On Case Licensing of Infinitival Subjects in Middle and Modern English*

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This paper attempts to account for the distribution of to-infinitives with lexical subjects in Middle and Modern English in terms of their Case licensing, within the framework of the minimalist program. After identifying two classes of to-infinitives whose subjects are accusative and nominative, respectively, the historical changes in the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to are examined on the basis of to-infinitives as verb complements. Then, it is argued that accusative subjects are licensed by to in to-infinitives as complements to adjectives and nouns, due to its prepositional nature that it retained until the sixteenth century. On the other hand, to-infinitives with nominative subjects, which were first attested in the fourteenth century, are shown to be categories of CP, with C responsible for nominative Case assignment under the system of Case/agreement based on the C-T configuration. Among them are the exclamatory and absolute infinitives, which are argued to have survived until quite recently because of their same sorts of illocutionary force as finite clauses.

1. Introduction

PE (Present-day English) allows to-infinitives with lexical subjects that are not introduced by the complementizer for, only if they are selected by a limited class of so-called “ECM (Exceptional Case Marking)” verbs. On the other hand, it has been observed by a number of linguists that ME (Middle English) and ModE (Modern English) had a freer distribution of to-infinitives with lexical subjects than PE, in that they could appear in various contexts without for or ECM verbs.
This paper attempts to account for the distribution of to-infinitives with lexical subjects in ME and ModE in terms of their Case licensing, within the framework of the minimalist program advocated by Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2004). The proposed account depends on the changes in the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to, together with the system of nominative Case assignment based on the C-T configuration.

Let us begin by reviewing the distribution of to-infinitives with lexical subjects in ME and ModE, which come in two varieties depending on their case forms. The first class consists of to-infinitives whose subjects are accusative (objective), as illustrated in (1) with their functions and the relevant section numbers in Visser (1966):

(1)  

a. complement to adjectives (§ 911)  
   it were better pee to haue it pan to lacke it  
   (1443 Pecock, Reule Crysten Rel. 46 / ibid.: 964)  

b. complement to nouns (§ 912)  
   Certis, it were wondir me to haue pis singular 3ift  
   (c1445 Pecock, Donet 5. 8 / ibid.: 966)

As discussed by Fischer (1988) among others, these constructions had as their origins to-infinitives preceded by matrix benefactive arguments that are distinctively dative in OE (Old English):

(2)  

Hit is swiðe earfoðe æ̂niʒum to ðeowienne twam  
   it is very difficult anyone (DAT) to serve two  
   hlafordum  
   lords  

According to Fischer, the loss of the morphological distinction between accusative case and dative case in EME (Early Middle
English), as well as the establishment of SVO order, led to the reanalysis of the matrix benefactive argument as the subject of the following to-infinitive. One of the arguments comes from examples like (3), where the inanimate DP preceding the to-infinitive cannot be interpreted as a matrix benefactive argument, but only as an infinitival subject:

(3) a. Hit is ri3t ... Felons inome handhabbing For to it is right feloniously taken theft for to suffer jugement

suffer judgement

(c1250 Floris & Bl. (in Emerson MER p. 42) 29 / ibid.)

b. What profite is it wallis to schyne wiP preciose stonys what profit is it walls to shine with precious stones
and crist to die for hunger in pe pore man?

and Christ to die for hunger in the poor man

(1443 Pecock, Reule Crysten Rel. 384 / ibid.: 966)

Although it is difficult to determine when these constructions became possible as a result of reanalysis from examples like (2), it seems plausible that the relevant reanalysis took place in the thirteenth century, when the morphological distinction between accusative case and dative case was lost (which is abundantly documented by Allen (1995)) and evidence like (3) came to be attested. Then, these constructions were replaced by constructions with the complementizer for in the sixteenth century (Visser (1966)):

