

To-Infinitive Clauses in English: A Generative Grammar Analysis

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Abstract

This paper analyses *to*-infinitive clauses from various angles. It is divided into four different, but related, parts. Firstly, there is an introduction to the term '*to*-infinitive clauses' in terms of their implicit meanings, their structure, showing their tenselessness, and their types. Then the two phenomena, namely control and raising, which are closely related to *to*-infinitive clauses come under discussion. Finally, the last part is devoted to the complementation of *to*-infinitive clauses. Concerning this, two approaches are presented: the first one focuses on the function of the *to*-infinitive clause, and the second one takes the structure of the *to*-infinitive clause into consideration. The paper ends with its conclusions.

1. Introducing *To*-Infinitive Clauses

This type of infinitive clause begins with 'to'. There are two types of *to*-infinitive clauses in terms of having or lacking subject: The first type is *to*-infinitive clause with subject, and the second one is *to*-infinitive clause without subject. Throughout the study both types are considered, that is why the term is usually (not always) used in plural. It is important to know that this 'to' is not a preposition as it is not followed by any noun (phrase). Rather, it is an infinitival 'to'. As Los (2005: 208) argues, it can be referred to as a non-finite modal. The present study supports the argument regarding 'to' as a modal since, taking structure into account, it precedes a bare verb form, just like modals. Another evidence to support Los is Miller's claim that "The non-finite constructions *do* allow some modality to be signalled, that is, events can be presented as necessary, or requiring permission, or requiring ability" (2002: 82 emphasis added). Here, Miller mentions the term 'non-finite constructions' in general. It is clear that *to*-infinitive clauses can be grouped under the superordinate term 'non-finite clause'. Thus, the claim is true to *to*-infinitive clauses as well.

- (1) Kate wanted [to talk to Marry]. (necessity)
- (2) Kate wanted [to be allowed to take part in the competition]. (permission)
- (3) Kate wanted Marry [to be able to take part in the competition]. (ability)

One more way to differentiate between infinitival 'to' and prepositional 'to' to avoid confusion is their ability to permit their complement ellipsis. The complement of infinitival 'to' can be ellipsed while that of prepositional 'to' cannot be (Radford, 2004: 51). Below in the first answer of (B) the complement of the infinitival 'to' is omitted, but the second answer is ill-formed because the complement of prepositional 'to' should not be absent.

(4) A: Do you want to go to the zoo?

B: No, I don't want *to*.

*No, I don't want to go **to**.

On the grounds that a very important aspect of non-finite clauses is the absence of tense, and *to*-infinitive clauses belong to non-finite clauses, it is concluded that *to*-infinitive clauses are tenseless, i.e., they show no tense as can be seen in the following two example sentences.

- (5) They *attempted* [to come early].
- (6) They *attempt* [to come early].

The bracketed parts in both sentences above are *to*-infinitive clauses, in both sentences the same clause pattern is available whereas the first sentence is past and the second one is present. One can easily see that the bracketed clauses indicate no tense, and this proves the researcher's claim.

Although this kind of tenseless clause always begins with 'to', there are three types of *to*-infinitive clauses with respect to time. Of this, Declerk (2006: 17) mentions two types: *present infinitive* (to do) which expresses simultaneity to the time of the higher clause situation, and *perfect infinitive* (to have done) which expresses anteriority. As for the third type, Murphy (2012: 108) indicates that *continuous infinitive* (to be doing) is also another form of *to*-infinitive clauses. The present study is primarily concerned with the first type (to do). The following are examples for each kind, respectively.

(7) John seems [to be happy].

(8) John seems [to have been happy].

(9) John seems [to be enjoying his job].

With respect to (7), the *to*-infinitive clause, which is known as the lower clause, tells us that John's happiness simultaneously coincides with his presence in the contextual time of the higher clause. In (8), his happiness has happened before the given situation. As for (9), the *to*-infinitive clause shows that John is in the progress of enjoying something, namely his job.

There exist some significant phenomena related to *to*-infinitive clauses. Henceforth the rest of the paper is devoted to matters of control, raising, and complementation of *to*-infinitive clauses.

