Are agreement markers in Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS) really AUX?

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Main claims

◆ ÖGS agreement markers (AgrM)
  ◆ Do not show AUX-like behavior
  ◆ Can occur with inflected agreeing verbs
  ◆ Are always optional
  ◆ Appear in many syntactic positions

◆ Our proposal
  ◆ AgrM as head (optional), functional projection AgrMP
  ◆ Located between VP and TP
Outline

- **Overview**: Sign Language agreement markers (AgrMs) – what is their syntactic status?
- ÖGS AgrMs
  - Arguments against AUX
- Alternate syntactic analysis
  - AgrM head functional projection AgrMP
  - Located between VP and TP
Sign Language agreement markers

- Function: indicate argument structure
- Form: path movement/facing
- Language specific differences:
  - Phonological form
  - Syntactic/semantic properties
  - Lexical source

- Are they “Auxiliaries“?

Auxiliaries?

“AUX is defined as a category that is distinct in its syntactic behavior from the behavior of other syntactic categories - labeling a constituent that includes elements expressing the notional categories of Tense and/or Modality“. (Akmajian et al. 1979:2)

- Sign Language AgrMs primarily mark agreement
- Not Tense or Modality

Arguments re AUX status

Against:
- Different developmental sources (DET, Noun)
- Restricted to animate arguments (S-selection)

In Favor:
- Devoid of lexical meaning
- Cannot stand on their own
- Obligatorily co-occur with main verb (except Gapping)
- Verb-like behavior

ÖGS agreement markers

- Pre- and post-verbal position
- Sentence second position after Subject
The data

- Corpus data various sources (1999-2017)
- Individual interviews (2015)
- Group interview (2015)
Findings against AUX status

- Semantically constrained (only animate object)
- Verb-like behavior (similar in form and function)
- Optionality (Unlike some other SLs which require when verb doesn’t show agreement)
- Redundancy (Unlike other SLs, may occur with completely inflected agreeing verb)
- Variability (HS choice across signers, contexts)
Positional similarities between AgrMs & Modals (= AUX)

- Both in post-verbal and sentence-second position (after Subject).
- Both in main and embedded clauses, questions, declaratives, and wh-clefts.
Differences between AgrMs & Modals (= AUX)

- AgrMs:
  - Only in transitive contexts
  - Only animate objects
  - No incorporation of negation
  - Can occur in pre-verbal position
  - No doubling
  - Allow both Subject and Object drop
    - M only Subject
Previous analyses

- Pfau and Steinbach (2013) DGS:
  - Agreement auxiliary PAM
  - PAM inserted in AgrO; Verb in situ
  - No Double agreement marking

- Rejected for ÖGS:
  - ÖGS allows Double agreement marking

Previous analyses

- Rathmann (2003) DGS:
  - Auxiliary-like morphemes
    - AgrM cliticizes to Object

- Rejected for ÖGS:
  - AgrMs in positions non-adjacent to Object
  - IX can intervene between AgrM and Object
  - Object can topicalize without AgrM (separate nodes)
  - Covert arguments allowed (Object drop removes “host”)
  - No phonological assimilation (no evidence of cliticization)
  - AgrM in post-Verbal position (not next to Object)
Previous analyses

- Meir (2003) and Börstell (2017) ISL/Scandinavian SLs:
  - AgrMs = Object pronouns

- Rejected for ÖGS:
  - AgrM cannot be used instead of Object referent NP

Previous analyses

- Lourenço (2014) Libras:
  - AgrMs = Topic markers

- Rejected for ÖGS:
  - AgrMs in basic, pragmatically unmarked sentences
  - No specific non-manuals co-occur with AgrMs
  - Word orders more varied than Libras

Lourenço, G., & Wilbur, R. B. (Manuscript in preparation). Are plain verbs really plain?: Location as the exponent of agreement in Brazilian Sign Language.
Previous analyses

- Pavlič (2016) SZJ:
  - Applicative morpheme
    - AgrMs used in transitive contexts involving agent and beneficial

- Rejected for ÖGS:
  - AgrMs occur with non-benefactives

Previous analyses

 Steakbach and Pfau (2007) DGS:
  - Emphasis or focus marker
    - Double agreement marks emphasis/focus

 Rejected for ÖGS:
  - Double agreement marking in non-emphatic contexts

Previous analyses

◆ Pfau and Steinbach (2008) DGS:
  ◆ “Tun-insertion“
    ◆ Uninflected agreeing verb in VP; PAM inserted in AgrO

◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
  ◆ AgrMs restricted to animate objects
  ◆ Double agreement marking permitted

Proposed analysis

- AgrM projects functional phrase AgrMP
  - below TP and above AgrSP and AgrOP
- Head can be filled by AgrM
- AgrM features are path, facing, handshape
- Location (and facing) features provided by co-indexing with spatial agreement features in AgrS/AgrO
Tree

Spec,CP  C'
Tree

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  CP
     /
    Spec,CP
   /      \
 C'       C  TP
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Tree

Spec,CP

C

C'

TP

i_Spec,TP

T'
Possible orders

- S-O-AgrM-V
- S-AgrM-O-V
- S-O-V-AgrM
- S-M-O-V-AgrM
- S-O-M-V-AgrM
- S-O-V-AgrM-M
- S-O-V-M-AgrM
- S-M-O-AgrM-V
- S-M-AgrM-O-V
- S-O-M-AgrM-V
- S-AgrM-O-M-V
- S-AgrM-O-V-M
- S-AgrM-O-V-M
ÖGS Modals

- Prefer sentence second position (after Subject)
  - T -> C movement
- May also appear
  - Sentence-final
  - Sentence-initial, if Subject dropped
  - May double to final position

Will present a few examples of AgrM and M(odal)

ÖGS AgrM with Modals

ÖGS AgrM with Modals

AgrM

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Conclusion

- ÖGS AgrM not category AUX
- Proposed approach
  - AgrM has its own projection
  - Accounts for optionality, redundancy and variability of ÖGS AgrMs
- AgrMs indicate who is doing what to whom
- Need to start developing a SL typology of AgrM
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