(4) a. It was verye needefull and necessarye for him to take a Pilot

(1582 N. Lichefield, tr. Castanheda's Conq. E. Ind. vi. 16 / ibid.: 969)

b. it is the use in Rome, for all men whatsoever to weare their haire short
Next, turning to the second class of to-infinitives with lexical subjects, Visser (1966) identifies several contexts where to-infinitives take nominative subjects, among which the following four types are discussed here (see subsection 4.2.2 for comments on the exclamatory and absolute infinitives):

(5)  

a. subject (§ 905)  
thou to loue that loueth not the, is but grete foly  
(1470–85 Malory, M. d’A. (Sommer) 237. 16 / ibid.: 957)

b. after than (§ 971)  
A heavier taske could not haue beene impos’d, Than I to speake my griefes vnspeakeable  
(1590 Shakesp., Com. Err. I. i. 31 / ibid.: 1027)

c. exclamatory infinitive (§ 985)  
I to bere a childe that xal bere mannys blyss: ho mythe have joys more?  
(1450 Coventry Myst. viii. 77 / ibid.: 1048)

d. absolute infinitive (§§ 992–3)  
and if they may not accorde, ze and I to be umpere, for we stande bothe in like cas  
(1422–1509 Paston Lett. (Gairdner) I. 120 / ibid.: 1055)

In contrast to to-infinitives with accusative subjects discussed above, it is hard to consider that to-infinitives with nominative subjects as in (5) emerged as a result of reanalysis, because there were no strings of the form [nominative DP to-infinitive] in OE that would serve as an input to reanalysis. In fact, Visser (1966) cites some examples of infinitives preceded by nominative subjects in OE and EME, but Warner (1982) states that they are better understood as subjunctive clauses or elliptical finite clauses, and that the real cases of infinitives with nominative subjects came to be attested in the late fourteenth
century and their number is very small before 1450. Fischer (1988) also observes that their appearance was later than that of to-infinitives with accusative subjects, comparing the two classes of to-infinitives in impersonal contexts like (1) and (5a) (see also Manabe's (1989: 77) statistics supporting this observation). The timing of the loss of nominative subjects is different among the four types of to-infinitives in (5), which will be discussed in subsection 4.2.

2. Previous Studies

There have been some generative studies on to-infinitives with lexical subjects in ME and ModE, two of which are discussed in this section. First, Arimura (1982) argues that the grammar of ME had a rule of Case assignment in which to as well as Tense can assign nominative Case, yielding to-infinitives with lexical subjects. Later, the rule was replaced by that of PE in which Tense is the only element that can assign nominative Case. Although he attempts a unified analysis of to-infinitives with lexical subjects, the different case realizations on lexical subjects between the two classes of to-infinitives in (1) and (5) cannot be explained under his analysis. Moreover, it is not entirely obvious how to can assign nominative Case in ME and ModE, but not in OE and PE; his specific proposal mentioned above on nominative Case assignment is an ad hoc stipulation, unless it is based on some independently motivated properties of to that are present in ME and ModE, but not in OE and PE.

Second, Nagasaki (1988) argues that the kinds of Case assigned to infinitival subjects are determined in ME and ModE by the configurations where the relevant to-infinitives appear, basically along the lines of Reuland's (1983) analysis of PE gerunds. According to her, adjectives and nouns assign accusative Case to the head to of to-infinitives as their complements, which transmits the Case to infin-
itival subjects, yielding constructions like (1). As for to-infinitives with nominative subjects, the matrix INFL assigns nominative Case (through transmission by to) in the types of to-infinitives in (5a, b); the exclamatory and absolute infinitives in (5c, d) are ungoverned, and hence their subjects are assigned nominative Case in the same manner as nominative absolutes. However, Nagasaki’s assumption that adjectives and nouns are responsible for accusative Case assignment is highly dubious, given the widely accepted view that they ceased to assign inherent Case in EME (Kemenade (1987)).

Furthermore and more generally, the two previous studies examined here cannot fully account for the facts that (i) OE lacked to-infinitives with lexical subjects, (ii) there is a difference in the timing of the rise of to-infinitives with accusative subjects (the thirteenth century) and to-infinitives with nominative subjects (the fourteenth century), and (iii) the exclamatory and absolute infinitives survived longer than the other types of to-infinitives with lexical subjects (Visser (1966)).

