Foc, can be inherited by T through a lower head, like Fin.

5.3 Stylistic Fronting?

As Jóhannes Gíslason Jónsson (p.c.) and an anonymous reviewer for NELS 46 point out, the movement in AccTC may be a case of Stylistic Fronting (SF). Following Holmberg (2000), SF involves movement to SpecTP, the same landing site as in AccTC on my proposal. Even though verbs and particles in SF can only cross one phase boundary, as argued by Ingason & Wood (2014), DPs and PPs are not restricted in the same way as they can move successive-cyclically across phase boundaries when they undergo SF; even though SF is

\(^{12}\)Thanks to Hlíf Árnadóttir for discussing these examples with me. She finds (26a) grammatical whereas she finds (26b) ungrammatical. The difference between the two examples is not as clear for me.

\(^{13}\)That would mean that the finite verb would have to move higher than Fin. However, it is possible that the finite verb in Icelandic cannot move to the left of any specifier in the CP domain (Jónsson 2010, 51).
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clause-bounded, or, rather, phase-bounded (Ingason & Wood 2014), DP and PP movement in SF can be long-distance. However, the fronted element in SF typically precedes the finite verb but the same is not true of AccTC. What may indicate that AccTC is closer to being topicalization than SF is that topicalization “in general is associated with some foregrounding, often contrastive focusing, of the fronted constituent, and SF is not” (Holmberg 2000, 450). I leave the relation between SF and AccTC for future research.

6. Concluding remarks

I have discussed the AccTC and many of the challenges it has to offer. I have proposed an account of what on the surface seems to be improper movement. I argue that T over-inherits features from C, making AccTC a case of movement to a mixed A/A’-position. That way, the ban on improper movement is circumvented. The nature of the composite probe needs to be explored further as well as A- and A’-properties of the construction.

Limitation on over-inheritance in AccTC and other constructions needs further research as we do not want our analysis to overgenerate. In addition, it is of some concern that all the instances of over-inheritance to circumvent the ban on improper movement discussed above for the AccTC and other constructions contain infinitival clauses. If there are no such cases that involve finite embedded CPs, then that might suggest that the infinitival clauses in question have less structure.

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References


