IF IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT IN: SUBJECT ACCUSATIVES IN PLAUTUS AND TERENCE[1]

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ABSTRACT: The accusative-and-infinitive construction in Latin is a type of non-finite subordinate clause with the subject in the accusative case and the verb in the infinitive. Latin infinitives are marked not only for voice, but also for relative tense; the perfect infinitive expresses anteriority, the present infinitive simultaneity, and the future infinitive posteriority. The subject accusative can sometimes be omitted. Most scholars have assumed that this is a colloquialism. However, omission occurs equally frequently across literary genres, and is more common with future than with present infinitives; these facts make it unlikely that register plays a role. My article shows that omission is most frequent among future active and perfect passive infinitives, that is, those forms which contain a participle marked for gender and number. The reason is that here the participle allows us to retrieve an omitted subject accusative more easily.

KEY WORDS: accusative-and-infinitive construction; ellipsis; register; participles.

Most modern linguists declare themselves to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Rules concerning split infinitives or the difference between *who* and *whom* are generally considered *passé*. These are issues for people writing letters to the more conservative newspapers, but surely we do not get agitated about them. Or do we?

Actually, I suspect that most of us do; maybe not in our first languages, where we would consider such attitudes pedantic, but almost certainly in the languages we learn later in life. In fact, the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive linguistics inevitably gets blurred here: a second-language learner will at first be

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[1]   This paper is an updated and slightly revised version of de Melo (2006).

restricted to a single variety of the language, and as soon as we consider the question of which variety should be selected for description in a textbook we enter the domain of prescriptive linguistics.

Latin has never ceased to be used, but at the same time it has not been anyone's native language for centuries. The unfortunate result is that among the plethora of grammar books there are hardly any which do not contain – more or less overtly – a number of prescriptive elements and value judgments. It is easy to label constructions that are rare in Cicero or Caesar as 'archaic', 'poetic', or 'colloquial'. Yet all too often the tendency to pigeon-hole usages means that scholars stop looking for different, sometimes more adequate explanations.

A case in point is the topic of this article, the occasional absence of subject accusatives in Plautus (ca. 254-184 BC) and Terence (ca. 185-159 BC), which is supposed to be a colloquialism.[2] The accusative and infinitive construction, or AcI for short, is normally described as a subordinate clause whose subject is in the accusative and whose verb is in the infinitive. This 'regular' type is well-known from the classical period and is also frequent in early Latin:

> (1) (Crito is looking for the house of the deceased Chrysis.) *In hac habitasse platea dictumst Chrysidem.* (Ter. *Andr.* 796) 'It was said that Chrysis used to live in this street.'

> (2) (An old man has doubts about a doctor's qualifications.) *Nunc cogito utrum me dicam ducere medicum an fabrum.* (Plaut. *Men.* 886-7) 'Now I am wondering whether I should say that I am bringing a doctor or a stonecutter.'

> (3) (Laches is talking about his son.) *Dixin, Phidippe, hanc rem aegre laturum esse eum?* (Ter. *Hec.* 497) 'Didn't I say, Phidippus, that he would take this badly?'

In all three examples, the superordinate verb is a form of *dicere* 'say'. The accusatives *Chrysidem* 'Chrysis', *me* 'me', and *eum* 'him' are the subjects of the subordinate clauses. The dependent infinitives, *habitasse* 'to have lived', *ducere* 'to bring', and *laturum esse* 'to be going to take it in a certain way', select their

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[2]   However, it is said to be regular (and thus stylistically neutral) if the same pronoun has already occurred in the clause so that the presence of a subject accusative would mean that the same form would be found twice; cf. Kühner and Stegmann (1962: i. 701).

tenses according to the temporal relationship between them and the superordinate verbs; the perfect infinitive is used for anterior events, the present infinitive for simultaneous ones, and the future infinitive for posterior ones.[3] In addition, the present infinitive can also be employed for posterior events in early Latin:

> (4) (A man is considering returning a slave-girl to the slave-dealer.) *Dixit se redhibere si non placeat.* (Plaut. *Merc.* 419) 'He said he would take her back if I don't like her.'

Redhibere 'taking her back' would of course take place after making a statement to that effect. The subject accusative is the reflexive pronoun *se* 'himself'.