3. The Category and Formal Features of the Infinitive Marker To

This section discusses the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to in the history of English, based on the distribution of lexical subjects in to-infinitives as verb complements. This in turn provides a basis for the account of the development of to-infinitives with accusative and nominative subjects as in (1) and (5) to be presented in section 4.

3.1. The Rise of Lexical Subjects in To-Infinitives as Verb Complements

Let us briefly review the distribution of lexical subjects in to-infinitives as verb complements in the history of English. It is a well-known fact of OE that lexical subjects were allowed in bare infinitive complements to causative and perception verbs, but to-
infinitives never had lexical subjects except in glosses and translations under Latin influence (Kageyama (1992)). Then, to-infinitives with lexical subjects came to be observed after causative verbs in EME (Los (1999)) and after verbs of thinking and saying in LME (Late Middle English) (Geldereren (1993) and Warner (1982)), as illustrated in (6a, b) respectively:

(6) a. ich make he make the knight to pierce God's side with sharp spears ord spear's point (CMJULIA 110. 238 / PPCME2: M1)

b. I have knowe vertu to have gon out of me (Wyclif, Luke 8. 46 / Gelderen (1993 : 61))

However, there is a crucial difference between to-infinitives with lexical subjects in EME and LME; according to Tanaka's (forthcoming) investigation based on PPCME2, there are no instances of second passives (where infinitival subjects move to the matrix subject position under passivization) in EME. On the other hand, eight instances of second passives are found in LME (two with causative verbs and six with verbs of thinking and saying). This indicates that second passives became available only in LME (see also Los (1999) for the same conclusion), which will suggest different Case properties of infinitival subjects in EME and LME. The following subsections discuss the distribution of lexical subjects in to-infinitives as verb complements just reviewed, in terms of the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to.

3.2. OE

Given the following two observations, it seems plausible that to was a preposition with an inherent Case feature in OE (Jarad (1997) and Tanaka (1994, 1997)). First, to assigned dative Case to the following infinitive like normal prepositions, and it was usually
realized as the dative form of the infinitival morpheme -enne. Second, it was possible to coordinate to-infinitives and normal PPs:

\[(7) \text{ Ut eode to his gebede oððe to leornianne mid his geferum out went to his prayer or to study with his comrades (Bede 162.7 / Kageyama (1992: 99))}\]

Given that category identity is imposed on coordinated elements, examples like (7) will indicate that OE to-infinitives were categories of PP headed by to as a preposition. These observations will lead us to postulate the following feature specification of to in OE, where the presence/absence of the relevant formal features is indicated by +/− for ease of exposition of its subsequent developments:

\[(8) \text{ The Infinitive Marker To in OE} \]

−EPP (Extended Projection Principle), +inherent Case (=P)

In addition, I will adopt a series of assumptions made by Tanaka (1994) for “FP (faire-par) constructions" that were attested in OE and ME (see Kayne (1975) for this terminology and corresponding constructions in French). As illustrated in (9), FP constructions are infinitival complements to causative and perception verbs without lexical subjects, where the unexpressed infinitival subjects are vague in reference or recoverable from context (see also Arimura (1990) and Denison (1993)):

\[(9) \text{ he let halgian þet mynster} \]
\[\text{he let hallow the minster (O. E. Chron. an. 1094 / Visser (1969: 1356))}\]

Tanaka (1994) claims that FP constructions have their external arguments suppressed, which is neatly captured by assuming that the infinitival morpheme -an in OE and -en/e in ME) functions as an external argument, as Baker, Johnson, and Roberts (1989) propose for the passive morpheme. For the sake of compatibility with the
framework of the minimalist program, suppose that the infinitival morpheme bears Case and \( \emptyset \)-features like normal arguments, functioning as an external argument by entering into an Agree relation with an appropriate probe.

