

NOT REALLY ECM, NOT EXACTLY CONTROL: THE ‘QUASI-ECM’ CONSTRUCTION IN GREEK*

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we discuss Greek constructions with an accusative DP, which appears in a syntactic position where it could, in principle, be assigned a thematic role from the embedded clause and accusative case from the main verb, as in (1a) and (1b).

- (1a) i epivates perimenan ton kapetanio
the passengers-NOM expected-3PL the captain-ACC
na ferthi me aksioprepia
SUBJ behave-3SG with dignity-ACC
‘The passengers expected the captain to behave with dignity.’
- (1b) o petros ithele ti maria na traghudhai
the Peter-NOM wanted-3SG the Maria-ACC SUBJ sing-3SG
oli mera
all day
‘Peter wanted Maria to sing all day long.’

The Greek examples in (1) resemble well-known cases of Raising-to-Object (RtO)/ Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) (Postal 1974; Chomsky 1981, among others), where the embedded subject is assigned accusative case by the matrix verb, as in English (2).

- (2a) The passengers expected the captain/him to behave with dignity.
(2b) Peter wanted Maria/her to sing all day long.

The embedded verbal element attracts special attention in the Greek examples. Specifically, the embedded clauses are finite in Greek, and, as a consequence, they may allow for the subject to surface in nominative, as in the parallel examples (3a) and (3b).

- (3a) i epivates perimenan o kapetanios
the passengers-NOM expected-3PL the captain-NOM
na ferthi me aksioprepia
SUBJ behave-3SG with dignity-ACC
‘The passengers expected the captain to behave with dignity.’

- (3b) o petros ithele i maria na traghudhai
 the Peter-NOM wanted-3SG the Maria-NOM SUBJ sing-3SG
 oli mera
 all day
 ‘Peter wanted Maria to sing all day long.’

The same effect can be observed with a host of matrix verbs in Greek, such as *ipologhizo* ‘estimate’, *pistevo* ‘believe’, *ksero* ‘know’, *theo* ‘consider’, among others.

Interestingly, the nominative alternate is not attested in a language like English, which exhibits a prototypical instance of ECM, as can be easily observed in (4):

- (4a) *The passengers expected he to behave with dignity.
 (4b) *Peter wanted she to sing all day long.

Of course, English permits nominative case-marked subjects with indicative *that*-clauses:

- (4c) The passengers expected *that* he would behave with dignity.

The same applies to Greek indicative clauses, as illustrated in (5).

- (5) i epivates perimenan oti o kapetanios
 the passengers-NOM expected-3PL that the captain-NOM
 tha ferotan me aksioprepia
 would behave-3SG with dignity-ACC
 ‘The passengers expected that the captain would behave with dignity.’

These examples are not identical to the examples in (3). In particular, Greek has a nominative/accusative alternation in the same (non-indicative) linguistic context, as illustrated in (1) and (3). This is not attested in a language like English, where ECM alternates only with an embedded *that*-clause. This situation raises a number of questions, concerning the similarities and differences between the Greek and English data, leading to the ultimate goal of this paper, namely the suggestion of a possible explanation for the alternating pattern in Greek with reference to thematic information, case properties, and semantic control. Our discussion seeks to contribute new insights to the overall issue of control and RtO/ECM at the interface of syntax and semantics.

First, we present the main issues raised by the Greek ‘quasi-ECM’ construction. To be more accurate, we discuss the syntactic analysis of this construction, and its semantic implications for the thematic information that is realized. Second, we present a number of arguments against an analysis of ‘regular’ ECM. This leads to the conclusion that Greek involves finite embedded clauses with a phonologically empty pronominal subject (*pro*). The evidence indicates that the accusative DP is case-marked by the matrix verb, and it presumably also receives the internal thematic role of the main verb. Next, we present a possible explanation for the Greek examples that is based on case properties, along the