Subject-to-Object Raising Constructions in Modern Greek

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Abstract: This paper will examine constructions of Greek that are near-identical to Object Control structures in English. However, unlike English, the embedded clause is not infinitival, but it is introduced by the subjunctive marker na, followed by an inflected verb. I will argue that at least for some verbs in Greek the object of the main clause is generated as the subject of the embedded clause. Such a raising approach is similar to the one proposed by Hornstein (1999) and Boeckx & Hornstein (2003) for English and I will further argue that for both English and Greek the landing site of the moved DP is the specifier of the main clause VP.

Key words: control, raising, subjunctive, Exceptional-Case-Marking, finiteness

1. Introduction

This paper deals with constructions of Greek like (1), where the object of main clause is also the (semantic) subject of the embedded clause.

(1) Episa ton Jianni na figi.
    persuade-PAST.1SG the John-ACC SUBJ leave-3SG
    'I persuaded John to leave.'

These constructions are near-identical to Object Control structures in English. However, unlike English, the embedded clause is not infinitival, since Modern Greek lost the infinitive. Rather, the embedded clause is introduced by the subjunctive marker na, followed by an inflected verb.

I will argue that at least for some verbs in Greek the object of the main clause is generated as the subject of the embedded clause. I will also argue (following Iatridou 1993 and Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1999) that in these cases T cannot assign nominative, as it is non-finite. The non-finiteness of the embedded clause depends on temporal properties that the embedded clause shows.

Adopting such a raising approach, this paper contributes to the discussion about a proper explanation of control phenomena within the Minimalist Program. Control has been one of the main concerns of generative syntax since the 1960's and of course in the Government and Binding period, the Control module was part of the core of the Principles and Parameters theory. But since the adoption of minimalism and the abandonment of the notion of 'government', it is still somehow unclear, how control constructions can be explained properly. Hornstein (1999) and his subsequent work with Boeckx offer a new way to analyze such constructions. The Movement Theory of Control (henceforth MTC), proposed by Boeckx and Hornstein seems to offer a proper explanation of control constructions, at least for the languages that have infinitives, unlike Modern Greek.

However, in this paper I also adopt MTC even for Modern Greek and offer a raising approach similar to the one proposed by Boeckx and Hornstein. I will further argue that for both English and Greek the landing site of the moved DP is the specifier of the main clause VP.

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The paper will begin by briefly presenting Boeckx and Hornstein’s proposal and further suggesting that the place of the raised DP is [Spec,VP] (see also Chomsky 2008).

In the second part I will show how MTC accounts for the constructions under examination in Greek. I will first show how the finiteness of the embedded clause is affected by the temporal properties of the verb. Next, I will provide evidence for movement of the DP out of the embedded clause into the (thematic) object position of the main clause. Finally, I will argue (following Spyropoulos 1998) that in cases like (2) the nominative case that appears within the embedded clause is default case, exactly like Boeckx & Hornstein (2006) have claimed for similar Icelandic constructions.

(2) Episaton Jiannii na figi telefeos.
    persuade-PAST.1SG the John-ACC SUBJ leave-3SG last-NOM
    ‘I persuaded John to leave last’

The paper will close with a discussion of the long-standing question whether Greek has ECM constructions or not, concluding that some structures do indeed bear resemblance to ECM.

2. The case of English
2.1. Object Control vs. Exceptional Case Marking
The contrast between Subject-to-Object Raising (or ECM) and Object Control exists from the very beginning of the generative grammar. These two constructions do not only contrast in their structure, but there are more striking differences. In this paper, I will only mention two of them, as it is not the purpose of this paper to analyse the ECM vs. the Object Raising constructions. The first main difference concerns θ - role assignment. The Object Control verbs assign a θ - role to their object position, while ECM verbs do not. So, (3b) is ungrammatical due to the fact that an expletive cannot bear a θ - role, while (3a) is completely acceptable

(3a) John believed therei [t, to be three books]
(3b) *John ordered therei [PROi to be three books]

The second difference between ECM and Object Control constructions has to do with the passivization of the verb complement. When the complement of an ECM verb is passivized, the interpretation remains the same. Contrary to that, the passivization of an Object Control verb complement brings also a change to the sentence’s interpretation. The two sentences in (4a) have exactly the same meaning, while in (4b) the two sentences do not share the same interpretation; in the first one John persuaded the doctor to do the examination, and in the second one it is Mary that was persuaded by John, not the doctor.