Now, consider how the present assumptions account for the possibility of FP constructions in OE and ME, based on the following structure of (9) (see Tanaka (forthcoming) for arguments that bare infinitive complements were categories of vP lacking functional projections in early stages of English):

\[
(10) \ [v_P \ \text{he} \ [v' \ \text{let-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ [v_P \ \text{halg-ian-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ \text{pet mynster}]])]
\]

In (10), which represents the derivational stage of (9) where the matrix vP has been constructed, the \( \emptyset \)-features of the matrix v agree with the \( \emptyset \)-features of the infinitival morpheme -ian, deleting the former and the Case feature of the latter. Thus, the derivation converges with the infinitival morpheme functioning as the external argument of the infinitive in (10). Moreover, the present analysis sheds light on the loss of FP constructions in the history of English. According to Visser (1969), FP constructions became obsolete in the sixteenth century, which coincides with the loss of the infinitival morpheme (Roberts (1993)). This correlation can be explained as follows: in the periods of English when the infinitival morpheme was present, the external argument of infinitives could be realized as the infinitival morpheme under an Agree relation with the matrix v; once the infinitival morpheme was lost, it came to be obligatorily realized as a lexical DP, leading to the loss of FP constructions.

We are now in a position to explain the absence of lexical subjects in OE to-infinitives as verb complements:

\[
(11) \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & *[v_P \ \text{DP1} \ [v' \ \text{V-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ [pp \ \text{to} \ [v_P \ \text{DP2} \ [v' \ \text{V-enne-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ldots]])]])]]) \\
\text{b. } & [v_P \ \text{DP} \ [v' \ \text{V-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ [pp \ \text{to} \ [v_P \ \text{V-enne-v} \ [v_P \ \text{tv} \ldots]])]])]
\end{align*}
\]

In (11a), which corresponds to the structure of to-infinitives with
lexical subjects that were impossible in OE, to assigns dative Case to the infinitival morpheme -enne, which in turn functions as the external argument of the to-infinitive. This is possible because the infinitival morpheme occupies the head of the complement of to, so the two elements are regarded as being in a head-complement relation, satisfying the necessary condition on inherent Case assignment that has been assumed since Chomsky (1981). In fact, inherent Case assignment to the infinitival morpheme by to is obligatory, since the following infinitive usually appeared with dative case marking in OE. Note also that to cannot assign dative Case to the infinitival subject DP2, because the latter occupies the specifier of the complement of the former. Consequently, the Case feature of DP2 remains unchecked, or if there is an Agree relation between the matrix v and DP2, there would be two external arguments, DP2 and the infinitival morpheme, for one θ-role provided by the to-infinitive. This will cause the derivation to crash, thereby accounting for the absence of lexical subjects in OE to-infinitives. Therefore, the only possible structure of OE to-infinitives is the one without lexical subjects in (11b), which yields control infinitives (see also (12b)/(14b)).

3.3. ME

3.3.1. EME

A number of changes took place in to-infinitives in EME, some of which are relevant for determining the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to. First, the dative form of the infinitival morpheme -enne as witnessed in OE was lost in EME, with the result that the infinitival morpheme was reduced to the form -en/e in both bare infinitives and to-infinitives (Jarad (1997)). Given the discussion above that it enters into an Agree relation with the matrix v in FP constructions, it follows that an Agree relation with v and Case licensing by to gave rise to the same morphology in EME. This is plausibly taken as evidence for the shift of to from an inherent Case
assigner to a structural Case assigner, which is consonant with the
general tendency in this period that prepositions began to assign
structural Case (Allen (1995) and Kemenade (1987)).

