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Codeswitching data in *amerikanorsk* and the theoretical analysis of tense

It is well-known in intrasentential codeswitching that inflectional morphemes are almost exclusively taken from the dominant language (= the matrix language), whereas content morphemes may easily be borrowed from the subservient language (= the embedded language), disregarding embedded language islands, cf. Myers-Scotten (1993, 2002). This is also the case in the intrasentential codeswithching data found in *amerikanorsk*, cf. Haugen (1953), Hjelde (1992).

In my talk, I want to focus on the tense inflection of verbal stems in *amerikanorsk* intrasentential codeswitching, using relevant data from *amerikanorsk* as a starting-point for an investigation of the general theoretical analysis of the morpho-syntactic relation between a verbal stem and its tense affix. To exemplify what kind of empirical data I will be dealing with, consider the typical pattern found in *amerikanorsk* shown in (1), taken from Haugen (1953).

(1)   a. enterstein**e** 'entertain' (infinitive)
        b. reis**er** 'raise' (present)
        c. spen**te** 'spent' (past)
        d. kleim**a** 'claimed' (past)

As can be seen in these examples, the tense (including infinitval) suffix (in **bold**) is from Norwegian, the matrix luaguage, whereas the verbal stem is borrowed from English, the embedded language. The opposite pattern, i.e. an English tense suffix added to a Norwegian verbal stem, is never found in *amerikanorsk*. What is the theoretical import of this observational pattern for the analysis of the relation between stem and affix?

I will first argue that data like those in (1) should be taken as evidence that it is *not* the case that verbs (and inflected words generally) are fully listed with inflectional features in the lexicon and subsequently checked for their inflectional features in the syntax (as suggested in Chomsky 1995: 195). Instead, I will argue that what is contained in the lexicon are the verbal stems, and that tense morphology is syntactically *assigned* to the stem. I will discuss several ways to execute such an analysis, drawing on previous assignment-type analyses (e.g. the idea that the verbal stem moves to T to 'pick up' the tense feature).

However, a tense assigment analysis raises a severe problem for certain analyses that actually presuppose the correctness of the inflectional-features-as-intrinsic-lexical-property approach, like for instace the analyses of tensed *in situ* verbs in embedded clauses in Mainland Scandinavian proposed in Holmberg & Platzack (1995) or Vikner (1995).

I show that an analysis of the relation between stem and inflection using the probe – goal-mechanism construed as an assignment mechanism rather than a checking mechanism, solves this problem, and, furthermore, I will sketch an analysis indicating that codeswitching data

from *amerikanorsk* like those shown in (1) are readily explained adopting an analysis exploiting the probe – goal-mechanism as an assignment (and not checking) mechanism.

If time permits, I will discuss whether or not codeswitching data like those in (1) can be said to favour a neo-constructional analysis (frame generation and insertion) over a strictly derivational analysis (in terms of Merge), as assumed in the Minimalist Program.

References:
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