2. Control

One of the related issues to *to*-infinitive clauses is control. Before discussing control, we should know that in talking about control the focus is on the *to*-infinitive clause *without subject* because when the subject is present in the lower clause there is nothing to be controlled by the controller in the higher clause. Thus, control and an overt subject in the *to*-infinitive clause are mutually exclusive. Therefore, our analysis considers subjectless *to*-infinitive clauses. With respect to this, Miller (2002: 82) states that when there is no explicit subject, it is assumed that there is an understood subject. Given this assumption, and following Cook and Newson (2007: 87), semantically and syntactically there is a subject while this subject is absent phonologically because it is not pronounced. On the whole, this phonologically empty subject is known as PRO. As cited in Newson (2006: 298-9), the missing pronoun PRO has two main characteristic features: limitations on its occurrence and on its referential properties. Concerning its occurrence, it only occurs in non-finite clauses, it is never seen elsewhere.

(10) She attempted [PRO to start the car].

(11a) *She said [that PRO came earlier than usual yesterday].

(11b) *She phoned to PRO.

(11c) *She saw PRO.

As for the second property which has to do with reference, we come to the definition of control as cited in Crystal (2003: 107) “. . . determines the potential for REFERENCE of the

abstract pronominal element PRO.” Obviously, this reference is between the covert pronoun PRO and one of the overt nouns or pronouns seen in the higher clause.

(12a) I asked him_i [PRO_i to guide the guests].

(12b) David persuaded Laura_i [PRO_i to keep herself_i /*himself from the cold].

(13a) I_i promised him [PRO_i to guide the guests].

(13b) The government_i has pledged the citizens [PRO_i to root out corruption].

Here, PROs in (12) refer back to the object in the higher clause ‘him’ whereas in (13) refer to the subject of the higher clause. As Cook and Newson (2007: 89) argue, the reference of PRO is determined by the verb in the higher clause. Thus, verbs like ‘ask’ and ‘persuade’ are known as object control verbs because their object is the controller. Conversely, verbs like ‘promise’ and ‘pledge’ are subject control verbs since their subject is the controller. It follows that sentences in (12) involve *object control* while those of (13) involve *subject control*. From this perspective, subject control and object control are regarded as two types of control on the condition that there is an antecedent in the higher clause. Briefly speaking, control is the reference, PRO is controlled by either the subject or the object, which are called controllers and they occur in the higher clause.

Now a question arises concerning the reference of PRO. In each of the above sentences an antecedent exists in the higher clause. But what if there is no antecedent? The answer to this question is that lacking an overt antecedent means that PRO is not controlled by any word in the higher clause. In a case like that, PRO may refer to someone outside the sentence as in (14) or it may have an arbitrary reference in which case the generic pronoun *one* may be regarded as its referent as in (15) below (Radford, 2004: 111).

(14) It’s important [PRO to prepare myself for the exam]. (the speaker)

(15) It’s important [PRO to take oneself seriously]. (anyone generically)

So far we haven’t discussed the reason of establishing a relationship between PRO and its antecedent. Of this, Cowper (1992: 161) claims that PRO can only occur in ungoverned positions, i.e., it is not governed at all by any element. This makes the term ‘control’ necessary to come into existence in order to meet the needs of the relationship between PRO and its antecedent.

Finally, there are two grammatical categories which play a great role in determining the relationship between the controlled element (PRO) and its controller (antecedent). These grammatical categories are taken into account in the *to*-infinitive clause, rather than in the higher clause. They include passivisation and embedded Wh-question:

A. Passivisation: The active/passive contrast in the *to*-infinitive clause changes the controller of PRO. For example, in (16a) below PRO is controlled by the object of the higher clause whereas in (16b) it is controlled by the subject, bearing in mind that the verb is the same (*beg*) in both higher clauses.

(16a) John_j begged Jean_i [PRO_i to release the child from prison].

(16b) John_j begged Jean_i [PRO_j to be released from prison].

B. Embedded Wh-question: When having examples like this, the PRO is uncontrolled (free) as there is no potential controller in the higher clause. Lacking a controller in the higher clause results from the embedded wh-question. In this case, PRO has an arbitrary reference. Consider (17) below:

(17) Joseph asked Katherine [how [PRO_{arb} to prepare oneself for a journey]].

(Ibid.: 162)

3. Raising

Another phenomenon which is closely related to *to*-infinitive clauses is raising. Like control, raising occurs when a specific group of verbs/predicates exist. The verbs which allow raising are called raising verbs. As mentioned in Trask (1993: 228), raising verbs/predicates include *seem*, *appear*, and *be likely*. Whenever one of these verbs/predicates is available, raising happens from the *to*-infinitive clause to the higher clause. Radford (2004:274) prefers using the term 'raising predicate' rather than 'raising verb' as *likely* is an adjective not a verb. Anyway, the present paper works mainly on raising verbs.