Second, the rise of for to infinitives in EME is traditionally
accounted for in terms of the weakening of the meaning “direction/
purpose” of to as a preposition: for was introduced to reinforce that
meaning expressed by to in OE. This will provide a motivation for the
emerging functional nature of to. Since another cluster of changes
took place in to-infinitives in LME that support the establishment of
the functional nature of to (see below), it seems plausible that to was
on its way to becoming completely functional in EME, which would
be captured in terms of the optionality of its EPP feature. Thus, the
feature specifications of to in EME will be as in (12), where the first one
is represented as a category T/P in that to bears the properties of both
T (EPP) and P (structural Case):

(12) The Infinitive Marker To in EME
    a. +EPP, +structural Case (=T/P)
    b. −EPP, +structural Case (=P)

Now, consider how to-infinitives with lexical subjects as verb
complements became available in EME, based on the feature
specification of (12a):

(13) [T/P-P DP [T/P' to [vP tDP [v V-en-v [VP tv ...]]]]]

In (13), which represents the derivational stage where the to-infinitive
has been formed, to enters into an Agree relation with the infinitival
subject DP that originates in [Spec, vP], deleting the Case feature of
the latter. This is possible because to has a structural Case feature in
EME. Then, DP raises to [Spec, T/P-P] to satisfy the EPP feature of to,
leading to the convergent derivation with (13) embedded as a verb
complement. It should be noticed under this analysis that the Case
licensing of infinitival subjects is done within to-infinitives in EME.
This has a desirable consequence of explaining the absence of second passives in this period mentioned in subsection 3.1: since the Case feature of infinitival subjects is deleted under an Agree relation with to, they are no longer active for agreement with the matrix T even under passivization.

3.3.2. LME

In LME, there occurred a number of changes in to-infinitives, some of which provide a clue to the category and formal features of the infinitive marker to. First, the infinitival morpheme was weakened to the form -e; moreover, it was occasionally not realized as an overt morpheme. However, this does not mean the complete loss of the infinitival morpheme: it was still active, and so was the Case feature of to originally responsible for its licensing. Second, pro-infinitives and split infinitives became available in LME, which Gelderen (1993) takes as evidence for the establishment of to as a functional category T. Especially relevant is the rise of split infinitives, which would indicate that the Case feature of to, which represents its prepositional nature, began to disappear in LME. No matter how adjacency effects on Case assignment induced by prepositions are accommodated within the framework of the minimalist program (e.g. *John spoke to angrily Mary.), to cannot assign structural Case to any elements within vP in split infinitives, where there is some material like adverbs between to and vP. Putting these observations together, the feature specifications of to in LME will be as follows, where (14a, b) are inherited from EME and (14c) is a new member represented as a functional category T that consists only of EPP:

(14) The Infinitive Marker To in LME
   a. +EPP, +structural Case (=T/P): (12a)
   b. −EPP, +structural Case (=P): (12b)
   c. +EPP, −structural Case (=T)
With the introduction of the feature specification of (14c), the following derivation of to-infinitives with lexical subjects became possible in LME:

\[
(15) \quad [vP \ DP1 [v' V-v [vP tV [TP DP2 [t' to [vP tDP [v' V-e-v [vP tV . . . ]]]]]]]
\]

Prior to the derivational stage in (15), the infinitival subject DP2 raises to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature of T. Then, the derivation proceeds to the matrix vP, where the matrix v enters into an Agree relation with DP2, deleting the Case feature of the latter. This is the same derivation as ECM infinitives in PE, which contrasts sharply with that of EME to-infinitives in (13) where the Case licensing of infinitival subjects is conducted by to. Given this, the rise of second passives in LME observed in subsection 3.1 follows immediately: if the Case feature of infinitival subjects cannot be deleted by the matrix v under passivization, they are active for agreement with the matrix T and can raise to the matrix subject position to satisfy its EPP feature.

3.4. ModE

As mentioned in subsection 3.2, the infinitival morpheme was lost in the sixteenth century, which means the loss of nominal properties of infinitives. This will naturally lead us to assume that the Case feature of to originally responsible for the licensing of the infinitival morpheme was lost at the same time. It follows that to completely established its status as a functional category T in the sixteenth century, leaving (14c) as its only feature specification:

\[
(16) \quad \text{The Infinitive Marker To after ModE} \\
\ \ +\text{EPP}, \ -\text{structural Case (=}T): (14c)
\]
4. The Development of To-Infinitives with Lexical Subjects

With the changes in the category and formal features of the infinitive marker *to* in the previous section, let us consider the development of *to*-infinitives with accusative and nominative subjects as in (1) and (5).