In all the examples we have seen so far, the infinitives have overtly expressed subjects, and these are in the accusative. Now just as main clause subjects, which are in the nominative, can be left unexpressed if it is clear who or what is referred to, there are also examples of our infinitive constructions without subject accusatives;[4] I have again chosen forms of *dicere* as governing verbs:

> (5) (Chrysalus refuses to give any more advice.) *Neque ego hau committam ut, si quid peccatum siet, fecisse dicas de mea sententia.* (Plaut. *Bacch.* 1037-8) 'I won't take the risk that, if something has gone wrong, you say you acted on my advice.'

> (6) (Mercury has just been accused of lying.) *At iam faciam ut uerum dicas dicere.* (Plaut. *Amph.* 345) 'But I shall take care that you will say I'm telling the truth.'

> (7) (A captive is about to fool an old man.) *sed utrum strictimne attonsurum dicam esse an per pectinem nescio.* (Plaut. *Capt.* 268-9) 'But I don't know whether I should say that he is going to give him a close shave or a shave through the comb.'

> (8) (A servant asks Menaechmus what she can tell her mistress.) *Dicam curare?* (Plaut. *Men.* 538) 'Should I say that you will see to it?'

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[3]   I cannot discuss infinitives of the type *impetrassere* in this article, for which cf. de Melo (2007*b*).

[4]   It may sound odd to speak of an AcI or 'accusative and infinitive' if there is no accusative, but I have retained the term AcI in order not to complicate matters.

In none of these four examples is there a subject accusative. It is merely the context that tells us who is subject. Note that the subject accusative can be left out both when the subject of the superordinate verb and that of the infinitive are identical, as in (5), and when they differ, as in (6) to (8).[5]

Why is the accusative left out in these examples? Because subject accusatives are used so frequently in classical Latin, and presumably also because pupils learning Latin leave them out so often, their absence has come to be regarded as sloppy or even incorrect. School grammars treat bare infinitives instead of the accusative and infinitive as wrong; more scholarly works are more reserved, but still speak of a colloquialism, as a look at Hofmann and Szantyr (1965: ii. 362), Kühner and Stegmann (1962: i. 700-1), or Landgraf (1914: 129) shows. If this were correct, the bare infinitive ought to be restricted to colloquial registers. However, this does not seem to be true, as I shall argue in the following section. We are dealing with one of those cases where prescriptive and descriptive grammars have influenced each other: the usage was given a label which has negative connotations, and it has been regarded as wrong ever since. In the section after the discussion of register, I shall therefore adopt a discourse-based approach, which will turn out to yield better results. In this way I will also be able to explain some of the discoveries made by Sjögren (1906), Lindsay (1907), and Adams (1972), all of whom noticed a correlation between the tense of the infinitives and the absence of subject accusatives.

1. Is the absence of subject accusatives colloquial?

The only reliable way to determine the register of a form or construction is to examine its distribution patterns; a form or construction can be said to be colloquial if it is restricted to genres such as comedy, if it is frequent enough for this restriction to be statistically significant, and if there are synonymous expressions in other genres.[6] There can be no doubt that subject accusatives are often missing in the most colloquial passages of Roman comedy; but this absence is also typical of those passages in comedy which are in an elevated style:

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[5]   Kühner and Stegmann (1962: i. 701) point out that this is a strong argument that the construction should not be regarded as a Grecism. In Greek, omission of the subject accusative is very frequent if the two subjects are identical, but rare otherwise.

[6]   Cf. also Adams, Lapidge, and Reinhardt (2005: 3).

(9) (Tyndarus is about to be punished by his new master for saving his old one. He is in a defiant mood.) *Pol si istuc faxis, hau sine poena feceris, si ille huc rebitet, sicut confido affore*. (Plaut. Capt. 695-6) 'Really, if you do this, you will not have done so without punishment if he comes back, as I trust he will be back.'