Raising can be defined as the movement of the subject from the *to*-infinitive clause to the higher clause under the conditions of having certain verbs (raising verbs). Despite the fact that the subject which undergoes the movement must be the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause, it must also originate in it. With the presence of raising verbs the subject position of the higher clause will be vacant and possible to be filled by the moved subject. Moreover, the verb must

take a clause as its complement within which the subject raises (Newson, 2006: 294-6). Consider the following sentence:

(18) Robin appears [to be happy].

What sentence (18) claims is that the person who is happy is Robin. Hence Robin is not the semantic subject of the verb 'appear'. Rather, he is the semantic subject of 'to be happy', and it is seen in the higher clause due to raising. One piece of evidence of this claim is the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). According to Radford (2004:268), the EPP feature obliges the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause to raise from its position to become the structural subject of 'appear'.

The phenomenon of raising can also be seen in passive structures. This is because there is a similarity between raising verbs and passive verbs in that both allow an element to raise to the subject position of the higher clause. In (19a), *he* is the thematic subject of the finite clause, it raises from its position to become the structural subject of 'appear' in (19b). Likewise, *several riots* is the thematic complement of the *to*-infinitive clause in (20a) and raises to become the subject of 'believe' in (20b) below (Radford 2004: 267 ; Newson, 2006: 296).

(19a) It would appear [that *he* has been lying to her].

(19b) He would appear [to have been lying to her].

(20a) There are believed [to have occurred *several riots*].

(20b) Several riots are believed [to have occurred].

The discussion and the example sentences above are all about complex sentences consisting of a high clause and a lower clause. It is also possible to have more than one lower clause. Newson (2006: 297-8) argues that no limitation exists to the distance of raised subject and the subject position of the raising verb. Thus, in (21) below the subject raises from the farthest *to*-infinitive clause to become the subject of the raising verb 'seem'.

(21) The doctor_i seemed [to be unlikely [to be considered [t_i to be very skilled]]].

Having discussed control and raising in detail, one can easily see similarity between the structures of sentences in which these two phenomena occur. The similar point is having a *to*-infinitive clause as the complement of the verb of the higher clause. What makes distinction

between control and raising is the *verb* of the higher clause: when having a control verb, PRO is implied as the subject of the subjectless *to*-infinitive clause, and there is no raising; but when there is a raising verb, PRO is not even implied and the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause involves movement, namely raising. On this basis, Radford (2004: 272-4) presents some differences between raising verbs and control verbs by which understanding the two phenomena becomes easier. The following is the summary of the differences:

A. Expletive subjects (it/there): Raising verbs such as *seem* allow this kind of subject while control verbs like *want* do not.

(22a) It seems / *wants [to be expected that they did the work].

(22b) There seem / *want [to remain several unsolved problems].

The reason of this is that raising verbs have no thematic subject whereas control verbs θ -mark their subjects, and it is clear that *it* and *there* are not thematic subjects. Therefore, no restriction is seen by the raising verbs on the choice of the structural subject.

B. Idiomatic subjects: Raising verbs can have idiomatic subjects while control verbs cannot.

(23) The cat seems / *wants [to get his tongue].

C. Presenting truth-functional equivalence under passivisation: Raising verbs preserve this equivalence whereas control verbs do not. Thus, (24a) below conveys the same meaning as (24b) cognitively; but (25a) and (25b) do not.

(24a) Kate seems [to have phoned John].

(24b) John seems [to have been phoned by Kate].

(25a) Kate wants [to phone John].

(25b) ≠ John wants [to be phoned by Kate].

D. Pragmatic restriction on the choice of subject: Control verbs allow this restriction since the subject should be a rational being rather than an inanimate entity. Conversely, raising verbs have no such restriction.

(26a) My dog / !My gesture wants [to be appreciated].

(26b) My dog / My gesture seems [to be appreciated].

In addition to raising verbs, there exist two adjectives which appear in raising structures. These adjectives are *(un)likely* and *certain* which play the role of a raising predicate (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 665).

(27) Martin is likely / certain [to pass the exam].

