
Towards a decompositional semantics for partial control

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In a partial control (PC) sentence, the understood subject of the control complement is a group that includes, but is not limited to, the controller:

(1) I want to read a book together.

In Pearson (2016), I argued that two conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient for a given control predicate to license PC. Firstly, it must be an attitude predicate. Secondly, it must allow non-simultaneous interpretations, with the event time of the embedded predicate shifted forward or backward with respect to the subjective ‘now’ of the attitude holder (cf. Landau 2000). I accounted for this via a centred worlds semantics for PC predicates, where the individual and temporal coordinates of the alternatives quantified over by the predicate are both permitted to shift, giving rise to PC (in the individual domain) and non-simultaneity (in the temporal domain). Thus the semantics of PC was in effect built into the semantics of the predicates that license it.

A problem for this view concerns the attitude predicates *claim* and *pretend*, which are prototypically simultaneous predicates (2a), and which in the unmarked case do not allow partial control (2b).

(2) a. *Tomorrow I will claim/pretend to read a book yesterday.

b. *I claimed/pretended to read a book together.

While the facts in (2a) and (2b) are expected on the account in Pearson (2016), the analysis leaves unexplained the fact that PC is made available by the addition of tense or aspect markers in the complements of these predicates:

(3) I claimed/pretended to have read a book together.

I will argue that these facts show that PC does not arise purely from the semantics of the embedding predicate, but rather via an interaction between the lexical semantics of the predicate and material in the embedded clause; it is the latter that yields the shifting of individual and temporal coordinates that is characteristic of PC predicates. The resulting decompositional account is true to the spirit of the earlier proposal, while addressing (at least some of) its inadequacies.

References: • Landau, I. (2000). *Elements of Control: Structure and Meaning in Infinitival Constructions*. • Pearson, H. (2016). The semantics of partial control. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*.