4.1. To-Infinitives with Accusative Subjects

Recall that *to*-infinitives with accusative subjects as complements to adjectives and nouns were attested from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, when they were replaced by constructions with the complementizer *for* like (4). First, their absence in OE is straightforward: OE *to*-infinitives never had their external arguments realized as lexical DPs, regardless of whether they are complements to verbs, adjectives, or nouns, since the infinitival morpheme always functions as an external argument under inherent Case assignment by *to* as a preposition. Of course, constructions like (2) were allowed where the dative DP is the benefactive argument of the matrix adjective.

Then, the reanalysis of a matrix benefactive argument as an infinitival subject took place in the thirteenth century, which was possible because of the feature specification of (12a). Namely, constructions like (1) can be derived in the same manner as (13), where the infinitival subject enters into an Agree relation with *to* bearing a structural accusative Case feature. This yields *to*-infinitives with accusative subjects in the absence of *for* or ECM verbs. Later in the sixteenth century, these constructions disappeared with the loss of the prepositional nature of *to*, including the feature specification of (12a)/(14a). Consequently, the complementizer *for* was introduced to license accusative subjects in *to*-infinitives, yielding constructions like (4).

4.2. To-Infinitives with Nominative Subjects

As observed in section 1, *to*-infinitives with nominative subjects
as in (5) came to be attested in the fourteenth century. Among the feature specifications of to in (14) available in LME, (14a, b) are simply irrelevant in which to assigns accusative Case to the infinitival subject and the infinitival morpheme, respectively. It must therefore be that to-infinitives with nominative subjects are based on the feature specification of (14c), which yields ECM infinitives as in the manner of (15). But a question will arise how to with [+EPP, -structural Case] participates in nominative Case assignment.

4.2.1. Nominative Case Assignment under the C-T Configuration

In order to answer this question, let us introduce the system of Case/agreement based on the C-T configuration, which was developed in Tanaka (2003) by pursuing and elaborating the lines of research suggested by Chomsky (2004). Unlike the standard assumption that T is the only element responsible for Case/agreement licensing of subjects (Chomsky (2000, 2001)), that paper argued (among other things) that C as well as T is involved in nominative Case assignment. One of the key assumptions is that C bears uninterpretable θ-features and enters into a checking relation with the subject in [Spec, TP], deleting its Case feature. Let us consider the following representation of a finite clause:

(17) \[\text{CP } \text{C } \text{[TP John } [\text{T } \text{T} \text{[VP tDF [V read-v [VP tv the book]]]]]]}\]

Prior to the derivational stage in (17), the θ-features of T agree with the θ-features of John, deleting the former, and John raises to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature of T. Under the proposed system, the Case feature of John is not deleted under an Agree relation with T, because feature deletion on DP can only be effected by a phase head, i.e. by C under the C-T configuration in this case. Then, the derivation proceeds to the level of CP, where the θ-features of C agree with the θ-features of John, deleting the former and the Case feature of John.
4.2.2. Nominative Case Assignment in To-Infinitives

We are now in a position to examine how nominative Case is assigned to lexical subjects in to-infinitives of ME and ModE like (5), where a ϕ-complete T is absent and hence simply irrelevant for nominative Case assignment. Given the above discussion that such to-infinitives involve to with [+EPP, −structural Case], it might be conjectured that C is responsible for nominative Case assignment, in conformity with the present system of Case/agreement.