The tone of the scene as a whole is solemn. Tyndarus knows that he is about to face severe punishment because he has helped his old master, but he prefers suffering from injustice to being guilty of it. The serious content of the passage has linguistic repercussions. Lindsay (1900: 273) notes that 'the metre, as well as the language, of a great part of the scene has more of the tragic than the comic style.' Note also the high-register form *faxis* 'you will have done' in the quotation itself; sigmatic futures in subordinate clauses function like future perfects, but convey an elevated tone as well.[7]

What is more important than the distribution over the various types of passages in comedy is the distribution over the various genres in early Latin. Colloquialisms are largely absent from tragedy, and if a construction is attested there, this is strong evidence that it is not a colloquialism. And indeed, subject accusatives are often omitted in tragedy, as a few examples will show:

(10) (Orestes is confident that he has done what is right.) *Id ego aecum ac iustum fecisse expedibo atque eloquar.* (Enn. *scaen.* 148 Jocelyn) 'I shall set out and say that I did this as something fair and just.'[8]

(11) (Ulysses, who has been wounded by Telegonus, is addressed by the chorus.[9]) *Tu quoque Vlixes, quamquam grauiter cernimus ictum, nimis paene animo es molli, qui consuetus in armis aeuom agere.* (Pacuv. *trag.* 259-62) 'You too, Ulysses, although we can see that you are heavily afflicted, are almost of too soft a spirit, you, a man used to spending his life under arms.'

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[7]   Cf. Happ (1967) on the register of sigmatic forms in general, and de Melo (2002: 167-8) on that of the sigmatic futures in particular.

[8]   Jocelyn (1967: 289) comments that the absence of a subject accusative will not lead to confusion because the context makes it clear who is being referred to. Here it is obvious that the subject of the infinitive is Orestes, even if we follow Warmington (1956: 271), who believes that the subject of the finite verbs is Apollo.

[9]   Cf. also D'Anna (1967: 268).

(12) (Teucer wants to prove his innocence to Telamon.[10]) *Numquam erit tam immanis, cum non mea opera extinctum sciat, quin fragescat.* (Acc. trag. 337-8) 'He will never be so savage that he will not become subdued when he knows that the man was not destroyed through my doing.'

(10) comes from Ennius. The omitted subject of the infinitive is the same as that of the finite verbs. In (11) from Pacuvius, by contrast, there is a difference of subjects: the subject of *cernimus* 'we can see' is the chorus, and that of *ictum* 'afflicted' is Orestes; note that not only the subject accusative has been left out, but also the copula *esse* 'be'. (12) from Accius is similar. The subjects are different and the infinitive is a perfect passive infinitive without copula.

Absence of subject accusatives occurs after the archaic period as well. One example from Livy should suffice here:

(13) (The crowds want Marcus Manlius Capitolinus to be released.) *Iam ne nocte quidem turba ex eo loco dilabebatur refracturosque carcerem minabantur.* (Liv. 6. 17. 6) 'By that time the crowd did not even go away from this place at night and they were threatening that they would break open the jail.'

This is a piece of prose in a neutral style. I cannot detect any colloquialisms. The first verb, *dilabebatur* 'it went away', is in the singular because it agrees with *turba* 'the crowd'. The next verb, *minabantur* 'they threatened', has the same group of people as subject, but is in the plural (*constructio ad sensum*). The infinitive, again without copula, has plural agreement as well and is without subject accusative.

The evidence I have presented is just a selection of examples I came across. The distribution patterns do not speak for a colloquialism. Thus, Lebreton (1901: 378), who mainly looked at Ciceronian data, was certainly right when he called this '*une construction vraiment latine et non pas une incorrection ou un hellénisme*'.

2. A discourse-based approach

If register is irrelevant for the presence or absence of subject accusatives, we have to look at other factors. Kühner and Stegmann (1962: i. 701) claim that

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10   For a more detailed discussion of the passage cf. Dangel (1995: 329).

the tense and voice of the infinitive do not matter either, but they do not present any data. However, several scholars who have examined individual authors claim that omission of subject accusatives is more frequent in some tenses than in others. Lindsay (1907: 73) states that omission is particularly frequent with present infinitives, but he does not give any evidence. Some data can be found in Sjögren (1906: 57), according to whom this phenomenon is not equally frequent with all types of present infinitives, but especially those which have future reference. At least in literary Latin, present infinitives with future force became very rare after the archaic period and therefore they play no role in studies dealing with classical Latin. Adams (1972: 371), looking at Tacitus' works, notes that in the *Histories* the reflexive *se* is left out quite frequently with future infinitives, while in the *Annals*, which were written later, the pronoun is often absent regardless of the tense.