4. Complementation

Complementation of *to*-infinitive clauses is based on the type of the verb in the higher clause. Each specific group of verbs have their own influence on the *to*-infinitive clause. The present paper presents two kinds of classifications of these verbs which occur in the higher clause. Quirk et al. (1985:1185-7 , 1215) classify the verbs on the basis of taking objects, i.e., in terms of transitivity. With respect to this aspect of verbs, they can be classified as monotransitive, ditransitive, and complex transitive. Their analysis focuses on the function of the *to*-infinitive clause as they claim that the lower clause functions as a direct object regardless of whether the *to*-infinitive clause is a clause with subject or a subjectless one. The researcher prefers their claim in that the *to*-infinitive clause is the only object, which is usually direct, in the complex sentence (the higher clause + the lower clause) and it is the complement of the main verb when it is a subjectless *to*-infinitive clause as in (28) below. When there is a noun or an objective pronoun after the main verb of the complex sentence, the noun or the objective pronoun functions as the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause, and it introduces a *to*-infinitive clause with subject when taking the lower clause alone.

(28) I would hesitate [to interfere]. SVO_d

(29) I advised [Tom to go on a diet]. SVO_d

Another approach towards the complementation of *to*-infinitive clauses ties the lower clause to the type of the verb in the higher clause. This classification relates the *to*-infinitive clause as a complement to its preceding verb. Instead of focusing on the function of the *to*-infinitive clause, the structure of the *to*-infinitive clause is taken into consideration. Among several groups of verbs, the present study discusses two verb-type complements, namely 'believe-type' and 'want-type'.

As for the first type, which is believe-type complement, Newson (2006: 285) uses the term *exceptional verbs* for the verbs acting like 'believe' such as *expect*, *suppose*, *assume*,

understand, and *require*. They are called exceptional verbs because, unlike other verbs, they are followed by an accusative subject without the involvement of complementiser 'for'. He (Ibid.) also names the *to*-infinitive clause *exceptional clause*, which acts as the complement of 'believe' and other equivalent verbs. The accusative subject that occurs after these verbs functions as the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause. It follows that this group of verbs allow a *to*-infinitive clause with subject not a subjectless one, and the *to*-infinitive clause with subject becomes the complement of the verb.

(30a) The students believed/supposed [their teacher to be skilful].

(30b) The students believed/supposed [him/*he to be skilful].

The second type acts in a different way. Verbs which belong to this class, those behave like 'want', can be followed by the complementiser *for*. What is important to be mentioned here is that having or lacking *for* makes a great difference in assigning the role to the noun or the accusative pronoun which follows it, though the sentence remains grammatical in both cases. The presence of *for* makes the following element the subject of the *to*-infinitive clause while the absence of *for* and its following element gives the subject of the higher clause the power of functioning as the subject of the complement clause. Once more, the *to*-infinitive clause with or without the complementiser is the complement of the preceding verb. Some other verbs of this type include *arrange*, *desire*, *hate*, *hope*, *intend*, *like*, *love*, and *prefer* (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 640).

(31) The travel agent wanted/intended [(for me) to take another trip].

Concerning this group of verbs, Quirk et al. (1985: 1194) state that the verbs which occur with *for* and complemented by *to*-infinitive clauses, the complement clause can be replaced with a *that*-clause with 'should'.

(32a) They arranged [for Greg to leave the building quickly].

(32b) They arranged that Greg should leave the building quickly.

Moreover, they (Ibid.) claim that the meaning of the *to*-infinitive clause as a complement is a matter of implying potentiality rather than the real performance of the action.

Conclusions

1. *To*-infinitive clauses are tenseless as they carry no tense whatsoever.
2. Control and raising are two different phenomena. In control, the *to*-infinitive clause is always subjectless; it contains nothing to raise. In raising, the *to*-infinitive clause originally has a subject which undergoes raising and becomes the structural subject of the raising verb.
3. The *to*-infinitive clause always functions as the direct object, when it occurs after the verb of the higher clause, whether it occurs with subject or without subject

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پوخته

پارسته‌کان له زمانی ئینگلیزیدا بۆ چەند جۆری جیاواز دابەش دەبن بە گۆیرەى ئەرکیان، پیکهاته‌یان، یان شوینیان له رسته‌دا. یه‌کێک له پۆلینه‌کان دەم دیارخەر و دەم دیارنەخەر. ئەم تووژینه‌وه‌یه یه‌کێک له جۆره‌کانی پارسته‌ى دەم دیارنەخەر ده‌خاته به‌ر لیکۆلینه‌وه که بریتیه‌ پارسته‌ى بنجی له‌گه‌ڵ 'to'. ئەم جۆره پارسته‌یه لاوه‌کییه و به‌ نزم ناوده‌بریت، وه‌ ده‌به‌ستریته‌وه به‌ نیمچه‌پسته‌یه‌کی تری سه‌ره‌کی که به‌ به‌رز ناوده‌بریت.

