

“Me give a paper at PLC18!?” On Adult Root Infinitives

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Adult Root Infinitives (ARIs; cf. Etxepare & Grohmann 2005, Jespersen 1924) constitute a pragmatically marked sentential construction that exhibits the following discursive and grammatical properties: (1) they raise incredulity towards a previous utterance (‘!?’) (cf. Fillmore *et al.* 1988); (2) they are followed by an expression of dissent; (3) they are non-embeddable; (4) their verb is nonfinite and lacks subject-agreement; (5) their subject bears obligatory focal stress (caps), and they have a final rising intonation (^[↑]); (6) in English, their subject case is accusative; (7) the subject and its predicate may be optionally connected by a coordinator (e.g. German *und* ‘and’; cf. Lambrecht 1990); (8) they come in verbless variants; and (9) they are a cross-linguistically attested phenomenon (cf. Etxepare & Grohmann 2007).

(1) I think John likes books... – *Him like books!?*

(2) Him like books!? *Never!*

(3) *I doubt [him like books]!?

(4) a. Him like-INF-∅ books!? [*ARI*]
b. He like-PRES-*s* books. [*Declarative*]

(5) a. HIM like books^[↑]!?
b. #HIM/Him like books^[→/↓]!?

(6) *[?]He like books!?

(7) Der (und) Bücher mögen!? [*German*]
‘Him (and) like books!?’

(8) John an idiot/stupid!? No!

(9) a. Io sparare a qualcuno!? [*Italian*]
‘Me shoot at someone!?’

b. Ja groźna!? [*Polish*]
‘Me dangerous!?’

The grammatical peculiarities (3)–(9) pose a challenge to a syntactic theory that seeks intra- and trans-linguistic generalisation. Against the background of a minimalist syntactic theory (cf. e.g. Chomsky 1995), I argue for a syntactic analysis of the ARI analogous to that of other common sentence types (*contra* Etxepare & Grohmann 2005, Progovac 2006).

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