Such tense-based asymmetries in the use of subject accusatives make it rather unlikely that we are dealing with register differences. But why should tense have an influence on whether or not there are subject accusatives? Is this not counter-intuitive? I shall argue below that there is a simple, discourse-based explanation for these tense-based asymmetries. First, however, a few general remarks seem in order. One of the Gricean maxims of conversation states that neither more nor less information than necessary should be given. If we assume that this maxim applies to AcI constructions as well, we can set up a simple hierarchy: noun phrase $<$ pronoun $< \emptyset$, where $x < y$ means that the entity referred to by y is more likely to be inferable than that referred to by x. I assume that speakers will sometimes be uncertain whether a noun phrase or a pronoun is more appropriate, or whether a pronoun or absence of a pronoun, but that there is no real choice between a noun phrase and total absence of a subject accusative. For this reason, I shall compare AcIs with pronouns to those without accusatives, but I shall leave AcIs with noun phrases out of the discussion.

With these remarks I have already begun asking what I should count in a study of AcI constructions and how I should categorize them, a topic I will go into in more detail now.

2. 1. How should AcIs be classified?

Counting and categorizing accusative and infinitive constructions may seem a dull but at least straightforward task. Unfortunately, it is not even always as straightforward as it appears to be. The first thing to note is that some nouns, like *res*

'thing', do not have much semantic content and are thus close to pronouns in that they are used for more inferable entities than the average noun. Some pronouns, on the other hand, are emphatic and thus unlikely to be left out, just like most nouns. For instance, if a pronoun like *is* 'this' is used contrastively, it can hardly be left out; other pronouns like *ipse* 'himself' are presumably inherently emphatic. What is more, relative pronouns can never be left out. This means that we have to modify the above hierarchy somewhat. I have treated all noun phrases as impossible to leave out and thus as irrelevant here. Similarly, I have treated all pronouns except for *is*, *hic*, *iste*, and *ille* in the same way. Where these four pronouns head relative clauses or other constructions, I have also treated them like nouns, that is, as impossible to leave out. Thus, I am merely contrasting simple *is*, *hic*, *iste*, and *ille* with lack of subject accusatives.

But we have not yet reached the end of the problems. When should we say that a subject accusative is absent? A few examples will demonstrate this difficulty:

> (14) (The master is needed for a financial transaction with a stranger. A slave said he would bring him along.) *Ego me dixeram adducturum et me domi praesto fore.* (Plaut. *Asin.* 356) 'I told him that I would bring him along and that I would be at home waiting.'

> (15) (An accusation levelled against Terence was that others wrote for him.) *Isti dicunt maleuoli, homines nobilis hunc adiutare assidueque una scribere.* (Ter. *Ad.* 15-16) 'Those malicious people say that members of the nobility assist him and constantly write together with him.'

> (16) (Philto's son wants to marry a girl, but she does not have a dowry. Two old men are discussing how to remedy the situation.) *Post adeas tute Philtonem et dotem dare te ei dicas, facere id eius ob amicitiam patris.* (Plaut. *Trin.* 736-7) 'Afterwards you should go to Philto and say to him that you are providing the dowry, that you are doing this out of friendship with her father.'

Example (14) is easy: there are two infinitives with the same subject, and the subject accusative, *me* 'I', is used twice. I classify examples like this as having two AcI constructions, each with a subject accusative. (15) is different. There are two infinitives, *adiutare* 'assist' and *scribere* 'write', both with the same subject, but the subject accusative *homines nobilis* 'members of the nobility' occurs only once.

Should we say that the second infinitive is an AcI without subject accusative? I have categorized both AcIs as having subject accusatives because they are co-ordinated with a connective, *-que* 'and'. In (16) there is no such connective and the subject accusative *te* 'you' occurs only once. In cases like this I have treated the first AcI as having a subject accusative and the second as being without one.