Let us consider the four types of to-infinitives in (5) to see that they are indeed CPs. First, topicalization may occur in to-infinitives as subjects and to-infinitives after than, as illustrated in (18a, b) respectively. Moreover, (19) shows that to-infinitives as subjects may involve wh-movement:

(18)  
    a. [hit I to beleue] is but fantecy, Ne had I hir sain in the bath only
    (c1475 Partenay (EETS) 3485 / Visser (1966: 957))
    b. It is better that we slee a coward than [thorow a coward alle we to be slayne]
    (1470–85 Malory, M. d'A (Sommer) I. xvi. 60 / ibid.: 1027)

(19)  Of him I gathered honour, — [Which he to seek of me again], perforce — Behoves me keep at utterance
    (1611 Shakesp., Cymb. III. i. 72 / ibid.: 957)

Assuming that topicalization and wh-movement target the CP domain, these examples will provide support for the CP status of the types of to-infinitives in (5a, b).

Second, the exclamatory infinitive in (5c) occurs in root clauses, expressing emotions like astonishment, incredulity, longing, sorrow, and so on. Like other root clauses, it seems to be associated with some sort of illocutionary force, typically exclamative or interrogative. This is explicitly shown by the use of the exclamation mark and
question mark in (20a, b) respectively, with the latter involving coordination with the interrogative clause:

(20)  

(a) She, in spite of nature ... To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!

(1604 Shakesp., Othello I. iii. 96 / ibid.: 1048)

(b) Why am I made a stranger? why that sigh, And [I not know the cause]?

(1682 Otway, Venice Preserved (Gollancz) III. ii. 83 / ibid.)

Given the natural assumption that C is a locus of illocutionary force that determines a clause type (Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2004)), this semantic property of the exclamatory infinitive would suggest that its category is CP.

Third, the absolute infinitive in (5d) occurs in root clauses as well as embedded clauses, typically used as arrangements, contracts, ordinances, prescriptions, wills, and so on. As pointed out by Koma and Hirose (1993), it is sometimes accompanied by the finite complementizer that, as shown in the following example of a conditional:

(21)  

yf they were not a (=in) powere to pay redy money, [that then they to fynd suffycyant suerty to pay the money ...]

(PL 182. 9-11 / Koma and Hirose (1993 : 268))

Moreover, they observe that the absolute infinitive may be coordinated with a finite clause involving a modal, arguing that it is associated with a modal interpretation:

(22)  

they shulde not pay no money ..., and [he to saue them harmeles ...]

(PL 225. 27-9 / ibid.: 267)

Based on these observations, it seems plausible that the absolute infinitive is a CP with the illocutionary force of declarative corresponding to that of a finite clause with a modal.
Thus, there is good reason that the types of *to*-infinitives in (5) with nominative subjects are CPs, where there is no $\emptyset$-complete T. This would lead us to conclude that C is responsible for nominative Case assignment, in accordance with the present system of Case/agreement. In particular, the fact that the exclamatory and absolute infinitives bear the sorts of illocutionary force typically associated with finite clauses would suggest the presence of a finite C as a nominative Case assigner. With this in mind, let us consider the following representation of *to*-infinitives with nominative subjects:

$$(23) \quad [CP \, C \, [TP \, DP \, [\_ \, to \, [vP \, tDP \, [\_ \, V \cdot V \, [vP \, tv \ldots ]]]]]]$$

Prior to the derivational stage in (23), the infinitival subject DP raises to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature of T. Then, C enters into an Agree relation with DP, deleting the $\emptyset$-features of the former and the Case feature of the latter. Since the relevant probe is a finite C, it licenses nominative Case on DP, yielding *to*-infinitives with nominative subjects.\(^8\)

Finally, consider in this light the development of the types of *to*-infinitives in (5) in the history of English. Since *to* had a Case feature in OE and EME as one of its prepositional properties (see (8) and (12)), *to*-infinitives with nominative subjects were simply impossible in these periods. Then, their emergence in the fourteenth century is explained as a consequence of the feature specification of (14c) without a Case feature; this served to create a configuration for nominative Case assignment by merging an infinitival TP with a finite C, yielding *to*-infinitives with nominative subjects. Later in the sixteenth century, the types of *to*-infinitives in (5a, b) were replaced by constructions with the complementizer *for*, as illustrated in (24a, b) respectively, perhaps because of the markedness of merging an infinitival TP with a finite C, which would in turn account for the fact that they were short-lived in the history of English:
(24) a. For us to levy power Proportionate to th\'enemy, is all unpossible


b. which is more easy for hym to do . . . than for the king to rescue theym

    (1534 St. Th. More, Lett. (Delcourt) XIV. 110 / ibid.: 1027)

