

ECM and object control

LING 200B · Ethan Poole · 22 November 2021

1 ECM infinitives

* EXCEPTIONAL CASE MARKING (ECM) infinitives are infinitives that have embedded accusative subjects:

- (1) a. Rose *believed* [_{TP} **him** to be innocent].
- b. Everyone *wanted* [_{TP} **the baby** to sleep].
- c. No one *expected* [_{TP} **her** to be at the party].
- d. Alex *allowed* [_{TP} **him** to eat nattoo].

• ECM = Accusativus cum Infinitivo (AcI) = Subject-to-Object Raising

• **The puzzle**

ECM infinitives are puzzling given the following two otherwise general tendencies:

1. subject ↔ nominative case
2. object ↔ accusative case

⇒ As such, syntacticians first became interested in ECM infinitives because the case and the grammatical function diverge.

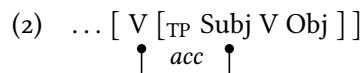
1.1 Analyses

* **Clause size**

Parallel to raising infinitives, ECM infinitives are TPs.

❶ **Exceptional-case analysis**¹

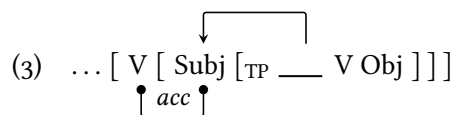
The ECM subject is base-generated inside the embedded clause and remains there. The matrix predicate *exceptionally* assigns accusative case to the ECM subject across the nonfinite clause boundary:



¹ Chomsky (1981)

❷ **Raising analysis**²

The ECM subject is base-generated inside the embedded clause and A-moves into matrix object position, from where it receives accusative case locally:³

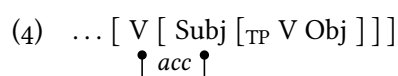


² Postal (1974)

³ Standardly, the ECM subject moves to a position above V, and then V undergoes movement to a higher head, e.g. *v*.

❸ **Logically-possible alternative**

The ECM subject is base-generated in the matrix clause:



- **Idioms**

The ECM subject may be part of an idiom. This follows from either the exceptional-case analysis or the raising analysis, because the ECM subject starts out in the embedded clause.

- (5) a. They expected [TP the shit to hit the fan].
 b. They believed [TP the cat to be out of the bag].

1.2 Evidence for raising

- In Minimalist syntax, the raising analysis of Postal (1974) is widely adopted. There are two main pieces of evidence in favor of it.


❶ *Intervening adverb or particle*

An adverb or particle may intervene between the ECM subject and the (rest of the) embedded clause:⁴

⁴ Postal (1974)

- (6) a. They made **Alex** *out* [to be the perpetrator].
 b. I believe **Sue** [*with all my heart*] [to be innocent].

- This is standardly analyzed as the matrix-object position being *above* the position of the adverb, so that when the ECM subject raises, it crosses the adverb:

- (7) ... [V [Subj [**Adv** [TP ____ V Obj]]]]]


❷ *Binding*

For Binding Theory, the ECM subject behaves as if it were in the matrix clause:⁵

⁵ Lasnik and Saito (1991)

- (8) a. **Condition A**
 Alex₁ believed [**herself**_{1/*2} to be innocent].
- b. **Condition B**
 Alex₁ believed [**her**_{*1/2} to be innocent].
- c. **Reciprocal**
 The DA proved [**the defendants**₁ to be guilty] during **each other**'s₁ trial.
- d. **NPI**
 The CEO believed [**none of the applications** to be qualified] during **any of the interviews**.

- Nowadays, case assignment in ECM infinitives receives less attention because we have well-defined theories of case that handle ECM—and moreover, they do not necessarily require committing to a particular analysis.


1.3 ECM verbs

- Whether a verb may embed an ECM infinitive is entirely idiosyncratic:

(9) a.	I regret [CP that he is no longer here].	<i>that-CP</i>
b.	*I regret [CP for him to no longer be here].	<i>for-CP</i>
c.	*I regret [TP him to no longer be here].	<i>ECM</i>
d.	I regret [DP this outcome].	<i>DP</i>
(10) a.	I hope [CP that he gets well soon].	<i>that-CP</i>
b.	I hope [CP for him to get well soon].	<i>for-CP</i>
c.	*I hope [TP him to get well soon].	<i>ECM</i>
d.	I hope *(for) [DP a favorable outcome].	<i>DP</i>
(11) a.	I believe [CP that she is innocent].	<i>that-CP</i>
b.	*I believe [CP for her to be innocent].	<i>for-CP</i>
c.	I believe [TP her to be innocent].	<i>ECM</i>
d.	I believe [DP her account].	<i>DP</i>
(12) a.	I want [CP that he leave].	<i>that-CP</i>
b.	I want [CP for him to leave].	<i>for-CP</i>
c.	I want [TP him to leave].	<i>ECM</i>
d.	I want [DP his immediate departure].	<i>DP</i>

2 ECM vs. object control

- Recall that with A-movement to subject position (i.e. raising), there is a contrast with control verbs:

(13) a.	He does seem [TP he to scare them].	<i>raising</i>
		
b.	He does want [CP PRO to scare them].	<i>control</i>

⇒ Let us call this a contrast between SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT RAISING and SUBJECT CONTROL (since the controller is a subject).

- **PRO is always a subject**

Note that PRO is always a subject and never an object. ‘Subject control’ does *not* refer to the controllee (PRO) being a subject, but to the controller being a subject.

- * **ECM vs. object control**

The same kind of contrast exists between ECM infinitives and OBJECT CONTROL:

(14) a.	I believed [him to go to school].	<i>ECM</i>
b.	I persuaded him [PRO to go to school].	<i>control</i>

- Pretheoretically, the difference between ECM and object control is that:
 - With ECM, the accusative-marked DP associated with the embedded clause is an argument of the *embedded* clause.
 - With object control, the accusative-marked DP associated with the embedded clause is an argument of the *matrix* clause.
- Under the raising analysis of ECM, the contrasts line up nicely:
 - subject-to-subject raising vs. subject control
 - subject-to-object raising vs. object control

2.1 Distinguishing ECM and object control

❶ *Expletive ‘it’*

Only ECM predicates allow an expletive *it* subject:⁶

- (15) a. It was believed [_{CP} that he went to school].
 b. *It was persuaded [_{CP} that he went to school].

⁶ This happens for ECM predicates only when the embedded clause is a CP (which blocks A-movement out of it).

❷ *Expletive ‘there’*

Only ECM predicates allow an expletive *there* subject:⁷

- (16) a. I believe there to be a solution.
 b. *I persuaded there to be a solution.

⁷ As with subject-to-subject raising, this is only possible when the embedded predicate is itself compatible with *there*.

❸ *Idioms*

Only ECM predicates preserve idiomatic interpretations:

- (17) a. I expected the shit to hit the fan.
 b. #I persuaded the shit to hit the fan.

❹ *Equivalence under passivization*

Passivization of the embedded predicate does not change the meaning in ECM constructions, but it does radically change it in object-control constructions:

- (18) a. He persuaded the doctor [PRO to examine Alex].
 b. He persuaded Alex [PRO to be examined by the doctor].
- (19) a. He wants [the doctor to examine Alex].
 b. He wants [Alex to be examined by the doctor].

* *TP for raising/ECM, CP for control*

A standard component of analyzing the difference between raising/ECM and control is that raising/ECM infinitives are TPs and control infinitives are CPs.

References

Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on government and binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

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