

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICIT CONTROL AND CONTROL SHIFT

INTRODUCTION

Control theory has produced a vast amount of research over the past two decades. In certain areas, understanding has significantly deepened, along with the growth in empirical knowledge. These areas include, among others, the OC/NOC distinction, the relation of control to binding, the nature of PRO and the relation between tense and (partial) control. Obviously, the various issues are not resolved, in fact they are under constant debate. Nevertheless, it seems that those debates by now are carried out against a fairly rich background of understanding, which has gradually grown over the last 20 years.

By contrast, other areas in control theory “lag behind”; although we have accumulated a great deal of data in them, theoretical understanding is relatively limited. Two topics belonging to this category are discussed in this chapter: Implicit Control and Control Shift. They are illustrated in (1) and (2), respectively. In (1a), the dative controller can be left implicit; (1b) allows an implicit agent controller but (1c) does not. In (2), *promise* and *ask*, normally assigning agent and goal control, respectively, switch to the opposite pattern:

- (1) a. Louise gestured/said/signaled (to Tom_i) [PRO_i to follow her].
b. It was decided (by the committee_i) [PRO_i to investigate the matter].
c. * John was promised (by Mary_i) [PRO_i to leave].
- (2) a. John_i was promised [PRO_i to be allowed to leave].
b. Mary_i asked John [PRO_i to be allowed to leave].

Both implicit control and control shift are subject to complex felicity conditions, mostly semantic and pragmatic. Those conditions seem to be of a rather flexible nature, varying not only across languages but also from speaker to speaker. This is, undoubtedly, one reason why it proved so hard to pinpoint the precise principles governing these phenomena. Thus while the literature abounds with data, the status of many generalizations is yet unclear, resulting in an unwelcome situation where too many incompatible theories coexist, with no decisive evidence forthcoming.

This chapter is a critical review of the literature on implicit control and control shift. In what follows I will try to extract the clearest possible generalizations and insights from that literature. I think it is an effort worth making, and one that is badly needed, if we are ever to make any progress in these areas. Although no comprehensive theoretical proposal will be made here, I hope to sharpen up some of the issues that any future theory would have to face. Inevitably, the discussion to follow will sometimes read as a list of examples and counterexamples; still, whenever possible, we will state the relevant generalizations and point out which of the existing proposals explain them and which do not.

One issue that I will not take a stand on is how implicit arguments are to be represented in the grammar. Other than control, implicit arguments interact in complex ways with binding, argument linking (as in *John underwent an operation*) and secondary predication, in nominal as well as in verbal environments. Existing analyses treat them as pronouns, thematic indices, variables at LF, or slots at lexical-conceptual structure (for extensive discussion, see Williams 1987, Brody & Manzini 1987, Roeper 1987, Clark 1990, Safir 1991). For concreteness, I will assume (following Clark 1990) that implicit arguments are represented as variables at LF, although nothing crucial rests on this choice. As mentioned in chapter 2, the view that control is licensed by the functional head that agrees with the controller DP rather than by the DP itself is more amenable to implicit control than alternative theories, which rely on the syntactic presence of the controller.

This chapter is organized as follows: In section I discuss implicit control, divided into dative and agent control. Section 1.1 establishes implicit dative control as a solid effect, with all the properties of normal OC. In section 1.2 I address several analyses that challenge the notion of implicit dative control, and instead classify the relevant cases under NOC. For each proposal, I show that the challenge does not withstand a closer scrutiny. Section 1.3 extends our observations to implicit controllers of purpose clauses.

Section 2 is devoted to implicit agent control. In section 2.1 I consider various attempts to tackle "Visser's Generalization" (which is said to rule out (1c)), and conclude that none of them is fully satisfactory. In section 2.2 I turn to control into impersonal passives and temporal adjuncts - two cases that systematically violate Visser's Generalization. It is shown that adjunct control has certain peculiar properties, setting it apart from standard OC cases (contrary to standard treatments). In section 2.3 I consider rationale clauses, which have often been claimed to exhibit implicit agent control. I review some compelling evidence against that view, however conclude that no existing proposal is able to capture all the relevant data.

The overall picture emerging from the discussion of implicit control is the following: Implicit datives (and more generally, oblique arguments) can control whenever they are independently licensed; omissibility of controllers is orthogonal to control. Control by implicit agents presents a more complex picture. Broadly speaking, implicit agents can control - both in impersonal passives and in adjuncts (excluding rationale clauses, which involve a more abstract notion of

“intentionality”), although the adjunct cases are subject to further ill-understood restrictions. “Visser’s Generalization” possibly covers a single case - that of (1c) - hence teaches us very little.

Section 3 is dedicated to control shift. In section 3.1 I present the data on this phenomenon. In section 3.2 I discuss in detail five theories of control shift, some of which invoke special mechanisms to account for control shift and some of which do not. It is concluded that narrowly thematic approaches are ill-equipped to deal with the phenomenon; yet the choice between the more sophisticated approaches, which appeal to notions of intentionality and causation, is a rather subtle question. Section 4 considers, in light of these considerations, the status of the Minimal Distance Principle (MDP), which selects a controller solely on the basis of syntactic locality. I argue that the MDP fails to provide a systematic account of subject control and control shift, and that recent attempts to derive it from the MLC raise even further empirical problems.

The summary of this chapter briefly states the conclusions from the preceding discussion: Findings, generalizations, and theoretical constraints on possible accounts.

