Object movement symmetries in British English dialects
keywords: A-movement, locality, case, argument structure

In recent generative literature, cross-linguistic variation in the availability of theme passivization out of applicatives has generally been explained in terms of locality. On this approach, theme passivization is fed by theme movement to an outer specifier of a high applicative head, whence it passivizes without hurdling the goal, as in (1). Where this movement is unavailable, theme movement to TP is blocked by the intervening goal (Anagnostopoulou 2003, Doggett 2004, Bobaljik 2002, McGinnis 1998, 2001, Ura 1996).

(1) [(TP THEME [TP T…[ApplP <THEME>[ApplP GOAL [ApplV APPL [VP V <THEME>]]]]]]

Independent evidence for the short theme movement in (1) has mainly come from Germanic. As Anagnostopoulou (2005) notes, Norwegian and Swedish, which have theme passives, also marginally allow theme-goal orders in object shift. Similarly, some speakers of British English dialects (BrE) with theme passives also allow for theme-goal orders with pronominal themes in active contexts, as in (2) and (3) (Doggett 2004, Citkova 2008). The latter construction behaves like double object constructions (DOCs) on standard diagnostics, and plausibly involves short theme movement across the goal.

(2) %The ball was given my brother. (3) %She gave it me.

To date, no work has examined the extent to which availability of theme-goal orders in passive and active contexts correlates at a finer level, that is, across speakers of these varieties. In this talk, we report on a recent magnitude estimation experiment (n=137) to test this prediction. Results show a significant positive correlation in scores for the sentence types exemplified in (2) and (3), suggesting support for the locality position that theme passivization is related to short theme movement.

The BrE facts are nevertheless problematic for the approach in (1) since theme passives and theme-goal active orders do not behave like high applicatives on standard diagnostics, including benefactive interpretations:

(4) *The bag was held her. (‘The bag was held for her.’) (5) *She hit it me. (‘She hit it for me.’)

A locality approach is in principle combinable with a low applicative structure, as in (6), but this will entail an “anti-locality” violation since Appl would attract its own complement to its spec (Grohmann 2003, Kayne 2000).

(6) [ApplP THEME [ApplV GOAL [ApplV APPL <THEME>]]]

We propose that the BrE facts are better expressed on a modified version of traditional case-based approaches to passive symmetry (Baker 1988, Wooldred 1993). We assume that BrE theme-goal constructions, like DOCs, are low applicatives. In DOCs, both Appl and v will have phi-probes that value accusative case on their targets—the theme and goal respectively:

(7) [VP EA [v’ V[Acc] [VP V [ApplP GOAL [ApplV APPL[Acc] THEME]]]]]

Theme-goal constructions will differ minimally from DOCs in that the accusative-valuing person probe on Appl in (7) is merged as a separate head above ApplP:

(8) [VP EA [v’ V[Acc] [VP [ApplP GOAL [ApplV APPL THEME]]]]]
In active contexts, the person probe above ApplP will agree with the goal, bearing the closest person feature. The \textit{in} feature on \textit{v} will subsequently agree with the theme across the goal; because the goal’s case feature has previously been valued, the goal will be transparent to this agreement (i.e. no defective intervention). Assume further that weak pronouns, but not full DPs, raise to the specifier of their probes. In this grammar, pronominal themes but not full DP themes will therefore appear in theme-goal orders in active contexts. The position of the verb relative to the theme indicates that the verb has moved out of vP. We assume the verb raises to a position immediately above vP, here labeled F. We illustrate this in (9), which derives (3).

(9) **Theme-goal orders in active contexts:**

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{[TP} \text{give-v-F} [\text{vP}\text{ it v}\text{ she} [\text{v} <\text{v}\{\text{A}\text{n}\text{w}\text{t}\text{e}\text{r}\text{r}\text{r}\text{t}\text{w}\text{e}\text{r}\text{t}\text{y}}\} > [\text{vP} <\text{give}> [\text{XP me} [\pi_{[\text{A}\text{t}\text{t}\text{e}\text{r}\text{r}\text{r}\text{t}\text{w}\text{e}\text{r}\text{y}}]} [\text{ApplP} <\text{me}> [\text{ApplP} \text{APPL} <\text{it}>])]])]]]]
\end{array}
\]

As in DOCs, intransitive-v will be deficient in that it will lack a case-valuing probe and will not be a phase head. Consequently, the theme will not agree with the phi-probe on \textit{v}, but rather subsequently with T, which will assign it nominative case, as in (10), which derives (2). Again, the goal will be transparent to extraction by virtue of previous agreement with \pi. Because the EPP feature on T attracts any eligible DP, the theme need not be pronominal here.

(10) **Theme passives:**

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{[vP} \text{ v} [\text{vP} \text{ give} [\pi_{[\text{A}\text{n}\text{w}\text{t}\text{e}\text{r}\text{r}\text{r}\text{t}\text{w}\text{e}\text{r}\text{y}}]} [\text{ApplP} \text{ my brother} [\text{ApplP} \text{ Appl} <\text{the ball}>])]])]
\end{array}
\]

This proposal now meets two key desiderata: (i) accounting for the cross-speaker correlation in availability of theme-goal orders in actives and passives; and (ii) accommodating the low-applicative semantics of theme-goal constructions.

**References:**


