SMALL CLAUSE

A NOTE ON ITS CATEGORY

Associated Prof.
Dr. Sonel K. Sinha
Ibb University - Faculty of Art – Engilsh Dept

[خلاصة البحث]

عـــدّ (ستويل – ١٩٨٣) الجملة القصيرة إنها إسقاط للمعـــنى الـــذي يحملــه المسند – الفعل – وبنى رأيه هذا على أساس إن الفعل يصنف مكوناتـــه الفرعيـــة وإنـــه لا يستجيب للمكونات الجزئية المتعلقة بمكوناته الفرعية تلك .

لكننا حين نتفحص – وعن قرب – خاصية التصنيف الفرعي للفعل نجده أحيانــاً – إن لم يكن دائماً – ذا تأثر بتلك المكونات الجزئية وهـــذه الخاصيـــة للفعـــل تنـــاقض وتدحض رأي (ستويل) وتدحضه . ومن هنا نرى عدم تصنيف العبارة القصـــيرة بأنهــا (جملة الجار والمجرور PP) أو (الجملة الفعلية VP) أو (الجملة الأسمية NP) . وذلك اعتماداً على المعنى الفئوي للمسند الذي تحمله العبارة القصيرة .

ABSTRACT

Stowell (1983) considers small clause a projection of the lexical head of its predicate. His claim is based on the argument that a verb subcategorizes for a constituent and that it is insensitive to a sub-constituent of its sub-categorized constituent. But when we closely examine the sub-categorization feature of a verb we find that it may, at times, if not always, be sensitive to a sub-constituent of its sub-categorized constituent. This feature of the verb invalidates Stowell's arguments and hence a small clause should not be labelled as a PP or an NP or a VP depending on the categorial label of the head of the predicate of the small clause.

0. INTRODUCTION

Stowell (1983) claims that a small clause is a projection of the lexical head of its predicate. His claim is based on the argument that a verb subcategorizes for a constituent and that it is insensitive to the sub-constituents of its subcategorized constituent. This paper seeks to suggest that Stowell's argument is untenable. A verb may be sensitive to the sub-constituents of its subcategorized constituent. Hence, Stowell's claim regarding the categorial labelling of a small clause can not be sustained.

1. STOWELL'S ANALYSIS OF SMALL CLAUSES

In the principles-and-parameters approach a small clause has been assigned the following structure:

(1)   [sc NP   XP]

Where X can be V, A, P or N, as shown below[1] :

(2)   a. I saw [sc him   go].

b. I believe [sc John   intelligent].

c. I saw [sc Bill on the floor].

d. I consider [sc Mary a good girl].

Stowell (1983) considers a small clause a projection of the lexical head of the predicate. Thus, in (3-6), he gives the small

clauses a categorial label according to the lexical head of the predicate, with an NP in the specifier position.

(3)   a. John finds [AP Bill [absolutely crazy]]

b. Alexander proved [AP the theory [false]]

c. We consider [AP it [unlikely that John will win]]

(4)   a. I expect [PP that man [off my ship]]

b. The captain allowed [PP him [into the control room]]

(5)   a. Mary had [VP her brother [open the door]]

b. Nobody heard [VP it [rain (last night)]]

(6)   a. We all feared [VP John [killed by the enemy]]

b. I don't want [VP advantage [taken of John]]

His argument is that the matrix verb subcatgorizes for the small clause predicate. If the small clause were really S, then, according to him, the matrix verb should not specify the categorial features of any subconstituent other than the entire clause. That is, the matrix verb should be indifferent to the categorial status of the SC predicate. But it is not. He gives the following ungrammatical examples to prove the point:

(7)   a. * I consider [John [off my ship]] (cf.3a).

        b. * I proved [the weapon [in his possession]] (cf.3b).

        c. * I expect [that man [very stupid]] (cf.4a).

        d. * We all feared [John [unfriendly]] (cf.6a).

2. A CRITIQUE OF STOWELL'S ANALYSIS

According to Stowell's claim, the prediction is that the matrix verb will not be sensitive to the predicate of its IP or CP complement. But this proves to be false. Consider the following sentences:

(8)   a.   * I consider [$_{IP}$ John to be running in a race]

        b.   * I consider [$_{CP}$ that John is running in a race]

        c.   I consider [$_{IP}$ John to be honest]

        d.   I consider [$_{CP}$ that John is honest]

        e.   I consider [$_{CP}$ that you are not to blame]

        f.   I consider [$_{CP}$ John off his senses]

The verb consider subcategorizes for an IP or a CP complement. Yet (8a-b) are ungrammatical even though the sub-categorization condition is fulfilled. On the other hand, (8c-e) are grammatical. The obvious reason seems to be that the verb

consider is sensitive to the predicate of its CP (or IP) complement. But can we distinguish (say) the CP complements of (8b) and (8d) in terms of category labels ? Such a move is prima facie false. Evidently, the fact that a verb seems to be sensitive to the predicate of its complement does not become a basis for assigning a categorial label to its complement. Indeed, we can deal with data like (7) – (8) in the following way. Chomsky (1986) argues that lexical entries should specify just S-selection (as part of the semantic characterization of an item) and transitivity, and they need not specify C-selection (categorial selection) as it would follow form S-selection. Let us say that S-selection, just as it distinguishes between different classes of "terms" in terms of such features as [± Animate], [± Abstract] etc., also distinguishes between different classes of "propositions". Thus, there are propositions which predicate an attribute ("John is honest") and those which predicate an action ("John ran"). It seems to be clear that consider requires a proposition which predicates an attribute as its complement. Consider again (7a) and (8f), repeated below:

