

# Chapter 12

## Infinitival Complements

### 12.1 Lecture notes

#### Chapter 12

##### I. Introduction

- The constructions we've studied so far have been pretty easy to pick out just by their form. For example, we can tell a passive by the *be* + past participle; existentials have *there*; and extraposition has *it* at the beginning and a *that*-clause near the end.
- The constructions in this chapter are less transparent: superficially parallel strings of the form NP-V-to-VP can get significantly different analyses depending on certain properties of V. Likewise for NP-V-NP-to-VP. [Slides:1]
- The distinction that is the focus of this chapter is 'raising' vs 'control' (sometimes called 'equi') predicates. The names are a holdover from early transformational analyses.
- It's basically a semantic distinction, but with syntactic effects. And semantic intuitions about how to classify a particular verb don't always coincide with the syntactic tests; when in doubt, trust the syntactic tests.

## II. Raising Verbs

- Subject raising verbs (like *continue*) are predicated of propositions.
- E.g. (1) asserts that a certain fact (namely, that the stock market is rising) continues to be the case. [Slides:3]  
(1) The stock market continues to rise.
- This is modeled in the lexical entry by giving the continue relation only one argument: the index of its CP complement (□). [Slides:4–5]
- *To* unifies its index with the index of its complement, so this will be the index of the infinitival VP.
- The index of the specifier is not mentioned anywhere in the lexical entry and in particular, is not mentioned in the continue relation.
- This fits with the fact that the subject of *continue* is dependent in a number of ways on the VP in the complement (after *to*).
- Non-referential NPs (idiom chunks, dummy *there*, dummy *it*) provide the clearest examples, since they can appear as subjects only with a very restricted set of VPs.
- In transformational analyses, this dependence is handled by moving the subject out from the complement, making it the subject of the raising verb (hence the name).
- We use tagging to say that a single NP is the grammatical subject of both verbs, but we make it a semantic argument only of the second one. This is not a new idea for us: we did it with *be* in Chapter 10.
- The complementizer *to* is also a raising element. [Slides:2]
  - Correction: Like *that* in the last chapter, the lexical entry for *to* should bear the specification [MODE prop]. (The reason for not just putting this on the type *comp-lxm* is that *wether* and *if* are also instance of *comp-lxm* and should be [MODE ques]).

### III. Control Verbs

- Subject control verbs (like *try*) denote a relation between an individual and a proposition (in which the individual plays a role).
- E.g. (2) asserts that Pat tried to bring about a certain state of affairs, namely, one in which Pat buys stocks. [Slides:6]
 

(2) Pat tried to buy stocks.
- The referent of the subject of *try* plays a semantic role in the trying relation, viz. the role of the trier.
- Thus in the lexical entry for *try* [Slides:7–8], the index of the subject and the index of the CP complement are involved in the try relation.
- Hence, non-referential NPs can't be subjects of control verbs.
- The subject must play a role in the 'downstairs' predication as well because the index of try's specifier is the same as the index of the complement's specifier. This is necessary to get the semantics right; Problem 7 gives another argument for why we want to do this.
- In early transformational analyses, control was handled by positing underlying structures with two copies of the same NP, one as subject of the main verb and one as subject of the complement. The lower NP would then be deleted "under identity" with the higher one.
- Later analyses posit an empty (i.e. lexically unfilled) NP as the subject of the complement, and the empty NP is interpreted like a pronoun, with the subject of the higher verb as its antecedent.

### IV. Comparison and Conclusion

- On our analysis, there are two key differences between raising and control verbs: [Slides:9]
  - (i) the subject of a control verb is a semantic argument of the verb, but the subject of a raising verb is not; and
  - (ii) the subject and complement subject of a raising verb are tagged as identical, but the subject and complement subject of a control verb are only coindexed.

- As far as English is concerned, both raising and control verbs could identify the subject and complement subject (as we do for raising verbs).
- The different treatment of control verbs in (ii) is motivated cross-linguistically, e.g. by the facts in Problem 5. Do this problem in class, if you haven't assigned it.
- Everything above is overly specific along two dimensions:
  - It only covers subject raising and subject control.
  - It only covers raising and control verbs, not other kinds of predicates.
- However, the fundamental idea can be generalized in both ways: A raising predicate has a syntactic argument that is not a semantic argument (of that predicate), whereas a control predicate has an argument that is obligatorily coreferential with the subject of one of its complements.
- A final caveat: the raising/control distinction is a very rough classification of predicates. The various diagnostics (semantic intuitions, dummies, idiom chunks, downstairs passivization) don't always converge on a clean classification. Moreover, there are finer distinctions among the predicates of both classes. But it's a good first approximation, and one that has played a big role in the syntax literature.