The Complementation of Raising and Control Verbs in Mauritian

The question regarding the categorial status of the complement of raising and control verbs is still not settled: they are analyzed either as clauses (Chomsky 1981) or as phrasal complements (Bresnan 1982, Pollard and Sag 1994). Chomsky's GB theory motivates the clausal analysis by assuming a strict isomorphism between syntactic structures on the one hand and on the other, the representation of thematic structure and subcategorization properties of lexical items. Bresnan 1982 and Pollard and Sag 1994 argue against this position and more generally against the assumptions that lead to such an analysis. Mauritian provides further empirical evidence against a clausal analysis since verbs in this language are morphologically sensitive to the categorial status of their complement. The syntactic differences between the raising and control verbs in Mauritian are similar to those observed in English or French (passive, non-referential arguments). Those differences led us to adopt an argument sharing analysis for raising and a semantic-based analysis for control. Our analysis of control accounts for Mauritian obligatorily controlled overt pronominal subjects. Finally, from a descriptive point of view, Mauritian seems interesting with respect to the distribution of TMA markers, modals and raising verbs.

1. Differential properties between clauses and non-clausal VPs

Mauritian verbs do not agree with their subject nor do they inflect for TMA or finiteness. However, they have a two-place paradigm, Short Forms (SF) versus Long Forms (LF). According to Baker 1972, 70% of Mauritian verbs display two different forms while the others have a syncretic form. SF is only possible when the verb is followed by phrasal complements. Not using the SF in that context triggers a pragmatic effect (verum focus). In other syntactic contexts, the LF is always used.

(1) a. Zan ti manz (*manze) poul.
   John PST eat.SF (*eat.LF) chicken
   John ate chicken.

 b. Zan ti manze (*manz).
   John PST eat.LF (*eat.SF)
   John ate.

Only some VP complements trigger the SF. We analyze VPs that do not trigger the SF as clauses. This analysis is supported by the following properties: they can have an overt subject, they can be marked by TMAs, they can be introduced by the complementizer *ki* and finally they can be replaced by verbless clauses. VPs which do trigger SF can either be bare (2a) or be introduced by the complementizer *pou* (2c).

(2) a. Mari konn (*kone) lir.
   Mary know.SF (know.LF) read.LF
   Mary knows how to read.

 b. Mari panse (*pans) (ki) li'nn fel.
   Mary think.LF (think.SF) (that) 3SG'PERF fail
   Mary thinks that she failed.

 c. Zan pe pans (*panse) pou vini.
   John PROG think.SF (think.LF) COMP come.LF
   John is thinking about coming.

 d. Mari kone (*konn) kouma li apele.
   Mary know.LF (know.SF) how 3SG call.LF
   Lit. Mary knows how he is called.

Those VPs cannot contain TMA markers (3a), cannot be introduced by the complementizer *ki* (3b) and unlike clauses, they cannot have a subject (3c) except with *pou*. We analyze those VPs as non-clausal. Note that Mauritian verb forms allow us to contrast clauses (LF) and sequences of two non-clausal complements (SF) (Bresnan 1982) (3d).

(3) a. *Zan res pe rod sa
   John continue.SF PROG search.SF DEM
   John keeps on being looking for this.

 b. *Zan res ki (li) rod sa
   John continue.LF COMP 3SG search.SF DEM
   John keeps on that he looks for this

 c. *Zan res li rod sa
   John continue.LF 3SG search.SF DEM
   John keeps on he looks for this

 d. Li'nn get (*gete) (*ki) Mari fer sa
   3SG'PERF watch.SF watch.LF COMP Mary do.SF DEM
   He has watched Mary do this.

Since Mauritian has verbless clauses, we could expect control verbs to have non-verbal complements but this is not the case. This confirms the fact that (1) the complement of control verbs is not a clause (2) control verbs select the category of their complements (Pollard and Sag 1994).

(4) a. Mari res   fatige.
       Mary remain.SF tired
       Mary remains tired.

    b. Mari panse   (ki) Zan fatige.
       Mary think.LF (that) John tired
       Mary thinks that John is tired.

    c. *Mari pans   pou fatige.
       Mary think.SF COMP tired
       Mary believes to be tired.

2. Mauritian modals, TMA markers and raising verbs.

Mauritian has a closed class of modal verbs: 'paret' *seem*, 'kapav' *can* and 'bizin' *need* which are distinct from both TMA markers and raising verbs. Unlike TMA markers, they can appear in both clauses and VPs (5a). Unlike raising verbs, modals can appear in the middle of a TMA sequence with the tense marker *ti* always preceding them and the aspect marker *pe* typically following them (5c). However, they cannot have a clausal complement (5b).

(5) a. Mo le   (*pou) kapav vini.
       1SG want.SF (IRR) can   come.LF
       I want to be able to come.

    b. Zan kapav (*{ki|pou}) (*li) vini.
       John can   COMP   3SG come.LF
       John can come.

    c. Zan bizin pe   vini.
       John must PROG come.LF
       John must be coming.

Modals do not have the same properties as adverbs since they can appear alone with a subject phrase.

(6) a. Zan kapav/ankor manz poul?
       ((Can) John (still) eat(s) chicken?)

    b. Wi, Zan kapav/*ankor
       yes, John can/*still

We therefore analyze modals as raising verbs with special complementation properties with respect to TMA marking.

3.HPSG analysis

We give an HPSG account of the complementation of control and raising verbs in Mauritian. Such an account allows one to express the subcategorization constraints imposed by each verb (class) including categorial constraints, which are not always semantically based. It also allows one to derive the identity of the controller or the form of the controlled complement from semantic properties of a verb (class). Raising is analyzed as argument sharing while control is analyzed as index sharing. TMA markers are analyzed as light markers rather than verbs. This accounts for their distribution, strict ordering as well as for their lack of mobility which cannot be derived from semantic/scope constraints only. Modals are analyzed as subject sharing verbs which inherit the marking properties of their complement. According to our analysis, the Mauritian VP has a layered structure unless a modal intervenes in which case, light markers form a cluster with the modal or with its complement depending on their linearization (7).

(7) [mo [[ti [pe [touzour kapav]]] [pe [get sa]]]]
    (I was always able to see this.)

References

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