

July 31, 2003

CLASS 11: Arguments and A-Movement

Control vs. Raising

At first glance, the following two sentences look **near-identical**:

- (1) a. The students want to learn more syntax. → *Control*
- b. The students seem to learn more syntax. → *Raising*

Appearances can be deceiving, though. There are a number of **grammatical properties** in which the two constructions behave very differently and consequently have to be clearly **distinguished**.

Semantic role of subject

- (2) a. **The students** want [IP **PRO** to learn more syntax]. → *a wantor = a learner*
- b. **The students** seem [IP *???* to learn more syntax]. → *a learner, yes—a seemer?*

Expletive subject

- (3) a. * **There** hopes to be a man in the room. → *raising constructions do, control don't allow expletives*
- b. **There** appears to be a man in the room. → *idiomatic subjects can be raised, but not controlled*

Idiomatic subject

- (4) a. # **The shit** tries to **hit the fan**. → *control verbs take an agentiv/experiencer subject, hence subjects which could not satisfy this requirement can't be used*
- b. **The shit** is likely to **hit the fan**. → *raising verbs don't take or θ -mark a subject at all, hence any of these subjects are fine, as long as they satisfy the embedded verb*

Non-agentive subject

- (5) a. **John** tried to understand the problem. → *there is a difference in meaning when passivized with control verbs, but not with raising verbs*
- b. ? **My goldfish** tried to escape.
- c. ?? **My pet amoeba** is trying to reproduce.
- d. ?! **Your kettle** is trying to boil over.
- e. ! **Your theory** is trying to be foolproof.

- (6) a. **John** seemed to understand the problem.
- b. **My goldfish** seems to have escaped.
- c. **My pet amoeba** seems to be reproducing.
- d. **Your kettle** seems to be boiling over.
- e. **Your theory** seems to be foolproof.

Voice transparency

- (7) a. The doctor **tries to examine** John.
- b. John **tried to be examined** by the doctor.
- (8) a. The doctor **seemed to examine** John.
- b. John **seemed to be examined** by the doctor.

The Role of Theta Theory

We call the part of Theta Theory that regulates the assignment of thematic or semantic roles (θ -roles) **Theta-Criterion** (Θ -Criterion).

(9) *Theta-Criterion*

- a. Each argument bears one and only one θ -role.
- b. Each θ -role is assigned to one and only one argument.

How does that help us?

If **raising verbs** don't take a subject, **they don't bear an external θ -role**. That means that any subjects that show up must be **grammatical subjects** (SpecIP for Case) but **not logical subjects**.

Control verbs, on the other hand, do bear an **external θ -role**. That means that their subjects are **logical subjects** (as well as grammatical subjects), and the subject of their complement clause is **PRO**, the external argument of the embedded verb (also logical and grammatical).

Logical subject = θ -marked by a verb (external argument)

Grammatical subject = Case-marked by I ("Extended Projection Principle")

Let's put **some derivations** on control and raising structures:

- (10) a. **The students_i** will [VP *t_i* want/try/hope [IP **PRO_k** to [VP *t_k* learn more syntax]]].
- b. **The students_i** will [VP *t_i* want/try/hope [IP **PRO** to [VP learn more syntax]]].
- c. **The students_i** will [VP *t_i* want/try/hope [IP to [VP **PRO** learn more syntax]]].
- (11) a. **The students_i** will [VP seem/appear/be likely [IP *t_i* to [VP *t_i* learn more syntax]]].
- b. **The students_i** will [VP *t_i* seem/appear/be likely [IP *t_i* to [VP *t_i* learn more syntax]]].
- c. **The students_i** will [VP seem/appear/be likely [IP to [VP *t_i* learn more syntax]]].

Any of the three possibilities are sound by me. The choice depends on a number of background assumptions. Personally, **I use the a-examples** (and have argued for: (10c)), and definitely reject Radford's (10b) — he mentions **Greedy/Shortest Move**, but **I don't see a checking relation**.

Passive constructions

Now that we have seen an instance of **subject-to-subject raising**, let's look at another type of "subject-raising," which certainly also takes place within a single clause:

- (12) Mary was kissed (by John).
- (13) a. John/He kissed Mary/her.
- b. **She** was kissed (by John/him).
- c. * **Her** was kissed (by John/him).
- d. * **She** was kissed **Mary** (by John/him).
- e. * **It** was kissed **Mary/her**.
- (14) [IP **Mary/She** was [VP kissed *t* (by John)]]

In passives, the **logical object** (internal argument) becomes the **grammatical subject** — this is not a change in **thematic relations**, but **grammatical function** (Case!).
 → *Move from Comp/PP to Spec/PP*