(4a) John expected the doctor to examine Mary
    John expected Mary to be examined by the doctor
(4b) John persuaded the doctor to examine Mary
    John persuaded Mary to be examined by the doctor

Within the Government and Binding framework these differences could be captured though the different representation for each construction. (5a) shows the structure of an ECM construction and (5b) the structure of an Object Control construction.
Subject-to-Object Raising Constructions in Modern Greek

(5a) John expected Maryi [ti to leave]
(5b) John persuaded Maryi [PROi to leave]

It is easy to see the main difference between the two structures above. In (5a) the subject of the embedded clause has been base-generated within the embedded clause, and then has moved (raised) outside of the embedded clause to the object position of the verb of the main clause. The reason for this kind of movement is that in infinitival embedded clauses of English the T(ense) head is non-finite and thus cannot assign nominative case to the subject DP. So, the DP must raise to the object position of the verb of the main clause in order to receive accusative case from the verb of the main clause.

On the other hand, in (5b), the subject position (specTP) of the embedded clause is occupied by PRO, a (phonetically) empty category with +anaphor, +pronoun features. The (semantic) subject of the embedded clause is also object of the verb of the main clause and it is originated in its position within the VP of the main clause. Finally, from that position it can control the PRO, without any problem.

However, this way to explain such constructions can be problematic within the minimalist framework, as the notion of ‘government’ has been abandoned and thus a new way must be found to explain the distribution of PRO

2.2. The Movement Theory of Control
Hornstein (1999) and his subsequent work with Boeckx offer a new approach to Control constructions. According to this analysis the relevant structure of an Object Control construction is the one presented in (6)

(6) John persuaded Maryi [ti to leave]

There are two main differences between the MTC and the older Theory of Control. First, now there is no postulation of an additional category, namely PRO. The subject of the embedded clause is base-generated within the embedded clause and then raises to object position of the embedded clause.

The second difference has to do with the theory of the thematic roles. Under this approach, the subject DP is assigned two different θ – roles, one as the subject (agent) of the verb of the embedded clause and one as the object (theme) of the verb of the main clause. To make this possible, some alterations have to be made in the thematic theory, as it is known since the Government and Binding period. MTC changes the way θ – roles should be understood. From its point of view, θ – roles are features that can and should be checked. This crucial assumption makes movement into a θ – position possible. That means that now a DP can have more than one θ – role and this is the case of the moved DP in (6).

Moreover, when movement out of the embedded clause is not possible (e.g. out of an island), we have Non Obligatory Control (NOC) and a pro is present in the subject position of the embedded clause. The presence of pro is necessary for pro to receive the θ – role of the subject, or to be more precise to check the relevant θ – feature. Furthermore, the appearance of pro is actually a repair mechanism; pro is somehow different in this construction from the well known pro of the null subject languages. In a

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1 For an alternative analysis that accounts for the existence of PRO within the minimalist framework, see Landau (2001) and his subsequent work.
NOC construction *pro* gets no case. Actually it can not get case, as the T(ense) head of the embedded clause is non-finite and thus cannot assign nominative. In addition to that, if it could assign nominative, the Obligatory Control construction would crash, as the raised DP would check/receive two different cases\(^2\).

### 2.3. Spec,VP as the final landing site of the raised DP

One point of the Movement Theory of Control that needs to be further clarified is the final landing site of the raised DP. Hornstein and Boeckx do not give a clear answer to this question. In this part of the paper I will propose that this final landing site is actually the specifier position of the main clause VP.

One first test that shows the final position of the moved DP involves the position of an adverb that modifies the main clause verb. In (7) we have a relevant example with ‘sincerely’ modifying the verb ‘believe’ in both possible positions.

(7) John (sincerely) believes Mary; sincerely [\(ti\) to be innocent]

What the example in (7) clearly shows is that in its final position the moved DP lies within the main clause boundaries. This means that the subject of the embedded clause, not only raises from its original position, but also moves out of the embedded clause and within the main clause. Furthermore, the raised DP must be below the light verb \(v\) head, as this is occupied by the verb in English and the raised DP appears after the main clause verb.

The second test that I am going to use to define the final landing site of the raised DP consists in binding effects within adjuncts. Consider the example in (8).

(8) [The DA proved the defendants; \(ti\) to be guilty] [during each other;’s trial]]

The above example shows that the moved DP is high enough in order to be able to bind the reciprocal, which lies within a PP adjoined to the main clause VP.

If we combine the two examples above, then we conclude that the final position of the raised subject has to fulfil the following requirements: it should be within the main clause, below the light verb \(v\) position, but high enough to bind within a phrase adjoined to main clause VP. Keeping these requirements in mind, I propose that the position we are looking for is the specifier position of the main clause VP, an assumption that yields the structure presented in (9) for an Object Control construction, like the one in (7).

