

Crossing the lake, crossing the category. Microvariation in motion verb constructions in Alemannic
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1. Introduction. Alemannic varieties of German use a special particle to introduce infinitival complements of motion verbs. In Bodensee-Alemannic the particle is *gi*, in Swiss German it is *go*:

- (1) Er gaat **gi/go** de Unggle bsueche.
he goes PRT the uncle visit
'He goes to visit the uncle.'

The construction behaves identically in the varieties with respect to certain semantic and syntactic properties: The particle only appears after motion verbs, the subject must be agentive, the entire construction is interpreted as a single event. Furthermore, the construction only tolerates a limited set of elements within the *go*-phrase, only those licensed within the VP (e.g. no sentential adverbs); the particle forms a constituent with the infinitival complement and occupies the position of a direct complement (A'-extraction from the *gi/go*-complement is possible).

2. Asymmetries. Upon closer inspection, however, a number of intriguing asymmetries emerge: In Swiss German the particle can occur in various positions within the infinitival complement:

- (2) a) Ich gang [de Muetter en Struuss **go** chauffe].
b) [de Muetter **go** en Struuss chauffe].
c) [**go** de Muetter en Struuss chauffe].
I go PRT the.DAT mother PRT a bunch PRT buy
'I'll go buy a bunch of flowers for my mother.'

In Bodensee-Alemannic, however, it occurs preferably at the beginning of the infinitival complement (dative objects can exceptionally occur before *gi*)

- (3) a) I gang [**gi** da Muetter an Struuss kofe].
b)? I gang [da Muetter **gi** an Struuss kofe].
c)* I gang [da Muetter an Struuss **gi** kofe].

Furthermore, there is restructuring in Swiss German. First, pronoun fronting is obligatory:

- (4) a)??Ich gang [go s abhole]. vs. b) Ich gang s [go __ abhole].
I go PRTit get I go it PRT get
'I'll go get it.'

Second, full NP-Arguments of the lower verb can occur within the matrix clause:

- (5) Es gaat [**em Vatter**] niemert [go __ en Chueche bringe].
it goes the.DAT father no.one PRT a cake bring
'No one brings the father a cake.'

In Bodensee-Alemannic, however, such reorderings are much more limited: Pronoun fronting is optional and becomes impossible once material of the matrix clause intervenes:

- (6) a) Ich gang [gi s abhole]. vs. b) Ich gang s [gi __ abhole].
I go PRT it get I go it PRT get
b) Ich gang (*s₁) *denn morge* [gi (s₁) __₁ abhole].
I go it PRT tomorrow PRT it fetch
'I'll go get it tomorrow.'

Reordering with respect to elements of the matrix clause is completely impossible:

- (7) *Es goot [**de Mueter**]/ [**ere**] niemet [gi __ hälffe].
It goes the.DAT mother her.DAT nobody PRT help
'Nobody goes to help mother/her.'

3. Accounting for the asymmetries. We account for these differences by treating the particles as categorically distinct from each other. While both originate as a directional preposition (Lötscher 1993), they have developed differently: *Gi* is moving towards a prepositional complementizer while *go* has been reanalyzed as a verbal element (Schönenberger & Penner 1995, van Riemsdijk 2002).

3.1. The syntax of gi. The positional facts follow if *gi* is a complementizer with prepositional traces since C or P-elements generally occur at the beginning of the XP they select. Pronoun fronting is

optional because P/C are possible clitic hosts. The fact that the pronoun cannot cross material of the matrix clause shows that we are not dealing with restructuring proper; rather, the fronting is phonologically conditioned. The absence of restructuring follows from the PP/CP-layer projected by *gi* (we assume a base-generation analysis of restructuring, cf. Wurmbrand 2001). Datives can exceptionally cross *gi*, we assume that they move to its specifier. Evidence for this comes from the fact that remnant topicalization without datives is impossible, while they can be topicalized with *gi*:

- (8) a) **[Gi helfe] isch er em Vater gange.* b) *[Em Vater gi helfe] isch er gange.*
 PRT help is the.DAT father gone the.DAT father PRT help is he gone
 ‘He’s gone to help his father’

3. 2. *The syntax of go.* We follow previous work (Schönenberger & Penner 1995, van Riemsdijk 2002) to some extent in assuming that the *go*-construction has been integrated into the Verb Projection Raising system. Positional variation as in (2) therefore reduces to the positional options in VPR:

- (9) a) *Er hät wele [VP es Buech läse]. → Er hät [es Buech] wele [VP __ läse].*
 he has wanted a book read he has a book wanted read

However, we differ from cited work in not treating the *go*-construction as some kind of verb doubling or copying in a technical sense: The two verbal elements, i.e. the matrix verb + *go*, are syntactically independent. This is a necessary consequence of the fact that *go* also occurs after motion verbs other than ‘go’ or ‘come’, i.e. also after ‘run’ or ‘send’. Furthermore, we will show that the *go*-construction contains less structure, just a VP (as opposed to a vP or TP in VPR, cf. den Dikken 1996).

3.3. *The go-construction and VPR as base-generation.* We follow den Dikken (1996) in adopting a right-branching structure for VP- and clausal complements of verbs. However, we do not derive positional variants as in (2/9) by means of movement. Rather, we argue in favor of base-generation as there are no movement effects: As long as the arguments of the lowest verb occur in canonical order, we neither get freezing effects nor the usual semantic effects of scrambling (like no focus projection; the *go*-construction/VPR can thus be unified with the Third Construction [Wöllstein-Leisten 2001]):

- (10) a) *Was_i gaat de Hans [___i für Lüüt] [go [VP öppis Persöönlichs frööge]] ?*
 what goes the John for people PRT something personal ask
 ‘What kind of people is John going to ask something personal?’ CH
 b) *Er gaat de Muetter [go es BUECH chauffe].*
 he goes the.DAT mother PRT a book buy focus projection possible

However, once the arguments occur in non-canonical order, movement effects emerge:

- (11) **Was_i gaat [___i für Lüüt] de Hans [go [VP öppis Persöönlichs frööge]] ?*
 what goes for people the John PRT something personal ask

We will show that these facts can also be captured under base-generation if the approach of Neeleman & van de Koot (2002) is adopted where arguments can be checked off in any order. The freezing effects follow under the CED-theory of Müller (2008) where last-merged specifiers of a phase are intransparent, a view that is compatible with base-generation.

References

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