

High Applicatives in Icelandic Adjectival Constructions

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Ditransitives across languages and frameworks

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Introduction

- In this talk, we investigate apparent dative arguments of adjectives from the perspective of applicative theory.
- We propose that Icelandic allows a kind of “low-high” ApplP structure, even though it does not generally have high ApplP.
- The generalization is that v may take an ApplP complement, but Appl itself may take either a DP or PredP complement.

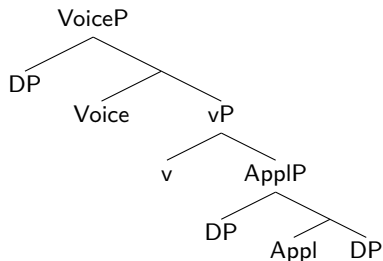
Applicative Theory

- The applicative theory of ditransitives holds that certain arguments are not arguments of the verb, but of an Appl head (Marantz 1993, Pylkkänen 2002).
- This idea was later extended to a variety of arguments, and Appl heads were proposed to be responsible for many dative arguments in Romance, Germanic, and beyond, even outside of ditransitives.

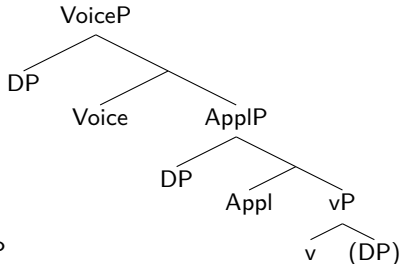
The structural height of applicatives

- A distinction is frequently made between “high” and “low” applicatives (McGinnis 2001, Pylkkänen 2002, Cuervo 2003)
 - Also called Event/Individual applicatives (Ingason 2016)

(1) Low/Individual Applicative



(2) High/Event Applicative



The structural height of applicatives

- The high/low distinction is traditionally understood to have semantic consequences.
 - Low applicatives relate individuals (entities) to individuals — typically a possessive relation.
- (3) I gave Mary the book.
→ Mary is now in the possession of the book.
- High applicatives relate individuals to events.
- (4) *John held Mary the bag.
→ Ungrammatical sentence in English (and Icelandic).
- An equivalent sentence is grammatical in some languages.
 - On the intended reading, Mary benefits from John holding the bag — English and Icelandic would use a PP here.

High applicatives

- Wood (2015) argues that Icelandic verbal structures do not in general allow high applicatives.
- Icelandic indirect objects of verbs are syntactically low applicatives, even though they may be semantically high.

- (5) a. Hún gerði mér **greiða**.
she did me.DAT favor.ACC
- b. Hún gerði mér **óleik**.
she did me.DAT disservice.ACC

- The boldfaced DPs refer to events, so Appl is semantically high (applying to events) but syntactically low (attaching to a DP) (see Marantz 2005).
- Note also that the complement affects the interpretation (here beneficiary vs. maleficiary).

Applicatives of adjectives

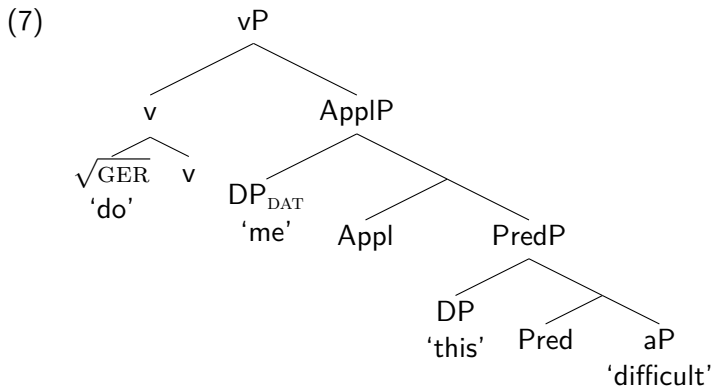
- Ingason (2016), however, has argued that Icelandic applicatives are not limited to verbs, and the range of applicative structures in Icelandic is still an open question.
- Consider the example in (6), where Appl seems to attach to a small clause (PredP).

(6) Hann gerði mér þetta **erfitt**.
he did me.DAT this difficult

- Notice that in (6), it is the predication “this (be) difficult” that conditions the meaning of the dative.

