

### 1. Introduction

C-agreement is widely attested in West Germanic languages and dialects (cf. Haegeman 1992, Van Koppen 2005 among many others). An example from a dialect of Dutch is provided in (1).

- (1) **Datt-e** we toffe jongens zijn, dat wille me wete. Rotterdam Dutch  
 that-<sub>INFL</sub> we great boys are that want we know.  
 ‘That we are great boys, that is what we want to know.’

This form of C-agreement was assumed to be restricted to SOV-languages (cf. Zwart 1993). However, in Midwest vernacular variants of American English (a SVO-language) a construction similar to C-agreement exists, which we label the *alls-construction*.

- (2) **All-s Jim and Carol** want to do is stay at home. Midwest AE  
 (3) **All-s I** know about Mike and Dena is that they are pretty old. Midwest AE

We seek to answer a global and a local issue: From a more global perspective we explore to what extent the *alls-construction* resembles C-agreement in other West Germanic dialects. Second, locally, we investigate what formal features license this phenomenon.

### 2. C-agreement vs. the *alls-construction*: similarities

Examples (2) and (3) are typical instances of the *alls-construction*. The C°-related element *all* carries an *s*-ending. The *alls-construction* shares several properties with C-agreement in the West Germanic SOV-languages (henceforth referred to as C-agreement): (i) it is sensitive to the feature specification of the embedded subject. It appears with first and third person subjects, but not with second person subjects as illustrated in (4). (ii) it is sensitive to adjacency (cf. Carstens 2002). When the subject and *all* are not adjacent, the *s*-ending cannot appear (see (5)).

- (4) ?? **All-s you** want to do is drink coffee. Midwest AE  
 (5) \*/?? **All-s that I** know about Joe and Kelly is that they smell bad. Midwest AE

### 3. C-agreement vs. the *alls-construction*: differences

Apart from the similarities between C-agreement and the *alls-construction*, there are also differences: (i) In contrast to C-agreement, the *s*-inflection of the *alls-construction* does not appear on the complementizer *that* or on any other C°-related element (see (5)). (ii) The *s*-inflection of the *alls-construction* does not appear on the finite verb in inversion contexts, unlike what is the case with C-agreement (see (6)).

- (5) \*/?? **All that-s I** know about Joe and Kelly is that they smell bad. Midwest AE  
 (6) \* **Does I** ever behave like an idiot? Midwest AE

### 4. The history of the *alls-construction*

Diachronically the *alls-construction* hails from the Early Modern English structure “all as that is...”. The consequential *alls-construction* is then clearly the result of phonological reduction; However, the data suggest that grammaticalization has occurred with regards to this construction enabling it to be licensed by formal features. As indicated by the contrast between examples (2-3) and (4) above, *alls* appears when the subject is either 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person. A subject in 2<sup>nd</sup> person results in a highly marked structure. Furthermore, as displayed in examples (7)-(8) below, the *alls-construction* can be licensed by a definite DP (7), but not by an indefinite DP (8) or a bare indefinite (9).

- (7) ? **Alls the bar** down the road does is make money on the weekends. Midwest AE

## C-agreement or something close to it: the *alls-construction*

- (8) ?? **Alls a chair** can do is put you to sleep. Midwest AE  
(9) \* **Alls restaurants** are these days is expensive. Midwest AE

The fact that *alls* can only occur with a restricted set of subjects is unexpected when this construction involves phonological reduction. Therefore, we assume that the form *alls* is no longer regarded a phonologically reduced form of the more complex *all as that*. Rather, based on the similarities it displays with C-agreement, we assume that the form *alls* has grammaticalized into C-agreement in this vernacular of American English.

### 5. The analysis

We argue that the *s*-ending on the *alls-construction* is inflection. The analysis we provide is similar to the one proposed for C-agreement by among others Carstens (2002).  $C^{\circ}$  possesses uninterpretable phi-features and functions as a Probe seeking to establish an *Agree* relation with a lower item possessing interpretable phi-features (Goal) for feature valuation. The c-command domain of Probe  $C^{\circ}$  contains the subject which has interpretable phi-features and hence is a suitable Goal. *Agree* establishes a relation between  $C^{\circ}$  and the subject. This relation is spelled out as C-agreement. To account for the fact that 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns and indefinites cannot license the *alls-construction*, we propose that the feature triggering agreement is [-addressee]. Second person pronouns have a [+addressee]-feature and hence do not trigger agreement. For indefinites we argue that  $D^{\circ}$  is defective with regards to the vocative feature [addressee]. Furthermore, as alluded to by Richards (2005) indefinite DPs are unspecified for [person] which explains the inability of these to occur in tandem with the *alls-construction*.

The inflection in the *alls-construction* only appears on the quantifier *all* and in contrast to C-agreement in the West Germanic SOV-languages not on the complementizer *that* or on the finite verb. We reduce this difference to variation in the position of phi-features in the CP-domain. We argue that in West Germanic SOV-languages the C-agreement is lower in CP (Rizzi's 1997 [FinP]), i.e., on Fin-complementizers like *that* and also on the finite verb (which only raises to  $Fin^{\circ}$ ). On the other hand, the *alls-construction* in Midwestern American English occurs higher in CP (Rizzi's [ForceP]) and not on Fin-complementizers and also not on finite verb. This typological distinction of the structural position of phi-features in CP is also attested by Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen (2002).

Probes are usually heads and not XPs. The *s*-inflection in the *alls-construction* seems to appear on a XP. In this construction the Probe is a head, but the phi-features of this head are spelled out on the XP in its specifier (*all*). Strikingly, this is also the case with C-agreement in West Germanic SOV-languages when  $Fin^{\circ}$  is not lexically realized (cf. Zwart 1993).

### 6. Conclusion

We conclude that the different properties exhibited by C-agreement and the *alls-construction* are a reflection of typological differences. C-agreement in the West Germanic SOV-languages is a reflex of an agreement relation between a lower  $C^{\circ}$  and the subject. The *alls-construction* in Midwestern American English however, spells out the relation between a high  $C^{\circ}$  and the subject.

### 7. References

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