1. IMPLICIT CONTROL

1.1. Control by Implicit Datives

The idea of control by implicit dative arguments can be traced back to Kimball (1971). Challenging the Super-Equi Deletion rule of Grinder (1970), Kimball argued that this rule can, and in fact must, be decomposed into two distinct deletion rules: The first one is a standard Equi-NP deletion rule, applying between the “dative” argument of an adjectival predicate and the embedded subject; the second one is a long-distance rule, deleting the dative controller under identity with a commanding NP.¹

- (3) a. S-Structure: Jones said it was necessary to see himself.
- b. D-Structure: Jones said it was necessary *for Jones* [Jones to see himself].
- c. Equi-NP: Jones said it was necessary *for Jones* [Ø to see himself].
- d. Dative-Deletion: Jones said it was necessary Ø [Ø to see himself].

Abstracting away from technical execution, which has radically changed since the early 70’s, Kimball’s analysis captures the essence of what later came to be called “control by implicit arguments”. Furthermore, Kimball’s discussion makes it

¹ The term “dative” is used somewhat loosely here, covering both *to*-PP’s and *for*-PP’s. In fact, our conclusions extend straightforwardly to all implicit oblique arguments.

explicit that he takes the interpretation of such constructions to implicate those unpronounced “dative” arguments.

Following Kimball’s insight, Epstein (1984) observes that sentences like (4a) are interpreted as in (4b), with an implicit **BENEFACTIVE/EXPERIENCER** argument (boldfaced below) understood to be coreferential with **PRO**; thus even cases of so-called arbitrary **PRO** in fact involve implicit control by an argument itself bound by a universal quantifier:²

- (4) a. It is fun [**PRO** to eat ice-cream].
- b. $\forall x$ [it is fun **for x** [for x to eat ice-cream]]

Koster (1984) notes that so-called LD-control in examples like (5a) is blocked in the presence of an overt **BENEFACTIVE** argument (5b); a natural suggestion is that the true controller in both cases is that argument, which is left implicit in (5a) but is linked to a remote antecedent. The *control* relation is local throughout:

- (5) a. Mary_i said it was difficult [**PRO**_i to take another topic].
- b. Mary said it was difficult for Bill_i [**PRO**_i to take another topic].

Turning to verbal environments, Rizzi (1986) argues convincingly that implicit dative arguments can control (but not bind). He distinguishes between generic contexts, where a dative *pro* may be projected, and non-generic contexts, where it cannot. Nonetheless, an implicit dative argument in the latter context may still control:

- (6) a. Lo psichiatra (gli) ha detto [di **PRO** parlare di se stessi].
 ‘The psychiatrist said (to him) to speak about himself’
- b. Il generale ha ordinato (ai soldati) di partire.
 ‘The general ordered (to the soldiers) to leave’.

In English, the distribution of implicit dative arguments of verbal predicates is restricted to certain communication verbs (*say, shout, signal...*). When allowed, implicit datives can control just like overt datives (see discussion in section 1.2). The idea that implicit arguments enter control relations allows us to solve a puzzling problem raised by Manzini (1983) regarding the following contrast:

- (7) a. Mary knows that it would help Bill [**PRO** to behave herself in public].
- b. * Mary knew that it had been decided (by John) [**PRO** to behave herself].

² The question of the source of universal - more likely, generic - quantification in (4b) is left open here. As shown in chapter 3, section 6, some difficulties arise with Epstein’s (1984) QR-analysis, which do not arise in Lebeaux’s (1984) idea of a base-generated empty operator.

For Manzini, the infinitive in (7a) is co-superscripted with the expletive *it*; the latter cannot be an accessible subject for PRO (because of the i-within-i condition), so PRO has no domain governing category and it is freely indexed.³ From the ungrammaticality of (7b) Manzini concludes that extraposed clauses in impersonal passives are not similarly coindexed with the expletive. It is unclear what lies behind this technical device; why, for example, does the indexing mechanism not act the other way round, allowing (7b) and disallowing (7a)? In fact, one does not want to motivate this particular mechanism because it is simply untrue that LD-control always fails across an impersonal passive:

- (8) a. Mary knew it had been recommended [PRO to behave herself in public].
- b. Mary knew it had been prohibited [PRO to reveal herself in public].

Manzini's technical device does not really explain the contrast in (7) and in fact incorrectly rules out (8), on a par with (7b). The notion of implicit control immediately accounts for the contrast between (7b) and (8). Notice that *recommend* and *prohibit*, but not *decide*, select an internal goal argument (that is, the person to whom the prohibition/ recommendation is made). The interpretation of (8) makes it clear that it is by this argument that PRO is controlled. No such argument is available in (7b), and the periphrastic agent *John* is incompatible with the feminine reflexive.

The implicit dative controller not only *can* be syntactically absent, but sometimes *must* be so. Consider the verb *prohibit*, which curiously selects a gerund in the active (9a) but an infinitive in the impersonal passive (9b). The internal argument is in fact syntactically inexpressible in the latter (9c), however still interpreted as the controller:⁴

- (9) a. John prohibited Mary from [PRO speaking loudly].
- b. It was prohibited [PRO to speak loudly].
- c. * It was prohibited on/to/for Mary [PRO to speak loudly].

Therefore, we have a case of implicit control - (8b) and (9c) - that cannot be reduced to syntactic control, suggesting that control theory should not be confined to S-Structure. More generally, control theory must apply at whatever grammatical level where implicit arguments are represented.

³ See Manzini (1983) for the technical details.

⁴ To the extent that a *for*-NP may follow *prohibit* in (9c), it is not an argument of the verb but rather a Comp-Subject sequence, as the ungrammaticality of (i) indicates.

i. * For Mary, it was prohibited [PRO to speak loudly].

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