The infinitives themselves can be problematic too. In the tables below I distinguish between perfect, present, and future infinitives. Among the present infinitives I draw a further distinction: that between present infinitives with present force and present infinitives with future reference. How should *nouisse* 'know' and *odisse* 'hate' be treated? Semantically they are presents, yet morphologically they are perfects. Since I draw a semantic distinction between two types of present infinitives, those with present and those with future meaning, I have given preference to semantics here as well. I counted *nouisse* and *odisse* as presents rather than as perfects, but doing the opposite would not change the results greatly.

The voice of the infinitive also matters. Again, there are some problematic cases, for instance *perire* 'perish' and *sequi* 'follow'. The former is active in form, but usually substitutes for the passive of *perdere* 'destroy', while the latter is passive in form, but has active meaning. As will become apparent below, it is morphology rather than meaning that exerts influence on the omission of subject accusatives in the future and the perfect, and for this reason I classified *perire* as active and *sequi* as (medio-)passive, as against *nouisse* and *odisse*, where a classification based on semantic criteria was preferred.

Finally, I should point out that I have not counted all AcIs in Plautus and Terence. I have only looked at a sample, namely those dependent on twenty superordinate verbs: *adiuro* 'I swear', *aio* 'I say', *arbitror* 'I think', *audio* 'I hear', *autumo* 'I claim', *censeo* 'I think', *confido* 'I trust', *credo* 'I believe', *denego* 'I deny', *dico* 'I say', *interminor* 'I threaten', *iuro* 'I swear' (with *ius iurandum do* 'I give an oath'), *minor* 'I threaten', *nego* 'I deny', *polliceor* 'I promise', *promitto* 'I promise', *repromitto* 'I promise in return', *scio* 'I know' (without *scilicet* 'of course', which can also govern AcIs), *spero* 'I hope', and *uoueo* 'I vow'. All the present and future infinitives selected by these verbs can be found in de Melo (2004: ii. 50-82), where they are categorized with regard to tense, voice, and presence and absence of subject accusatives. Space does not allow me to list all the perfect infinitives here, but in the appendix at the end of this article I list the cases that might pose some problems and I state how I have classified them.

2.2. Data and Interpretation

Now that I have discussed what I count and how I classify what I count, I can finally present the data. Table 1 shows how many AcIs belong to each tense, and how often subject accusatives are absent:

Table 1: AcIs with and without pronouns classified according to tense

	With *is*, *hic*, *iste*, or *ille*	Without accusatives	Total	Percentage of AcIs without accusatives
Perfect	207	84	291	28.87
Present	405	109	514	21.21
Future	103	51	154	33.12
Present with future meaning	34	36	70	51.43

As we can see from this table, previous researchers were right: tense choice clearly matters for the presence or absence of subject accusatives. But why should this be the case? Does it have anything to do with the semantics of the tenses? If so, why is the accusative left out in around 20% of the tokens if there is a present infinitive, while perfect and future go together in that the accusative is left out in around 30% of the tokens? What semantic features are shared by perfect and future infinitives? And why is the accusative absent even more often, in half of the tokens, if the infinitive belongs to the present tense, but has future reference?

The patterns seem clear enough, but difficult to explain. This is why I have brought in another factor in table 2, namely voice; voice has never been considered in connection with subject accusatives, but it does make a difference:

Table 2: AcIs with and without pronouns classified according to tense and voice

	With *is*, *hic*, *iste*, or *ille*	Without accusatives	Total	Percentage of AcIs without accusatives
Perfect active	139	43	182	23.63

Perfect (medio-) passive	68	41	109	37.61
Present active	366	100	466	21.46
Present (medio-) passive	39	9	48	18.75
Future active	101	50	151	33.11
Future (medio-) passive	2	1	3	33.33 (insufficient data)
Present with future meaning, active	32	35	67	52.24
Present with future meaning, (medio-) passive	2	1	3	33.33 (insufficient data)

At first sight this table might seem to make things worse. The perfect active now patterns with present active and (medio-)passive; in all three combinations of tense and voice, omission of subject accusatives occurs in around 20% of the cases. The perfect (medio-)passive, however, does not pattern with its active counterpart, but with the future active; omission of subject accusatives occurs in around 35% of the cases here.