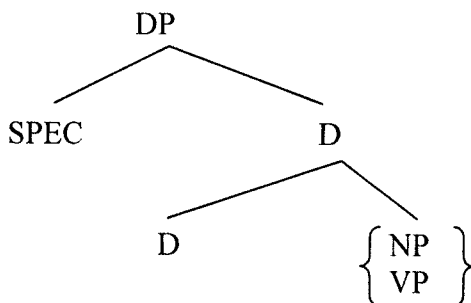(7)   a. * I consider [John [$_{PP}$ off my ship]].

(8)   f. I consider [John [$_{PP}$ off his senses]].

In (7a) off my ship is a projection of the preposition off., Stowell claims that [John [my ship]] is also a PP with John in the specifier position. Since consider does not subcategorize for a PP, the example is ruled out. This argument is unconvincing because, on the same line of analysis, (8f) should also be ruled out, since off his senses is very much a PP. But it is acceptable. Obviously, the reason is that off his senses has an idiomatic meaning as an attribute. in (8f) should, therefore, be labelled just a SC instead of a PP.

3. SOME MORE ARGUMENTS

Incidentally, small clauses are not the only categories with respect to which a matrix verb shows sensitivity to a subconstituent of its complement. Abney (1987) proposes a unified structure of NPs and gerunds in his DP-analysis of Noun phrases. In his analysis, the head D (=Determiner) has a choice between an NP and VP as its complement.

(9)

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                    DP
                  /    \
              SPEC      D
                      /    \
                    D     { NP }
                          { VP }
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Thus, we can get both

(10)   a. John's pen.

b. John's going (to the market).

Now, a verb selecting a DP should not be sensitive to sub-part of it (i.e., it should be insensitive to whether D selects an NP or a VP). But this is not the case.

(11)   a. I want [DP John's pen]

b. * I want [DP John's going]

Yet another argument against Stowell's claim comes from the strategy of assigning [+ Generic] feature to a DP in English. The indefinite article a, the indefinite article the, the singular morpheme and the plural morpheme assign a [+ Generic] feature to a DP.

(12)   a. [A tiger] is a ferocious animal.

b. [The tiger] is a ferocious animal.

c. [Tiger] is a ferocious animal.

d. [Tigers] are ferocious animals.

The verb be may subcategorize for a [+ Generic] DP as its complement[2].

(13)   Maya is [a good girl].

If subcategorization by a lexical item does not refer to the subparts of its subcategorized constituent, as claimed by Stowell, then we should expect all the strategies of assigning [+ Generic] feature being employed by the [+ Generic] DP in the complement position of the verb <u>be.</u> But this is not so.

(14)   a. Anita is [a doctor].

b. * Anita is [the doctor].

c. * Anita is [doctor].

d. * Anita and Priya are [the doctors].

e. Anita and Priya are [doctors].

We see that the verb <u>be</u> allows only the indefinite article <u>a</u> and the plural morpheme to its [+ Generic] DP complement. It does not accept the difinite article <u>the</u> and the singular morpheme in its [+ Generic] DP complement, though each is a subpart of the subcategorized complement.

In view of the examples given above, we cannot hold on to Stowell's claim. We should accept that a lexical element may (at times, if not always) be sensitive to a subconstituent of its subcategorized complement. But this does not entitle the category of the lexical head of the sub-constituent to become the

basis for the categorial labelling of the entire subcategorized constituent.

4. CONCLUSION

Summing up, Stowell labelled a small clause as a PP or an AP or a VP etc, on the argument that the matrix verb subcategorizes one of these phrases as the predicate of the small clause. If the small clause were really an S, the matrix verb should be indifferent to the category of a subconstituent of S. since it is not, the small clause should be taken as a projection of the lexical head of its predicate. This argument of Stowell, however, is untenable because a matrix verb may be sensitive to the subparts of its complement. If we accept Stowell's argument, we run the risk of relabelling a CP or an IP complement of a matrix verb according to the category of the predicate. Hence, a small clause should remain an SC instead of being labelled an AP or a PP or a VP.

NOTES

1. Chomsky (1981) has proposed that any clausally interpreted construction at LF is a constituent in syntax. We have assumed small clauses to be constituents, contrary to the claim of Schein (1982), Williams (1983) and Bresnan (1978). For arguments in favour of small clauses as constituents see Stowell (1981,1983), Pesetsky (1982), Safir (1983) and Kayne (1984) apart from Chomsky (1981).

2. Whether we take <u>be</u> as a raising verb or non-raising verb, the argument given here holds for either.

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