

Complementizer Agreement in Mansfeld German

Background

A number of West Germanic dialects exhibit a phenomenon called COMPLEMENTIZER AGREEMENT. Complementizer agreement refers to the property that the shape of subordinating conjunctions (and other elements introducing subordinate clauses) varies, depending on the ϕ -features of the subject (Koppen 2017, Weiß 2005). The data in (1) illustrate complementizer agreement in Luxemburgish (Bruch 1973: 87)

- (1) *wat s du* - what 2SG you - 'what you'
wat e mir - what 1PL we - 'what we'
datt e se - that 3PL they - 'that they'

There is general consensus that the agreement affixes used for complementizer agreement are exclusively drawn from two sets, namely either from the set of verbal agreement affixes or from the set of enclitic subject pronouns (Koppen 2017). In this talk, I present data from complementizer agreement in Mansfeld German that superficially challenge this consensus view. I then argue that on closer inspection the data are compatible with this view.

Mansfeld German

Mansfeld German is a variety of North-East Thuringian; North-East Thuringian itself is a branch of Thuringian, an East Central German dialect. Mansfeld German is spoken in the South West of Saxony-Anhalt, in the villages around the cities of Mansfeld and Eisleben. The data for this abstract come from dialect texts.

Mansfeld German complementizer agreement

Like many Southern German dialects, Mansfeld German exhibits optional complementizer agreement for 2SG and 2PL subjects. The affix for 2SG is *-st*, the affix for 2PL is *-d*, cf. (2).

- (2) a. ... *noch barmeste, wennste 's Majndrickn kreist.*
nor lament.2SG.you when.2SG.you the stomachache get
'... nor do you lament when you have stomachache.' (Weiland 1936: 389)
- b. *Mor muß ähmt immer Mansfäldsch met eich reden, ehder aen vorschteht.*
one needs PRT always Mansfeldian with you talk before.2PL.you one understand
'One has to speak in Mansfeld German with you before you can understand someone.'
(Zeising 2002: 20)

Apart from 2SG and 2PL subjects, Mansfeld German also shows optional complementizer agreement for 3SG.FEM and 3PL subjects. The agreement affix is *-e* for both 3SG.FEM and 3PL subjects, as shown in (3).

- (3) a. *Willem woar sehre froh, dass se ewwerhaupt wedder metten schprahch.*
Willem was very happy that.3SG she at all again with.him talked
'Willem was happy that she talked to him again at all.'
(Zeising 2002: 21)
- b. *Er solle doch nu endlich malerzeeln, wasse se so unger Tache machen.*
he should PRT now finally PRT tell what.3PL they so below days make
'He should finally tell what they do (= how they work) downhole.'
(Zeising 2002: 5)

The problem

The affixes used for complementizer agreement 2SG and 2PL subjects pose no problem: they are identical to the respective verbal agreement affixes, as the examples in (2) reveal. The problem resides in the affix *-e* for complementizer agreement with 3SG.FEM and 3PL subjects. This affix is not identical to the verbal agreement affixes for 3SG or 3PL verbs; 3SG is marked by *-t* in the present, and by a zero affix for the preterite (as in 3a); and 3PL is marked by *-en* in both the present and the preterite (as in 3b). Nor is the affix *-e* identical to the enclitic pronoun *se* used for 3SG.FEM and 3PL subjects. This state of affairs hence poses a problem for the consensus view that the affixes used for complementizer agreement are either verbal agreement affixes or enclitic pronouns.

Non-solutions

The obvious way to deal with this problem is to deny that it exists. I discuss four specific suggestions and argue that they are wrong. The first idea is to suggest that the agreement affix is not *-e*, but *-se*, so that the agreement affix becomes identical to the enclitic pronoun *se*. In other words, the examples in (3) are misanalyzed: *dasse* and *wasse* do not result from *dass+e* and *was+e*, but from *dass+se* and *was+se*. This solution works fine for *dass* and *was*, but it doesn't generalize, as revealed by example (4).

- (4) *Weile se nune dachten, de Wohnungen sin hieher noch besser jeworrrn.*
because.3PL they now thought the apartments are here even better become
'Because they thought that the apartments here are even better.'

(Zeising 2002: 26)

In (4), the complementizer agreeing with the 3PL subject is *weil* 'because'. If the affix were *-se* and not *-e*, *weilse* would result instead of the observed *weile*. The second idea is to analyze *-e* not as an agreement affix, but as an epenthetic vowel that is inserted in order to avoid a presumably illicit *s+s* sequence. This idea is initially attractive

because the majority of examples of complementizer agreement with 3SG.FEM and 3PL subjects in Mansfeld German involve *dass* 'that' or *was* 'what'. But this idea doesn't generalize either. On the one hand, it doesn't capture the example in (4). On the other hand, since complementizer agreement in Mansfeld German is optional, one finds cases where the apparently harmful *s+s* sequence is not broken up, as in example (5).