On closer inspection, though, the patterns turn out to make sense. I shall not discuss the future (medio-)passive infinitive and the present (medio-)passive infinitive with future force because in each case there are only three tokens. This leaves me with six combinations of tense and voice. It seems quite intuitive that a subject accusative can be left out more easily if the speaker assumes that the hearers will be able to identify the subject nevertheless; if there are doubts about the identifiability of the subject, the accusative will have to be used. If the infinitive is in the present active, present (medio-)passive, or perfect active, the subject accusative is left out in around 20% of the cases. In these 20% of the forms, the surrounding context is sufficient for the hearer to identify the subject without difficulty.

If the infinitive is in the perfect (medio-)passive or the future active, omission is much more frequent and can be seen in around 35% of all cases. Why should this be so? What makes it easier to identify the subjects of these infinitives? It is the morphology of the infinitives that helps in addition to the surrounding context:

(17) (Two men are discussing the marriage between one's son and the other's daughter.) *Desponsam quoque esse dicito.* (Ter. *Haut.* 866) 'Also say that she is engaged.'

(18) (Ampelisca was asked to get some water.) *Ego quod mihi imperauit sacerdos, id faciam atque hinc de proxumo rogabo. Nam extemplo, si uerbis suis peterem, daturos dixit.* (Plaut. *Rud.* 403-5) 'I will do what the priestess ordered me to do, and I will ask for water from here from the neighbourhood. For she said that if I were to ask in her name, they would give it immediately.'

In (17) we have a perfect passive infinitive and in (18), a future active infinitive. Each consists of a participle, which is often combined with the copula as in (17), but which can also stand on its own as in (18). Since participles are marked for gender and number, the likelihood that an addressee will be able to identify the subject increases greatly. In (17), the arrangements for the marriage are discussed, and the daughter is still on the addressee's mind. However, the last time she was referred to as *filia* 'daughter' was twenty lines before. Still, as the passive participle *desponsam* 'engaged' is marked as feminine singular, it is clear who is referred to. In (18), the neighbourhood is mentioned, but not the neighbours themselves. That they are the subject of the infinitive can be inferred not only from the the previous sentence, but also from the fact that the future participle *daturos* 'going to give' is marked as masculine plural.

Non-agreement in the future is quite rare; there are two types:

(19) (Casina fights against being married against her will.) *Per omnis deos et deas deierauit, occisurum eum hac nocte quicum cubaret.* (Plaut. *Cas.* 670-1) 'She swore by all the gods and goddesses that she would kill the man who she would sleep with this night.'

(20) (Ballio does not have a high opinion of Pseudolus.) *Vero in pistrino credo, ut conuenit, fore.* (Plaut. *Pseud.* 1060) 'But I believe he will be in the mill, as was agreed upon.'

In (19) the participle does not agree with the subject in gender – the participle looks like a neuter singular form, while the subject is feminine singular. This non-agreeing type, which was already remarked on by Gellius (1. 7. 6-8), is probably the oldest form of the future infinitive, *pace* Leumann (1977: 316 or 618).[11] Although the manuscript tradition may of course have obliterated some of these old infinitives, the large majority of future infinitives with the suffix -*tur*- certainly agreed with their subject accusatives in Plautus and Terence. (20) is different. The form *fore* was grammaticalized as a future infinitive, even though from a morphological point of view it is a present infinitive; because of its morphology it cannot agree with the subject accusative. However, *fore* is often combined with an adjective, and this adjective will agree in gender and number with the subject of the infinitive, even if the subject is not expressed. Thus, the two types of non-agreeing future infinitives cannot have a big impact on the statistics.

This leaves me with the present active infinitive with future reference. Here the subject accusatives are left out in circa 50% of all the tokens. This is quite an unexpected finding if we consider that among the present active infinitives with present meaning the accusatives are left out in only 20% of all the tokens. What is the reason for this? It cannot be the morphology of the infinitives.

I argue elsewhere (de Melo 2007*a*) that the present infinitive with future meaning is not in free variation with the future infinitive. Future infinitives can be used without restrictions, but the present infinitive with future force is practically confined to telic events,[12] and, more importantly in this context, undergoes another restriction process: unlike all other infinitives, present infinitives with future meaning are quite rare if the subjects of the superordinate verbs are different from the subjects of the infinitives. Among the 80 present infinitives with future force examined in de Melo (2007*a*), 62, that is 77.5%, have the same subject for both verbs.[13] Since in most cases the subject of the infinitive is the same as that of the superordinate verb, subject accusatives can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy and are

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[11] Its derivation is still problematic. Neither Postgate's theories (1894 and 1904) nor Blümel's (1979: 104-6) are satisfactory.

