The Icelandic Causation of Experience Construction
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This paper examines a Causation of Experience (CEx) construction in Icelandic (1) whose properties have escaped attention and which contrasts with a superficially similar construction in English. We argue that Icelandic noun phrases share the property of clauses that dative experiencers are merged in an nP-internal Spec,ApplP position when the predicate has the appropriate semantics, as in the theory of clausal applicatives (McGinnis 2001; Cuervo 2003; Pylkkänen 2008).

Data: The CEx construction (1) relates a causing event to a caused experience event where the experiencer can be expressed as a dative nP-internal argument. Its passive variant has the experiencer raised to subject position and the causing event expressed in an obligatory by-phrase. Alternatively, CEx can be headed by an intensional operator til in which case causation is not guaranteed. This variant can surface as an adjunct (2) or as a predicate.

(1) a. Dansinn var stelpunum göð skemmtun (CEx Predicate)  
   dance.the.NOM was girls.the.DAT good entertainment.NOM  
   ‘The dancing entertained the girls well’

   b. Stelpunum var göð skemmtun *(af dansinum)  
   girls.the.DAT was good entertainment.NOM *(by dance.the) (CEx Predicate-Passive)  
   ‘The girls were well entertained by the dancing’

(2) Þeir dönsuðu [(stelpunum) til (*stelpunum) skemmtunar (stelpunum)]  
   they danced [(girls.the.DAT) for (*girls.the.DAT) entertainment.GEN (girls.the.DAT)]  
   ‘They danced for the girls’ entertainment’ (Intensional CEx Adjunct)

The DAT forms a constituent with til and the nominal, as shown by its ability to raise as a unit to fill the initial V2 position, (3), as well as clefting and Q/A tests.

(3) [(stelpunum) til skemmtunar (stelpunum)] dönsuðu þeir  
   [(girls.the.DAT) for entertainment.GEN (girls.the.DAT)] danced they

Intensional CEx (2) is a DP, not a PP: We analyze til ‘for’ as a D head due to its syntactic properties. Several pieces of evidence speak against a PP analysis of the CEx adjunct in (2): (i) While P stranding is possible in Icelandic (Thráinsson 2007:346), as til in (4), til cannot be stranded in Intensional CEx (5). A DP analysis predicts this because Ds cannot be stranded in Icelandic.

(4) a. (?) Miðnættis.GEN dönsuðu þeir til en þá hættu þeir.  
   (?) midnight danced they to but then stopped they

   b. Hvaða endaloka aðlar María að dansa til? (Endaloka alheimsins)  
   which final moment plans Mary to dance to? (End of the universe)

(5) a. * Skemmtunar stelpunum/hverra spiluðu þeir Guns ‘n’ Roses til  
   *entertainment.GEN girls.the.DAT/whose.DAT played they Guns ‘n’ Roses for

   b. * Skemmtunar/hvers spiluðu þeir Guns ‘n’ Roses stelpunum til?  
   *entertainment.GEN/whose.GEN played they Guns ‘n’ Roses girls.the.DAT for

(ii) A PP analysis would require a construction-specific EPP movement to Spec,PP, which is unavailable for GEN DPs, whereas movement to Spec,DP is independently needed for contrastive GEN possessors. (iii) Also, the dative can be echo-questioned in Intensional CEx, but cannot move out of it (6). DP is a more natural locality domain than PP (note the stranding facts).

(6) (*Hverjum) dönsuðu þeir [(hverjum) til skemmtunar (hverjum)]?  
   (*whom.DAT) dönsuðu þeir [(whom.DAT) for entertainment.GEN (whom.DAT)]?  
   ‘Whose entertainment did they dance for’
nP-internal ApplP: We propose the structure in (7) for (Intensional) CEx. The non-intensional variant is a bare nP where the dative argument can raise to Spec,TP in the passive. The syntax of the D head resembles its clausal parallel, infinitival T. Arguments with default noun phrase subject case (GEN) and definiteness are impossible (8) like NOM and tense are lacking in infinitival clauses.

(7) (Intensional) CEx construction:

(8) Þeir dönsuðu stelpunum/*stelnannal til skemmtunar(*innar)
    They danced girls.the.(DAT/#GEN) for entertainment(*.the)

We show that the theta-role borne by the DAT is restricted to experiencers/benefactives/malefactives, supporting an applicative analysis; e.g. agents are impossible, (6). Unlike other DP-associated datives in Icelandic, e.g. poetic dative possessors (Thráinsson 2007:95–96), they do not alternate with genitivies (excluding irrelevant special cases), which supports our analysis.

(9) * Þeir dönsuðu óvininum til eyðileggingar
    * they danced enemy.the.DAT for destruction
    Intended: ‘They danced for the enemy’s destruction’

The DAT experiencer in CEx (1) is an object in (1a) and a subject in (1b), confirmed by standard subject tests in Icelandic (Zaenen et al. 1985), typical of active/passive alternations. The causing event of CEx appears in a by-phrase, which is obligatory unlike Icelandic clausal by-phrases. We hypothesize that CEx may only be compatible with an event identity Voice head (cf. Pylkkänen 2008 on Japanese adversity constructions). This head requires the causing event to be identified before its existential closure which explains the obligatory by-phrase.

Implications: The status of til reflects delicate distinctions of functional elements in DP (cf. Kayne 1993 on English of as D/P). We discuss the implications of CEx for Icelandic DPs and more generally the cross-linguistic licensing of arguments in the noun phrase.

References