The Predicative Default of Controlled Adjuncts

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Within the realm of adjunct control, a number of distributional asymmetries appear to be robustly attested crosslinguistically, yet so far remain unconnected to each other or to any principled theory. Three such generalizations are stated below (OC = Obligatory Control, NOC = Non-obligatory Control).

G1: A lexical subject is possible in W → subject control is possible in W
G2: NOC is possible in W → OC is possible in W
G3: Object control is possible in W → subject control is possible in W

G1 and G3 are drawn from Stassen 1985, an extensive typological study of 110 languages from all major language families and areas. G2 is novel. We will demonstrate all three generalizations below (given the diversity of adjuncts, only a sample will be shown, but the patterns reported here are consistent), and then derive them from a common source.

Preliminaries. OC and NOC are defined by their characteristic signatures (Landau 2013, 2017). Generally speaking, OC results from some syntactic dependency whereas NOC results from pragmatic reference, which is sensitive to topicality and logophoricity. Crucially, NOC is only available with human antecedents; hence, inanimate control must be OC (and G2 is not vacuous; see below). Control by extra-sentential antecedents, of course, must be NOC.

Demonstrating G1. Rationale- and *without*-adjuncts admit lexical subjects, and as G1 predicts, also admit subject control.

(1) a. Jane$_i$ stepped back [in order PRO$_i$ to get a better view].
b. Jane stepped back [in order for Bill to get a better view].
(2) a. He$_i$ managed to climb to the top [without PRO$_i$ asking for help at any stage].
b. He managed to climb to the top [without anyone helping him at any stage].

Conversely, result and stimulus adjuncts admit subject control but not lexical subjects; G1 is unidirectional.

(3) a. The sofa folds out [PRO$_i$ to make a bed].
b. * The sofa folds out [for the bed to be unnecessary].
(4) a. Bill$_i$ smiled [PRO$_i$ to see the baby calm down].
b. * Bill smiled [for Mary to see the baby calm down].

Demonstrating G2. Temporal and absolutive ("free") adjuncts admit NOC (long-distance control in (5a) and arbitrary control in (6a)) (Kortmann 1991, Green 2019). As G2 predicts, both types of adjuncts also admit OC, (5b)/(7b) (recall that control by an inanimate antecedent, and certainly by a weather-*it*, can only be obtained by OC).

(5) a. The chef$_i$ thinks [the potatoes will sell better [after PRO$_i$ adding more salt]].
b. Around here, it$_i$ always snows [before PRO$_i$ raining].
(7) a. [PRO$_{arb}$ motoring down the road to New York], numerous signs read "Visit Our Snake Farm".
b. [PRO$_i$ having run smoothly *until* then], the economic engine$_i$ began to sputter already at the beginning of the year.

G2 is unidirectional: Result and Goal clauses display OC (8a)/(9a) but never NOC (8b)/(9b).

(8) a. $John_i$ is grew [PRO_i to become famous in the entire county].
b. $John_i$ is a gifted farmer. He_i keeps breaking records. This summer, his_i $pumkins_j$ grew [$PRO_{*i/j}$ to become famous in the entire county].

(9) a. $Mary_i$ went out [PRO_i to smoke].
b. $Mary_i$ was dying for a cigarette so $John_j$ went out [$PRO_{*i/j}$ to smoke].

Demonstrating G3. Except for adjuncts of justification (*He criticized the project for being too expensive*) and subject purpose clauses (*He sent Bill to bring the car*), which I set aside here, the default controller for adjuncts is the matrix subject, not the object. Interestingly, "exceptional" object control has been occasionally documented in temporal and absolutive adjuncts. These adjuncts, of course, normally display subject control.

(10) a. [PRO_i sitting quietly here], the memory stirred him_i.
b. The security guard stopped the $woman_i$ [before PRO_i boarding the plane].

A notable feature of these exceptional cases – which are highly variable across speakers – is that the object controller is either an experiencer or a contextually salient antecedent, i.e., a topic (Janke & Bailey 2017). These features will be attended to below. G3 is clearly unidirectional, as in most circumstances where subject control is allowed, object control is excluded.

Analysis. For the majority of adjuncts, OC delivers local subject control. G1-G3 contrast this option with (i) no control (lexical subject), (ii) NOC, and (iii) object control. In fact, (iii) reduces to (ii): The exceptional cases of object control show the signature of NOC (cf. their sensitivity to discourse status of the object, and preference for experiencers, which are suitable for logophoric antecedence). What, then, unifies "no control" and NOC? A natural suggestion is that in both cases, the adjunct clause expresses a *proposition*: Either closed (with a lexical subject) or open (with a logophoric variable for subject, namely, NOC PRO). In contrast, OC adjuncts express a *property* that combines with the matrix subject by predication. The three empirical asymmetries expressed in G1-G3 reduce to one fundamental theoretical asymmetry.

(11) *The predicative default of nonfinite adjuncts*
Adjunct W has a propositional variant → Adjunct W has a predicative variant

Certain adjuncts only display OC (result, goal, stimulus), others alternate between OC and NOC (temporal, rationale, absolutive), but no nonfinite adjunct only displays NOC. Why should that be? I argue that the semantic default in (11) reflects a syntactic default: Predicative controlled clauses are smaller than (included in) propositional ones. Specifically, a predicative clause is formed by moving the PRO-abstractor to FinP; a propositional one is formed by merging this FinP with a logophoric or topic-bound free variable *pro* (Landau 2015, 2017).

(12) a. Predicative adjunct: $[_{PP}\ P\ [_{FinP}\ PRO_i\ Fin\ [_{TP}\ \sout{PRO}_i\ \ldots\ ]]]$
b. Propositional adjunct: $[_{PP}\ P\ [_{CP}\ pro\ C_{log/top}\ [_{FinP}\ PRO_i\ Fin\ [_{TP}\ \sout{PRO}_i\ \ldots\ ]]]]$

The most frequent interpretation of controlled adjuncts is local subject control. Speakers (or rather, children constructing their grammar) can derive this interpretation either by (12a) or by (12b). Given this equivalence, Economy of Projection (Grimshaw 1994, Bošković 1996, Speas 2006) dictates that they opt for the smaller structure, namely, the predicative one. Hence, the predicative variant will be part of any grammar of adjunct control, explaining (11) and its derivatives, G1-G3. The propositional variant will only be added to accommodate those interpretations that go beyond local subject control, namely, NOC and "no control" (lexical subject).