[12] Before the creation of future infinitives, the 'present' infinitives were actually non-past infinitives. The distinction between present and future is easy to draw among atelic events, cf. *I think John is swimming* vs. *I think John is going to swim*. It is more difficult to draw among telic ones, cf. *I think John is leaving* vs. *I think John is going to leave*, where *is leaving* can have present or future reference. Thus, the use of future infinitives for future events became obligatory among atelic events earlier than among telic ones.

[13] In this count I include all AcIs, i.e. also those with nominal subject accusatives.

thus frequently left out. The contrast to other infinitives is striking: among future infinitives, the two subjects are identical in 31.10% of the cases (65 out of 209 tokens); among present infinitives with present meaning, in 21.24% of the cases (158 out of 744 tokens); and among perfect infinitives, in 27.25% of the cases (115 out of 422 tokens).[14] Consequently, no such predictions can be made for these other infinitives.

3. Conclusions

In Latin AcIs, subject accusatives can be left out under certain conditions. My aim in this paper was to argue that this ellipsis is not colloquial, but should be regarded as conditioned by discourse factors. It was under the influence of prescriptive grammar that the absence of subject accusatives came to be regarded as colloquial. A closer look at the distribution of this type of ellipsis, however, makes it more likely that it is stylistically neutral; within early Latin, we find it not only in comedy, but also in tragedy, and outside early Latin the construction occurs in Cicero, the historians, and many other authors.

If the presence or absence of subject accusatives is not determined by register, there must be other factors at work. These factors seem to be discourse-related. The more likely a listener is to understand what the subject of an infinitive is, the more easily this subject can be left out. If the speaker has doubts whether the addressee will understand what the subject is, he or she will probably leave the subject accusative in.

Subject accusatives are more likely to be left out in some combinations of tense and voice than in others. While this may seem puzzling at first, it can be explained by the same principles of discourse. In the present active and (medio-)passive and in the perfect active, subject accusatives are absent in around 20% of the cases. In the perfect (medio-)passive and the future active, this figure is around 35%. The explanation is that perfect (medio-)passive and future active infinitives consist of bare participles or of the copula in combination with participles, and the participles are marked for the gender and number of their subjects. This makes it easier to recover the subjects even if the subject accusatives are absent. The present active infinitive with future meaning has the greatest number of missing subject accusatives; they are absent in around 50% of the tokens. Present infinitives with

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14   The data for future and present infinitives are taken from de Melo (2004: i. 155 and 157), but I have added the type *noui* to the presents and have also included two present infinitives which were not counted in de Melo (2004).

present reference behave differently, so the discrepancy calls for an explanation. Such an explanation is indeed possible. The present infinitive with future reference is gradually dying out in early Latin, and its obsolescence is accompanied by some restriction processes: the most important one here is that in more than three-quarters of the tokens, the subject of the finite verb and that of the infinitive are identical. In most cases this makes it simple to identify the subjects of the infinitives, and hence they are left out most frequently here.

I have restricted myself to Plautus and Terence. It would be interesting, however, to see if the absence of subject accusatives is equally frequent in later authors and if it follows the same principles. If not, it would be worthwhile to trace the developments and to look for a rationale behind the regularities that can be observed in later Latin.

Appendix: problematic AcIs and excluded material

The relevant present and future infinitives are collected in de Melo (2004: ii. 50-82); only two infinitives need to be added to the list there, *largiri* (*Trin.* 742) and *sistere* (*Trin.* 743).[15] I shall therefore focus on the perfect infinitives here.

I exclude tokens from the *argumenta*, but include those from the *alter exitus* of the *Andria*. I exclude nominative and infinitive constructions.

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between passive participles and adjectives; *esse… mortuom* in *Stich.* 640 is a perfect infinitive, but *esse… mortuam* in *Persa* 356 contains a present infinitive and an adjective. I also regard the following forms as adjectives or adjectivally used participles rather than as participles that are part of past infinitives: *deuinctum* (*Andr.* 561), *mortuom* (*Truc.* 165), *natam* (*Cist.* 604), *paratas* (*Andr.* 341), *paratum* (*Andr.* 316, *Eun.* 969).