The structure of adjectival applicatives

- We would like to propose the following structure:



The structure of adjectival applicatives

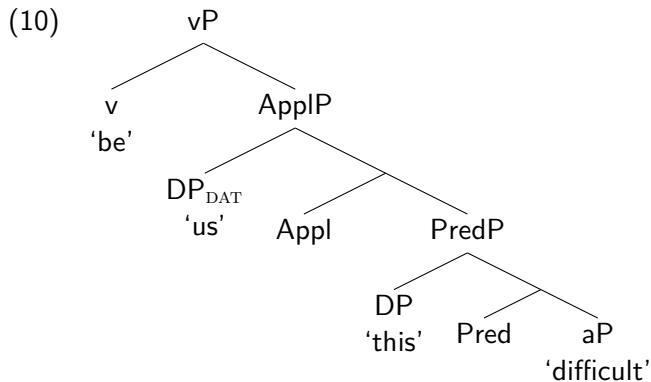
- This structure is different from the applicative structures we saw before.
 - Even though ApplP is selected by v , Appl does not take a DP object but PredP.
 - This is semantically a high applicative and syntactically not a typical low applicative.

The structure of adjectival applicatives

- Interestingly, this structure can also appear when *v* is realized as a light copula ‘be’, and there is no external argument.

- (8) Hún var okkur góð.
she was us.DAT good
‘She was good to us.’
- (9) Þetta var okkur erfitt.
this was us.DAT difficult
‘This was difficult for us.’

The structure of adjectival applicatives



Extensions

- Since the Appl we have been looking at embeds a PredP, we might expect Appl to be possible with a wider range of PredPs.

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- Since the Appl we have been looking at embeds a PredP, we might expect Appl to be possible with a wider range of PredPs.
- In fact, that seems to be the case: adjectival passives and nominal predicates are possible as well.

Applicatives of adjectival passives

- Some roots are compatible with an ApplP when they are adjectival passives, but not when they are verbs.

- (11)
- a. Þessi gögn eru (okkur) að eilífu glötuð.
these data.NOM are (us.DAT) forever lost
 - b. Bankinn glataði (*okkur) þessum gögnum.
the.bank lost (*us.DAT) these data.DAT
 - c. Þessum gögnum var (*okkur) glatað.
these data.DAT was (*us.DAT) lost
 - d. *Okkur var glatað þessum gögnum.
us.DAT was lost these data.DAT

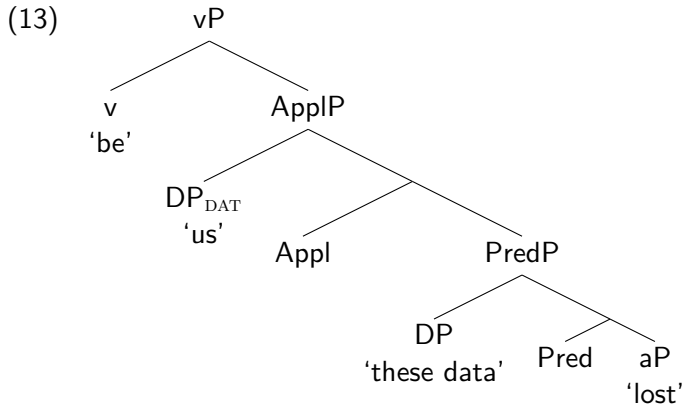
Applicatives of adjectival passives

- Some roots are compatible with an ApplP when they are adjectival passives, but not when they are verbs.

- (12) a. Þetta er (mér) hulið.
this.NOM is (me.DAT) hidden
'This is hidden (to me).'
- b. Jón huli (*mér) þetta.
Jón hid (*me.DAT) this
'Jón hid this (from me).'

Applicatives of adjectival passives

- Our structure helps us understand this, assuming that the theme in such cases is introduced as a subject of PredP.



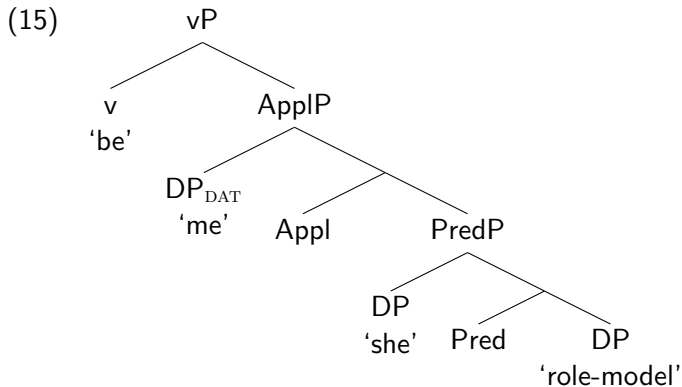
Applicatives of nominal predicates

- There are plenty of examples where instead of an aP in the PredP we have a DP (see, e.g., Jónsson 1997–1998, Ingason 2016).