As it is easy to be seen, the specifier position of the main clause fulfils all the requirements mentioned above. It is of course within the main clause and below the light verb \(v\) position. Moreover, it is high enough to bind within a phrase adjoined to main clause VP that I assume is adjoined at exactly the same position, which in (9) is occupied by ‘sincerely’. The specifier of the main clause is also the position that Chomsky (2008) proposes as the landing site of the moved DP in an ECM construction; a construction very similar to the one proposed for Object Control under the MTC approach.

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\(^2\) I would like to thank A. Roussou for pointing this problem out and K. Grohmann for the fruitful discussion.
Note also that the structure above does not postulate any new, extra functional category to place the raised DP, something very important as it keeps the functional categories minimal, in accordance to the economy spirit of the minimalist framework.

3. The case of Modern Greek (MG)

3.1. Control and subjunctive clauses with ‘na’

After seeing the basic features of the Movement Theory of Control (MTC), I will briefly present these constructions of Modern Greek that are similar to the Object Control constructions of English. A typical example of such a construction can be found in (10).

(10) Episa ton Jianni na figi.
    persuade-PAST.1SG the John-ACC SUBJ leave-3SG
    ‘I persuaded John to leave.’

Although the Modern Greek construction shares many common characteristics with the English equivalent one, there are a few rather striking differences. The major one is that in Modern Greek the embedded clause has no infinitive. On the contrary, it is introduced by the subjunctive marker ‘na’, which is followed by an inflected verb.

Moreover, all the subjunctive clauses of Modern Greek do not share the same characteristics. There can be distinguished three different types of subjunctive clauses (Landau, 2004, Spyropoulos, 2007). The first category is the independent subjunctive clauses, which can employ both past and non-past verb forms. They usually appear with verbs like 'elpizo' (hope), and 'perimeno' (wait/expect). The second type includes the dependent subjunctive clauses, which have affixed temporal reference that can be either future oriented or simultaneous to the matrix verb. This type comes after verbs like 'thelo' (want), 'pitho' (persuade) and 'zito' (ask). Finally, there are the anaphoric subjunctive clauses with event time identical with the matrix one. They can be found after verbs like 'ksero' (know), 'matheno' (learn), 'arxizo' (begin), and 'blepo' (see).

These three different types of subjunctive clauses do not only show different temporal properties with regard to the verb of the main clause. They also have differences as far as Control is concerned. So, the independent subjunctive clauses show no control at all, as it is shown in (11), the dependent subjunctive clauses show control that can be partial, take split antecedents, and allow backward control and control shift, as in the examples in (12), while the anaphoric subjunctive clauses show exhaustive control and disallow partial control, control shift and split antecedents, like the examples in (13).
3.2. (Non-) Finiteness of the embedded clause

As we have seen earlier, one of the features of the Modern Greek subjunctive clauses is that the verb of the clause is always inflected. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that the verb of the embedded clause is finite and that it always assigns nominative case to its subject (see also Iatridou (1993) and Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou (1999)). Consider the examples in (14)

(14a) Episa ton Jianni na figi. /*efige
persuade the John-ACC SUBJ leave-NONPAST-3SG- / leave-PAST-3SG
‘I persuaded John to leave.’

(14b) Ida ton Jianni na erxete. (*avrio)
saw-1SG the John-ACC SUBJ leave-NONPAST-3SG- tomorrow
‘I saw John coming (*tomorrow)’

The sentence in (14a) shows a dependent subjunctive clause and the one in (14b) shows an anaphoric one. In (14a) only a non-past form of the verb of the embedded clause can yield to a grammatical construction. If the verb of the embedded clause is in a past form, then the sentence is automatically ungrammatical. Similarly in (14b) we cannot have a temporal adverb that refers to the future, like ‘tomorrow’.

In conclusion, at least for these two groups of subjunctive clauses, dependent and anaphoric, the embedded clause shows no temporal properties. So, it is logical to assume that the verb of the embedded clause bears a [-T] feature, i.e. it is non-finite and thus does not assign nominative case.

3.3. Applying Movement Theory of Control in Modern Greek

Since the verb of the embedded clause in Modern Greek can be considered non-finite, the adoption of the Movement Theory of Control can be straightforward. In the Control cases of Modern Greek, similar to the English equivalent constructions, the subject of the embedded clause raises out of the embedded clause to the main clause and its object position. This kind of movement is now possible, as the verb of the embedded clause is
non-finite. The movement takes place in order for the raised DP to check the relevant θ–feature of the main verb (theme) and in order to check/receive accusative case.

If the movement out of the embedded clause is not possible, then again, similar to the English cases, there is a pro present. This gives a proper explanation for independent subjunctives and for the cases of the dependent subjunctives, where raising seems problematic (partial control, split antecedents etc.).

