

MOVEMENT-RESISTANT ASPECTS OF CONTROL

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate about the nature of obligatory control (OC) in recent syntactic theorizing.* Although the debate has seen many participants and approaches, I focus here on two opposing views in particular: The view represented in Landau 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004a, 2006, and the view represented in Hornstein 1999, 2001, 2003 and Boeckx and Hornstein 2004. According to the former, OC is formed by an abstract Agree relation, mediated by functional heads. On the latter view (the movement theory of control (MTC)), OC is formed by A-movement, an instance of raising.

Landau 2003 provides numerous independent arguments showing that the MTC as developed in Hornstein 1999 fails to account for the most significant generalizations about OC and non-obligatory control (NOC). In response, Hornstein (2003) addresses a variety of empirical problems and offers novel, sometimes ingenious, analyses for them. It also criticizes key aspects of the proposal in Landau 1999. Boeckx and Hornstein 2004, in turn, claims that most of the arguments in Landau 2003 against the MTC do not survive upon closer scrutiny.

These are welcome developments. As the debate proceeds, theoretical positions are continually sharpened, bringing to light more and more empirical consequences.

The purpose of the present paper is threefold. It first examines Hornstein's (2003) treatment of various empirical challenges to the MTC and evaluates how well his solutions meet these challenges. It next clarifies and defends certain aspects of Landau 1999 that are criticized (and misdescribed) in Hornstein 2003. Lastly, it shows why the reply in Boeckx and Hornstein 2004 fails to address the essence of the critique expressed in Landau 2003. The general organization of this paper more or less follows the discussion in Hornstein 2003 and then turns to some issues exclusively treated in Boeckx and Hornstein 2004.

One cautionary note to the reader: Because this is an ongoing debate with a considerable history, it becomes increasingly cumbersome to elaborate this history on each new installment. Therefore, much material – both data and arguments – that is already well-represented in the previous stages of the debate has been omitted. The discussion to follow thus presupposes some familiarity with the relevant literature. It is my hope that the arguments below will be appreciated and judged against the background of this knowledge.

2. THE MINIMAL DISTANCE PRINCIPLE (MDP)

An immediate consequence of reducing OC to movement is the emergence of locality constraints. In particular, a very strict constraint – the minimal link condition (MLC) – which restricts A-movement, is now taken to restrict OC. Hornstein (1999) claims this to be the source of the observation that most transitive control verbs display object control (the minimal distance principle (MDP)). The famous case of *promise* is treated as a marked exception.

Landau 1999, 2000 (Chap. 5) and 2003 extensively discusses the serious shortcomings of the MDP.¹ There it is shown, most notably, that the strictly configurational character of the MLC makes it look like an accident that the same semantic verb classes, again and again across languages, ‘violate’ the MDP. Rather than repeat those arguments here (see Jackendoff and Culicover 2003 for pertinent discussion), I will instead address some novel points made in Hornstein 2003.

As evidence for the workings of the MDP/MLC, Hornstein mentions Rosenbaum’s observation that object control verbs, when optionally lacking an object, shift to subject control: ‘[W]hen the object is not generated (at least in overt syntax), the subject can (and must) be the controller’ (Hornstein 2003:29).

- (1) a. John₁ asked/begged/got Mary₂ PRO_{*1/2} to leave.
- b. John₁ asked/begged/got PRO₁ to leave.

This description is misleadingly selective. In fact, many verbs *retain* their object control interpretation even in the absence of an overt object. English exhibits this pattern with communication verbs, other languages (like Hebrew below) extend it to many other instances.

- (2) a. Mary₁ said/shouted to John₂ PRO_{*1/2} to leave.
- b. Mary₁ said/shouted PRO_{*1} to leave.
- (3) a. Gil₁ hirša le-Rina₂ PRO_{*1/2} la’azov.
 Gil permitted to-Rina PRO to-leave
 ‘Gil₁ permitted Rina₂ PRO_{*1/2} to leave’.
- b. Gil₁ hirša PRO_{*1} la’azov.
 Gil permitted PRO to-leave
 ‘Gil₁ permitted PRO_{*1} to leave’.

Consider now how an MLC-approach might account for the difference between *ask* and *say*. It could be argued that the null object of *ask* is not syntactically represented, whereas that of *say* is present in the syntax, i.e. a small *pro*. The latter then imposes object control but the former, being invisible to the MLC, does not. This account, again, does not speak to the obvious question, which is *why* things are this way and not any other way. It also approaches circularity: there is no *independent* evidence for the presence/absence of a *pro* object, other