

Visser's Generalization and the c-command condition on Control

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The aim of this presentation is to address the issue of Visser's Generalization (henceforth VG), holding that subject control (hence SC) verbs are incompatible with the passive, and propose a solution based on a combination of the passive seen as smuggling and Obligatory Control seen as A-movement (Hornstein 2001, Hornstein & Polinsky 2010). We will be arguing that Control holds under c-command:

- (1) In the LF representation of Obligatory Control the controller must c-command its trace in the subject position (PRO).

The VG effect arises as the condition in (1) is not respected in the passive of SC verbs.

The nature of VG: the generalization, put forward in Visser (1973), holds that structures of subject-oriented predication resist the passive transformation, specifically, SC verbs are not compatible with the passive transformation (cf. 2b). Interestingly, the same matrix control predicates shifting to OC allow for the passive (cf. 2d). Similarly, OC verbs shifted to subject control mode disallow the passive (cf. 3d):

- (2)
 - a. *He promised me [PRO to open my gifts for me]. (SC)*
 - b. **I was promised to open my gifts for me. (SC + passive)*
 - c. *He promised me to be allowed to [PRO to open my gifts]. (SC shifts to OC)*
 - d. *I was promised to be allowed to open my gifts. (OC + passive)*
- (3)
 - a. *He asked me to open my gifts. (OC)*
 - b. *I was asked to open my gifts. (OC + passive)*
 - c. *He asked me to be allowed to open my gifts for me. (OC shifts to SC)*
 - d. **I was asked to be allowed to open my gifts for me. (SC + passive)*

Van Urk (2011) narrows the scope of the VG effect further and observes that it applies only when the matrix object is promoted to [spec,T], while it does not apply in the (impersonal) passive construction without promotion:

- (4) *Er werd mij beloofd om me op de hoogte te houden.*
there was me-DAT promise-PAST COMP me-DAT on the height to keep-INF
'It was promised to me to keep me informed.'

Thus the nature of the VG effect does not consist in the incompatibility of the passive and Subject Control interpretation but rather the clash between Subject Control interpretation and the promotion of the object. In solving the VG puzzle we will assume the smuggling theory of the passive in Collins (2005a), whose key element is (5) below:

- (5)
 - a. within an articulated projection of the passive clause the constituent including the passive participle, the object DP and (possibly) the remainder of the complement domain of the verb ([_{PartP} Part [_{VP} V DP_o]]) is moved to the position of [spec,Voice] around the implicit Agent in [spec,v]; next the DP object is moved to [spec,T], in line with MLC:
 - b. [_{VoiceP} [_{PartP} Part [_{VP} V DP_o]] Voice-by [_{vP} DP_{Agent} V [_{PartP} ...t...]]]

The genuine nature of the VG effect: The key element of our working hypothesis is that the head of Participial Phrase takes VP as its complement, thus the whatever material VP contains, including the infinitive, is promoted around the implicit Agent to the position of [spec, Voice]. Consider OC with promotion, where the implicit Agent (pro_1) is in [spec,v]:

- (6) a. *Mary was persuaded to leave the party.*
 b. [_{TP} Mary₂ T-was [_{VoiceP} [_{PartP} Part [_{VP} persuaded [_{AppIP} Mary₂ Appl [_{VP} t_v [_{CP} ~~Mary₂~~/PRO to leave the party]]]]]]] Voice [_{VP} pro_1 [_{v'} v ~~PartP~~]]]

The infinitive is carried along as part of PrtP above pro_1 and the object is raised to the subject position. In this representation (1) holds, as Mary₂ c-commands both its trace within PartP and PRO/Mary₂.

Now consider the passive of the SC verb with promotion in (7); the smuggling step of the operation removes PRO from the c-command domain of its controller (the implicit Agent pro_1 in [spec,v]):

- (7) a. **Mary was promised to leave the party.*
 b. [_{TP} Mary₂ T-was [_{VoiceP} [_{PartP} Part [_{VP} promised [_{AppIP} Mary₂ Appl [_{VP} t_v [_{CP} ~~pro_1~~ /PRO to leave the party]]]]]]] Voice [_{VP} pro_1 v ~~PrtP~~]]]

There is a clear difference between the representations of OC in (6) and of SC in (7); while in the former the position of PRO is c-commanded by its controller (Mary₂), in the latter it is not, so the VG effect is a violation of postulate (1).

This solution leads to three expectations confirmed in the literature: (a) lack of object promotion, meaning no smuggling of the infinitive and PRO out of the c-command domain of the implicit Agent, does not disturb Subject Control (van Urk 2011); (b) PRO requires c-command by its controller at LF, which holds true once the apparently problematic cases of intraposition and extraposition in Super Equi and the concept of logophoric extension from (Landau 2001, 2010) are reconsidered; (c) the smuggled constituent including the infinitive does not reconstruct to its original position, as this would equate (2b) with (4).

- (8) a. *??The magazines were sent to herself by Mary*
 b. *The magazines were sent to Mary₁'s mother by her₁ (the idiot₁ herself) yesterday.*
 c. *Mary was told to meet Betty₁'s daughter by her₁/the idiot₁ on Friday.*

Ex. (8a-b) from Collins (2005a) show that PrtP does not reconstruct, bleeding Conditions A and C; ex. (8c) shows the same effect when an infinitive is carried along within PrtP and not reconstructed. One of the reasons for which PartP, and other smuggling vehicles, do not reconstruct is that they feed another movement operation, Wh-movement in (9a-b, Starke 2001) or anaphor raising to T (in 9d, Chomsky 1995):

- (9) a. *?Who is it unclear [how many pictures of ~~who~~] he wants to shoot t*
 b. *Who is it unclear [how many portraits of ~~who~~] Amelie drew t?*
 c. *John wondered which picture of himself Bill saw.*
 d. *John self-wondered [which x, x a picture of t_{self}] [Bill saw x]*

Any reconstruction of the smuggling vehicle makes the ensuing further movement violate MLC. **In conclusion**, the account of VG developed above points to the conflicting requirements between the c-command condition on Control and promotion in the passive as

the key factors. The combination of control and smuggling in the passive leads to explanation of another puzzle: preservation of the pattern of OC into an adjunct in the passive, where the implicit Agent pro_1 should block this relation as a more minimal potential antecedent, (cf. 10b):

- (10) a. *The boss₁ fired the painter₂ [for PRO₂ drinking on the job]*
 b. *The painter₂ was fired* [_{VP} pro_1 [for PRO₂ drinking on the job]]
 c. [_{TP} the painter₂ T-was [_{VoiceP} [_{PartP} Part [_{VP} [_{VP} fired ~~the painter₂~~]] [for PRO₂ drinking on the job]]] Voice [_{VP} pro_1 [_{v'} v ~~PartP~~]]]

Clearly, once the adjunct is promoted together with the object inside PrtP, the preservation of object control is to be expected (cf. 10c).

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