Da,da,da—(In)finite possibilities

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<u>Abstract</u>: Traditionally, finiteness is associated with the presence of Tense and it is typically encoded in the C-domain (e.g., Rizzi's 1997 FinP). While this view may be sufficient for languages like English, it quickly faces problems when languages without (or with less) infinitives are considered. In this talk, we follow approaches that dissociate finiteness from (semantic) tense but we maintain that finiteness is nevertheless a syntactic phenomenon (and not just a morphological effect), indicating the presence of particular functional domains, but not necessarily only the CP domain.

Regarding a range of syntactic properties, embedded finite CPs are less transparent than their non-finite counterparts. Wurmbrand (2001 et. seq.) argues for a three-way distinction of embedded infinitival domains: tenseless (1a), future irrealis (1b) and propositional simultaneous (1c) infinitives. Assuming Grohmann's (2003) 3-way division of clausal domains—an operator domain, Ω (~CP), an inflectional domain, Φ (~TP), and a thematic domain, Θ (~vP)—the three types of infinitives minimally correspond to the following domains: tenseless infinitives involve a Θ domain, irrealis future infinitives involve Θ and Φ domains, and propositional infinitives involve all three clausal domains. This division successfully captures cross-linguistic differences with respect to, e.g. clitic climbing, cross-clausal scrambling, and long object movement.

(1) a. *Leo tried/began/managed/forgot to eat (*tomorrow).*   tenseless
     b. *Leo decided/planned/promised to eat (tomorrow).*   irrealis, future
     c. *Leo claimed to be eating (*tomorrow).*   propositional, simultaneous

Turning to languages lacking infinitives (or using them not as frequently), we observe that all three types of embedded clauses can be expressed via (morphologically) finite clauses, as is shown for Serbo-Croatian in (2). If finiteness is (solely) a matter of the CP domain, SC embedded clauses should be non-transparent and behave like the 'strongest' boundaries, finite CPs—this is not the case. Instead, we argue that exactly the same three clausal domains exist in Serbo-Croatian, as evidenced by the distribution of a number of syntactic and semantic properties: clitic climbing, scrambling, long SE passive, the availability of infinitives, NPI-licensing, *wh*-ordering effects, different adverb positions, and aspectual restrictions. The conclusion thus is that finiteness can exist in the absence of a tense and/or C-domain.

(2) a. *Jovan je   pokušao da čita   / pročita   knjigu.*
         Jovan AUX tried   DA read.3.SG.PRES.IMPFV / read.3.SG.PRES.PFV book
         'Jovan tried to read the (entire) book.'

     b. *Jovan je   odlučio da čita   / pročita   knjigu.*
         Jovan AUX decided DA read.3.SG.PRES.IMPFV / read.3.SG.PRES.PFV book
         'Jovan decided to read the (entire) book.'

c.   *Jovan je tvrdio da čita   / *pročita   knjigu.*
Jovan AUX claimed DA read.3.SG.PRES.IMPFV / *read.3.SG.PRES.PFV book
'Jovan claimed to be reading the book.'   IMPERFECTIVE
'Jovan claimed to have finished reading the book (right then).'   PERFECTIVE
[Perfective is possible in certain generic/habitual interpretations; e.g., *he claimed to read a book every time/whenever…*]

To capture this observation, we propose that finiteness is a property of different syntactic domains, and that differences among languages are the result of different [±FINITE] values of the Ω, Φ, and Θ domains. In a language like Serbo-Croatian, finiteness 'spreads' to the lower Φ and Θ domains, whereas in English the Θ domain must be non-finite. Conversely, in English, the Ω domain can be finite or non-finite, whereas the Ω domain in Serbo-Croatian can only be realized as finite. This leads to a gradient view of finiteness, which is supported by the cross-linguistic diversity in that domain.