Accusativus cum Infinitivo Clauses in Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*

Many beginning Latin textbooks teach students that the normal constituent order in a Latin main clause is subject-object-verb (SOV). Yet, because the order of constituents in Latin is not, in fact, beholden to the constituents' syntactic roles, their linear order can, and does, vary. Of course, whatever the order of constituents, one still has recourse to the inflectional endings to identify syntactic roles.

But what are students to do if they encounter an *accusativus cum infinitivo* construction (henceforth, AcI)? Here, there is no nominative to search out, and locating the accusative instead will often not lead them to the subject. Exactly how are they to sort out the grammatical relations of the accusative arguments in competing sentences like *dico Brutum Caesarem occidisse* or *dico Caesarem Brutum occidisse*? If they assume that the constituents will thus follow an SOV order, they will correctly translate the first sentence but not the second. Ultimately, they must rely on historical context to resolve the ambiguity in the second example.

Fortunately, the fact that constituent order in Latin can encode pragmatic information (often given the catchall label "emphasis") has been a commonplace among classicists for some time. As early as 1844, Henri Weil had noted that altering the order of constituents in even simple Latin sentences could change the informational focus of an utterance. Modern linguistic research has further refined and deepened our understanding of Latin constituent order, but it has done so primarily at the main clause level. Indeed, a problem encountered by those trying to explain Latin constituent order in main clauses is that very rarely, in fact, do we encounter simple sentences like "Brutus killed Caesar." In connected Latin prose, after all, nominal constituents are regularly marked by some anaphoric device, often zero-anaphora (i.e.

dropped pronouns), and this is especially true of subjects. Thus, sentences like "he killed him," where both nominal constituents in English have explicit textual referents, in Latin are likewise uncommon. However, one benefit of investigating AcI clauses is that according to Latin grammatical rules, one must include a subject constituent in the AcI even if it is co-referential with the main clause. Although authors do not adhere to this "rule" without exception, the regularity with which explicit subjects occur in AcI clauses does allow us to gather more examples of clauses with both accusative subject and accusative object constituents and provides a productive avenue for investigation.

In this paper my goals will be to present the AcI data I have gathered from Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* and lay out some preliminary conclusions on how constituent order within Cicero's epistles functions, which to my knowledge is the first time such a project has been undertaken. While this work is a part of a larger project which investigates constituent order in AcI constructions in Latin prose, I believe that even in this truncated form it will be beneficial to the wider scholarly community. Cicero is a core Latin Republican prose author, one whose corpus is fortunately bountiful, and an author whom we know actively thought about the theoretical aspects of prose composition.

Fundamentally, I am approaching this project from the perspective of Functional Grammar and discourse pragmatics (Dik, 1997; Spevak, 2010). Therefore, in the first portion of my paper, I will briefly review this theoretical framework and elucidate some of the key concepts such as Topic, Focus, Theme, and semantic role(s).

The bulk of the paper will discuss the data gathering and sorting process and my provisional analysis. Because time is short, I will focus on investigating instances where the highest probability for syntactic ambiguity arises (i.e. where both a subject accusative and object

accusative are present), these examples will be restricted to active transitive infinitives, in which all three primary clausal constituents are present: accusative subject, accusative object, and infinitive. I will go through a handful of these individual examples, expanding on the various constituent orders.

It is my hope that this paper will motivate scholars of Latin prose and Latin linguistics to apply their findings from main clauses to subordinate clauses and to see the value that interrogating constituent order in *accusativus cum infinitivo* clauses can have. There is also a broader application of this work to Latin pedagogy whereby Latin instructors will be better able to explain to students the nuances of this deceptively tricky construction.

Bibliography

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