- (14) a. Hún var mér fyrirmynd.
she was me.DAT role-model
'She was a role-model/example to me.'
- b. Þetta var okkur hvatning til að gera betur.
this was us.DAT motivation for to do better
'This was a motivation for us to do better.'

Applicatives of nominal predicates

- We assume the same structure as before, but with a DP predicate instead of an aP.



Semantic Restrictions

- Interestingly, not all predicate adjectives and DPs can occur with an ApplP.

(16) Hann var (*mér) ljóshærður.
he.NOM was (*me.DAT) blonde-haired

(17) Hann var (*mér) morðingi.
he.NOM was (*me.DAT) murderer

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- What distinguishes the cases that work from the cases that don't?

Semantic Restrictions

- We suggest that the cases that work treat the dative as a center of evaluation of the predicate.
- This only works for predicates whose truth can vary according to different evaluators.
- Thus, adding an evaluative adjective can allow a DP predicate that would otherwise be marked or unacceptable.

- (18) a. Hún var okkur ??(góður) kennari.
she was us.DAT ??(good) teacher
- b. Þetta var okkur ??(erfið) lífsreynsla.
this was us.DAT ??(difficult) life.experience

Semantic Restrictions

- Adding an evaluative adjective can allow a DP predicate that would otherwise be marked or unacceptable.

- (19) a. Petta var henni eftirminnilegt.
this was her.DAT memorable
'This was memorable for her.'
- b. Petta var henni *(eftirminnilegur) tími.
this was her.DAT *(memorable) time
'This was a memorable time for her.'

Semantic Restrictions

- Another way to improve these examples is to introduce something like ‘as’, which yields a kind of ‘quality of N’ reading.

- (20) a. Hún var mér sem kennari.
she was me.DAT as teacher
- b. Hann var mér sem faðir.
he was me.DAT as father
‘He was like a father to me.’

- In fact, to the extent that speakers allow sentences like this without the *sem* ‘as’ present, this is the kind of reading they get.

Semantic Restrictions

- These considerations support the view that ApplP attaches on top of PredP.
- It is the entire predication that is evaluated by (or relativized to) the applied argument.
- For example, 'he' in 'He was me.DAT (like) a father' might only have the characteristics of a father from the perspective/experience of the applied argument.

Semantic Restrictions

- These considerations support the view that ApplP attaches on top of PredP.
- It is the entire predication that is evaluated by (or relativized to) the applied argument.
- For example, 'he' in 'He was me.DAT (like) a father' might only have the characteristics of a father from the perspective/experience of the applied argument.
 - He might not strictly speaking be a father at all!
- That predication, then, only holds relative to the evaluator.

Semantic Restrictions

- Interestingly, comparative adjectives can also introduce a dative DP representing the standard of comparison.

- (21) a. Hún var (*flestum / *mér) hávaxin.
she was (*most.DAT / *me.DAT) tall
- b. Hún var flestum hávaxnari.
she was most.DAT taller
'She was taller than most (people).'

Conclusion

- We argued in this talk that Icelandic allows a kind of “low-high” ApplP structure (even though it does not generally have high ApplP).
- *v* may select an ApplP complement (as in “regular” low ApplP structures), but Appl itself may take either a DP or PredP complement.
- Further research: Why can either the dative or the nominative move to subject position? Why is there a strong preference for the nominative?

Extensions

- One might consider extending the analysis to structures with a PP, such as (22).

- (22) a. Þetta var þér ekki til framdráttar.
this was you.DAT not to advantage
'This was not to your advantage.'
- b. Þessi aðgerð er ykkur til skammar.
this operation is you.DAT to shame
'This operation is shameful for you.'

- However, Ingason 2016 has provided some indications that the dative originates lower in such cases, inside the PP.

Extensions

- Similarly, in (23), it's possible that the dative originates as part of the nP containing the body-part nouns (Wood & Livitz 2012; Myler, Sigurðsson & Wood 2016).

- (23)
- Mér er illt (í maganum).
me.DAT is bad (in the.stomach)
'My stomach feels sick.'
 - Mér er kalt (á höfðinu).
me.DAT is cold (on the.head)
'My head feels cold.'
 - Konunni er sorg í hjarta.
the.woman.DAT is sorrow in heart
'The woman has sorrow in her heart.'

- For now, we leave these cases for future research.