I take *responsum* in *Pseud.* 480 as a noun rather than a past participle. Similarly, *uinctos nescioquos* in *Asin.* 285 is a direct object noun phrase rather than a short AcI.

I also exclude the following infinitives: *abusos* (*Bacch.* 360, the governing verb *sciuerit* belongs to *sciscere* rather than *scire*), *esse* (*Poen.* 465, dependent on *portendi*, though it could arguably depend on *aibat* instead), *excucurrisse* (*Bacch.* 359, the governing verb *sciuerit* belongs to *sciscere* rather than *scire*), *fuisse* (*Vid.* 82, merely

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[15]   They were mentioned in de Melo (2004: ii. 63, footnote 208), but left out of the final count.

a conjecture), *lauisse* (*Rud.* 537, textually problematic), *nosse* (*Ad.* 648, dependent on *ut opinor*), *uenisse* (*Most.* 1123, the governing verb *dixit* is a conjecture).

I count the following as AcIs with the same subjects as the superordinate verbs and with pronominal accusatives: *emisse* (*Merc.* 208, *me* is a metrically required conjecture), *fecisse* (*Rud.* 197*a*, with a subject accusative *me… aut parentes*, which is not entirely pronominal, but *aut parentes* appears like an afterthought), *nuptam* (*Men.* 602, *aio* has to be understood from preceding *ais*), *perditum… esse* (*Curc.* 135-6, I take *te* with this infinitive rather than with *lubet*), *periisse* (*dico* or *dicam* can be supplied from the preceding context), *uidisse* (*Mil.* 402, I take *me* with this infinitive; *Phorm.* 199, *aio* has to be understood from preceding *quid ais?*).

I count the following as AcIs with the same subjects as the superordinate verbs, but without subject accusatives: *fecisse* (*Eun.* 513, Kauer and Lindsay delete *se* for metrical reasons), *uidisse* (*Mil.* 403, I take *me* with the preceding infinitive).

I count the following as AcIs with different subjects as the superordinate verbs and with pronominal accusatives: *esse captam* (*Haut.* 608, *ditem et nobilem* is predicative), *factum* (*Epid.* 207, *hoc* is a conjecture required by the metre), *surrupuisse* (*Men.* 941, the superordinate verb *scio* is a safe conjecture, compare the following lines).

I count the following as AcIs with different subjects as the superordinate verbs, but without subject accusatives: *abiisse* (*Men.* 556, I construe *me* with *sequantur* rather than with the infinitive), *aedificatas* (*Merc.* 902, this clause begins with *pulchre*, not before), *concubuisse* (*Hec.* 393, Kauer and Lindsay delete *eam* for metrical reasons), *isse* (*Hec.* 76, I take *me* with *quaeret*), *prognatam* (*Phorm.* 115, *bonam* is predicative), *surruptasque esse* (*Poen.* 1101, *filias… tuas* and *paruolas* are predicative).

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Dᴇ Mᴇʟᴏ, W. D. C. *If in doubt, leave it in: subject accusatives in Plautus and Terence*.

RESUMO: A construção latina de infinitivo com acusativo é um tipo de oração subordinada não definida, com o sujeito no acusativo, e o verbo no infinitivo. Os infinitivos latinos são marcados não pela voz, mas também pelo tempo relativo: o infinitivo perfeito expressa anterioridade; o infinitivo presente, simultaneidade; o infinitivo futuro, posterioridade. O sujeito acusativo pode às vezes ser omitido. A maioria dos especialistas admite que tal omissão constitui coloquialismo. Todavia, a omissão ocorre com igual freqüência em diferentes gêneros literários, e é mais comum com o infinitivo futuro que com o presente, fatos que tornam improvável a interferência do registro textual na omissão. Meu artigo mostra que a omissão é mais freqüente no infinitivo futuro ativo e no perfeito passivo, isto é, nas formas que contêm um particípio marcado por gênero e número. A razão é porque, nesses, o particípio nos permite restituir mais facilmente um sujeito acusativo omitido.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: construção de infinitivo com acusativo; elipse; registro textual; particípios.