ئەم جۆره پارسته‌یه له‌م تووژینه‌وه‌یه‌دا له‌ چەند گۆشه‌یه‌کی جۆراوجۆره‌وه شی ده‌کریت‌وه. تووژینه‌وه‌که دابەش ده‌بیت به‌سه‌ر چوار ته‌وه‌دا: سه‌ره‌تا، ناساندنی ئەم جۆره‌ى پارسته له‌ رووی مانا شاراوه‌کانی، پیکهاته‌که‌ی، دیارنەخستنی دەم، وه‌ جۆره‌کانی. پاشان دوو دیارده که بریتین له‌ کۆنترۆل و به‌رزبوونه‌وه، وه‌ هه‌بوونیان په‌یوه‌سته به‌ هه‌بوونی پارسته‌ى بنجی له‌گه‌ڵ 'to'. تاوتوی ده‌کرین. کۆنترۆل واته په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان جیناویکی نادیار له‌ رووی فونۆلۆژییه‌وه به‌ یه‌کێک له‌ وشه‌کانی پیش خۆی که له‌ نیمچه‌پسته‌ى به‌رزدا هاتووه. هه‌ندێ جار هه‌یج وشه‌یه‌ک نییه له‌ نیمچه‌پسته‌ى به‌رزدا که جیناوه نادیاره‌که کۆنترۆل بکات بۆیه له‌م حالته‌دا ئاماژه‌یه‌کی هه‌په‌مه‌کی بوونی هه‌یه. به‌رزبوونه‌وه ئاماژه‌یه بۆ جولانی بکه‌ری پارسته‌ى نزم بۆ شوینی بکه‌ری نیمچه‌پسته‌ى به‌رز به‌هۆی بوونی کرداره‌کانی به‌رزبوونه‌وه. جیاوازی نیوان کۆنترۆل و به‌رزبوونه‌وه به‌هۆی کرداری ناو نیمچه‌پسته‌ى به‌رزوه په‌یدا ده‌بیت. کۆتابه‌ش ته‌رخان کراوه بۆ پۆلی ته‌واکه‌ری پارسته‌ى بنجی له‌گه‌ڵ 'to'. له‌م بواره‌دا ئەرک و پیکهاته‌ى پارسته‌ى بنجی له‌گه‌ڵ 'to' لیکدانه‌وه‌ی بۆ ده‌کریت. تووژینه‌وه‌که کۆتایی دیت به‌ ده‌ره‌نجامه به‌ده‌سته‌تانه‌وه‌کانی.

المستخلص

شبه الجمل في اللغة الإنجليزية يقسم الى عدة أنواع المختلفة حسب عمله و تكوينه، أو موقعه في الجملة. أحد التقسيمات تظهر الزمن و تخفيه. هذا البحث يبحث عن أحد أنواع شبه الجملة مخفي الزمن حيث هو شبه الجملة المصدرية مع 'to'. هذا النوع من شبه الجملة عرضي يسمى بالأسفل، و يربط بشبه الجملة أخرى الرئيسية و الذي يسمى بالأعلى.

هذا النوع في بحثنا يحلل في عدة الجوانب، و البحث يقسم على أربعة محاور: التعريف به من حيث المعاني المخفية، و تركيبه، و عدم اظهار الزمن، و أنواعه. كما يبحث عن ظاهرتين و هما كونترول و ارتفاع، و لهما علاقة وثيقة مع شبه الجملة المصدرية مع 'to'. نقصد بالكونترول علاقة الضمير المستتر من حيث الجانب الصوتي مع إحدى كلمات قبله التي ورد مع شبه الجملة العليا. أحيانا لاتوجد الشيء في شبه الجملة العليا لسيطرة الضمير المستتر، في هذه الحالة توجد علامة اعتبارية. و نعني بالارتفاع تحريك فاعل شبه الجملة السفلى الى مكان فاعل شبه الجملة العليا. هذا التحريك يحدث بوجود مجموعة الأفعال و التي تسمى الأفعال الارتفاع. ختاماً، القسم الرابع مخصص لأهمية و دور المفعولية شبه الجملة المصدرية مع 'to'. حول هذا يرعى عمل و تكوين شبه الجملة المصدرية مع 'to'. يختم البحث بالنتائج.