- (5) *Als se nune vorr Weihnachten schlachten wollten...*
 when they now before Christmas butcher wanted
 'When they wanted to butcher before Christmas...' (Zeising 2002: 24)

The third idea is to claim that the complementizer agreement affix *-e* and the verbal agreement affix are indeed identical, namely that both are *-en*. The shape of the complementizer agreement affix results from a rule deleting the final *n* of *-en*. Although other Central German dialects feature such a rule (the so-called *Eifeler Regel*), Mansfeld German is not among them: one often finds cases where *n* is not deleted before *se*, as shown in (6).

- (6) *wärfense* - throw they - 'they throw'
frässense - eat they - 'they eat'
lachten se - laughed they - 'they laughed' (Zeising 2002: 39, 41, 48)

Moreover, this idea only works for 3PL subjects, as 3SG is never marked by *-en* on the finite verb. The fourth and final idea is to suggest that *-e* is an affix inserted to avoid ambiguity. To understand the attractiveness of this idea, it should be noted that the enclitic form the 3SG.MASC pronoun in Mansfeld German is *e*. So when *dass* is followed by *e*, the resulting sequence is *dasse* 'that he'. However, when *dass* is followed by *se*, the enclitic pronoun for 3SG.FEM or 3PL, the resulting sequence is also *dasse*, as Mansfeld German lacks geminates. *dasse* would hence be ambiguous between the meaning 'that he' and 'that she/they' and the insertion of *e* avoids this. Although the idea is attractive, there are two problems. First, examples like in (4) are not covered by this account. Second, Mansfeld German tolerates ambiguity resulting from encliticization in other areas of its grammar. In particular, when the enclitic pronoun *e* cliticizes onto a finite verb in C°, a complex consisting of verb+*e* can result that is ambiguous with respect to its status as present tense or preterite. Consider the two *hotte*'s in (7).

- (7) a. *Hernach hotte mei nackjen Bauch befummelt.*
 thereafter has.he my naked belly touched
 'Then he inspected my naked belly.'
 b. *Hier hotte schon ü aeln Trachekorb stehn.*
 here had.he already a old corf stand
 'He had already prepared an old corf.' (Zeising 2002: 18 & 6)

In (7a), *hotte* is derived from the cliticization of *e* to the present tense form *hot* 'has'. In (7b), *hotte* is derived from cliticizing *e* to the preterite form *hotte* 'had'. Similar examples occur frequently in Mansfeld German dialect texts. Since Mansfeld German has no trouble tolerating ambiguity in this area of grammar, it seems unlikely that it is allergic to ambiguity in a closely related area of its grammar.

Analysis

I wish to argue that a closer inspection of the verbal morphology of Mansfeld German, coupled with a syntactic approach to pronoun syncretism allows an analysis of *-e* as verbal agreement affix. Spangenberg (1993: 262) noted that the verbal morphology of Mansfeld German differs in one aspect from all other Thuringian dialects: the affix *-e* is optionally added to the preterite forms of strong verbs for 1SG and 3SG. So Mansfeld German features both *schmiss* and *schmisse* 'I/(s)he threw' (Zeising 2002: 6), and both *soff* and *soffe* 'I/(s)he boozed' (Zeising 2002: 11). What has gone unnoticed so far is that the affix *-e* is also optionally added to the 3SG form of *sein* 'to be'. Mansfeld German features both *is* and *isse* '(s)he is' (Zeising 2002: 14). Crucially, Craenenbroeck & Koppen (2002: 6) establish the generalization that the agreement affix for complementizer agreement is identical to the agreement affix of the auxiliary 'to be'. This answers why *-e* is chosen for agreement with 3SG subjects: *-e* is the agreement affix of the 3SG form of 'to be'. What needs to be answered is why *-e* is also chosen for 3PL subjects. This is unexpected because the 3PL form of 'to be' in Mansfeld German is *sin*, and never *sinne*. However, Postma (2005) observed that the subject forms for 3SG.FEM and 3PL are always syncretic in asymmetrical V2 languages, and argues that the plural version is created on the basis of the singular version in syntax via a DIST-operator. I adopt this idea for the analysis of Mansfeld German. In particular, *se* in Mansfeld German starts out as singular. When probed by C°, C° agrees for singular and *-e* is added. The DIST-operator, which I assume is located on top of CP, inserts the plural-feature for *se* after C° agreed with *se*. As for verbal agreement, which always differentiates between singular and plural, I argue that it applies late in the derivation.

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