On the other hand, the exclamatory and absolute infinitives in (5c, d) were not replaced by constructions with for and survived until quite recently perhaps as rhetorical devices (Visser (1966)). This would be due to the fact that they bear the same sorts of illocutionary force as finite clauses, which would have prevented the introduction of for as a nonfinite complementizer and instead have helped the otherwise strange combination of an infinitival TP and a finite C to survive until quite recently.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explain the distribution of to-infinitives with lexical subjects in ME and ModE, paying attention to how their accusative/nominative Case is licensed. In the first class of to-infinitives as complements to adjectives and nouns, their accusative subjects were argued to be licensed by the infinitive marker to with a structural Case feature that was available from EME to the sixteenth century. In contrast, it was claimed that the second class of to-infinitives whose subjects are nominative became possible in LME by merging an infinitival TP with a finite C, which is responsible for nominative Case assignment under the system of Case/agreement based on the C-T configuration. Finally, it was shown that the exclamatory and absolute infinitives in the latter class survived until quite recently because of their illocutionary force similar to that of finite clauses.
NOTES

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1. This problem also holds of Koma’s (1982) unified analysis of the types of to-infinitives in (1) and (5a, b), where to assigns Case to infinitival subjects under the condition that it is c-subjacent to the matrix INFL (see Rouveret and Vergnaud (1980) for the notion of c-subjacency).

2. Amano (1993) also presents an explanation of the different case realizations on lexical subjects between the two classes of to-infinitives in (1) and (5), in terms of the configurations where they appear. However, his postulated structure of to-infinitives of the form [sc NP [vp to VP]] seems highly problematic, because it has the curious property that to as a preposition does not project; see also subsection 4.2.2 for arguments that the types of to-infinitives in (5) are categories of CP, contrary to his small clause analysis.

3. (6a) is taken from the second edition of The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English (henceforth, PPCME2).

4. See Kageyama (1992) and Tanaka (1997) for arguments that OE to-infinitives did not have PRO (as well as lexical DPs) as their subjects.

5. One might wonder whether to-infinitives with accusative subjects became available in other contexts than complements to adjectives and nouns, once they were established by reanalysis from constructions like (2), together with the feature specification of (12a). However, judging from the large collection of the relevant examples in Visser (1966), accusative subjects seem to have been extremely rare in the types of to-infinitives in (5). This might be related to the fact that the relevant to-infinitives either undergo movement (to the subject or topic position, depending on the proper analysis of sentential subjects) as in (5a), or are somehow independent of the matrix clause as in (5b-d) (see subsection 4.2.2 for comments on the exclamatory and absolute infinitives). Under Chomsky’s (2001, 2004) conception of phases as syntactic objects that are relatively isolable, they would be analyzed as phases that are categories of CP, which is consistent with the proposal in subsection 4.2.2 that their subjects are assigned nominative Case.
6. See Fischer (1988) among others for arguments that for was reanalyzed as a complementizer in the sixteenth century.

7. See Tanaka (2003) for a number of arguments for this system of Case/agreement, including subject omission in English finite clauses: it is only possible in the absence of C and nominative subjects become obligatory in contexts where CP is projected. See also Chomsky (2004) for a similar argument from Greek subjunctives that nominative Case is assigned only in the presence of C.

8. This paper assumes that finiteness is a feature on both C and T, with the same value typically specified on the two heads in a given clause. Then, the types of to-infinitives in (5) will be regarded as having the intermediate status between finite and nonfinite clauses, in that they exceptionally involve merger of an infinitival TP with a finite C.

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