3.4. Spec,VP as the final landing site of the raised DP
One more question remains open for the MTC to be applicable in Modern Greek and that is the final landing site of the raised DP. If what has been proposed earlier for English is correct, then the best candidate is the specifier position of the main clause VP. Consider the sentence in (15):

(15) Episa ton Jianni meta apo poles prosphathies na figi.
    persuade the John-ACC after many attempts SUBJ leave
    ‘After many attempts, I persuaded John to leave.’

In (15) the prepositional phrase ‘meta apo poles prosphathies’ (after many attempts) modifies the verb of the main clause and signifies the right edge of the main clause. So, we can safely conclude that even in Modern Greek the subject DP lies again within the main clause and above a phrase that has adjoined to the main clause VP. So, it is reasonable to think that the raised DP occupies the specifier position of the main clause VP, exactly the same position that it has in the similar English constructions. Again, there is no need to postulate an additional functional category in order to give a proper explanation of this construction.

3.5. Nominative in the embedded clause as default case
Although the MTC seems to apply unproblematic even in the Control sentences of Modern Greek, which are not infinitival, there is an additional problem that must be solved. Consider the example in (16)

(16) Episa ton Jiannisi na figi telefteos,i.
    persuaded the John-NOM SUBJ leave3SG last-NOM
    ‘I persuaded John to leave last’

In the above sentence the adjective ‘telefteos’ (last) modifies the subject of the embedded clause and bears nominative case. This is rather problematic, because, as I have claimed earlier, the verb of the embedded clause is non-finite and cannot assign nominative.

Before solving this problem, let’s see a relevant structure in (17), this time without the embedded clause.

(17) O Jiannisi efige telefteos,i
    the John-NOM left last-NOM

Here again the adjective ‘telefteos’ (last) modifies the subject of the clause and of course bears nominative case. (17) shows a classic example of a sentence containing an

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3 Although more work is needed for a more precise analysis of these constructions.
adjunct small clause. According to Spyropoulos (1998), in case of an adjunct small clause like (17), the nominative case that appears within the small clause is default case.

Following this approach, I assume a similar construction for (16), where the nominative case within the embedded clause is default case, i.e. not assigned by the T head. Similar constructions to (16) can be found in Icelandic, where it has also been claimed that the case of the DP within the embedded clause is default case (Boeckx & Hornstein (2006)).

4. Control vs. ECM constructions in Modern Greek

In this final part of the paper, I will discuss the possibility that Modern Greek does indeed have ECM constructions. I will claim that at least for a group of verbs, we can find differences similar to the ones that were presented earlier and distinguish the ECM constructions from the Object Control constructions in English. Note also that by adopting the MTC both the ECM and the Object Control constructions have similar structure, with the subject of the embedded clause raising to the object position of the main clause. Consider the following example in (18) with the perception verb ‘vlepo’ (see), which is followed by anaphoric subjunctive clauses.

(18) Vlepo ton Jianni na troi pagoto
    see-1SG the John-ACC SUBJ eat ice-cream
    'I see John eating ice-cream'

In (18) the verb of the main clause does not assign a θ - role to its object position. The DP 'ton Jianni' has only one θ – role, that of the agent from the verb of the embedded clause. So, the verb of the main clause does not assign a θ - role to its object position, a first similarity to the ECM verbs of English.

A second similarity can be found in the passivization of the complement of a perception verb. Consider the sentence in (19)

(19) Vlepo to pagoto na trogete apo ton Jianni
    see-1SG the ice-cream-ACC SUBJ eat-PASS by the John
    'I see the ice-cream to be eaten by John'

The sentence in (19) is the result of the passivization of the verb complement in (18). Both sentences have exactly the same meaning, as it happens with the passivization of the ECM verb complement in English.

In conclusion, there are similarities between ECM constructions of English and Object Control constructions of Modern Greek, at least for a (small) group of verbs. These similarities are not restricted to similar structure under the MTC approach, but also include effects like the passivization of the verb complement and θ – role assignment; effects that distinguish ECM and Object Control verbs in English.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper has been to see if the Movement Theory of Control, which has been proposed primarily for English, a language with infinitival embedded clauses, can be applied to a language like Modern Greek, which has no infinitives. The application of MTC in Modern Greek seems possible, under the assumption that the verb of the embedded clause in Modern Greek may be inflected, but it is non-finite, i.e has a [-T] head, as it shows no temporal properties.
The second assumption that was made in this paper was about the final landing site of the raised DP in both English and Modern Greek. We have seen that the specifier position of the main clause VP seems to be the perfect spot, without the need to assume an additional functional category, in compliance with the minimalist framework’s spirit.

References