

# snippets

---

Issue 24

November 2011

---

## Contents

1. Theresa Biberauer and Johan Oosthuizen. *More unbearably light elements? Silent verbs demanding overt complementizers in Afrikaans.*
2. Alex Drummond. *The ban on rightward P-stranding is a global constraint.*
3. Giorgio Magri. *The plurality inference of object mass nouns.*
4. Jacopo Romoli. *Presupposition wipe-out can't be all or nothing: a note on conflicting presuppositions.*
5. Philippe Schlenker. *Generalized bishop sentences.*
6. Carson Schütze. *There does not undergo predicate inversion.*
7. Michelle Sheehan. *A note on case assignment to CP.*
8. Gary Thoms. *P-stranding diagnoses A'-movement in tough constructions.*
9. Honglei Wang, David Potter and Masaya Yoshida. *Cross-conjunct binding in nominal gapping.*



## 7.

### Michelle Sheehan – University of Cambridge A note on case assignment to CP

[michellesheehan@hotmail.com](mailto:michellesheehan@hotmail.com)

---

Some predicates allow for a passive form with promoted CP objects (henceforth CP-passives), whereas other predicates do not:

- (1) It was thought/believed/ that he was a spy.
- (2) \*It was complained/prayed that he was a spy.
- (3) \*That it was raining was complained.

Crucially, this does not appear to correlate with general Case assignment possibilities. Although *complain* fails to assign accusative Case to DP complements, the same is true of other verbs such as *hope* which nonetheless permit a CP-passive (cf. Alrenga 2005 amongst others):

- (4) I'm hoping/wishing \*(for) rain.
- (5) It was hoped/wished/insisted that it would rain.

Nor does the split appear to depend on factivity, as many factive verbs allow a CP-passive:

- (6) It was revealed/divulged/recognised that he was a spy.

Moltmann (2009) provides a crucial diagnostic which appears to distinguish the class of verbs represented by *complain* from the class represented by *hope*. While the (factive/non-factive) *hope*-class can (marginally) combine with a non-referential 'special' pronoun *something*, the *complain*-class cannot:

- (7) (?)Mary hoped/wished/reasoned/revealed/divulged something.
- (8) \*Mary complained/prayed something.

The interesting thing here is the extremely restricted distribution of Case assignment with *hope*-type verbs. As Moltmann shows, the special pronouns are only possible where they have propositional content. Where the complement has non-propositional content, a preposition is required in active sentences. Where passives are permitted in such cases, they take the form of pseudo-passives:

- (9) John hoped \*(for) something (replacing a DP)
- (10) A solution was hoped/wished/reasoned for.

Assuming that the passive is derived via Case-absorption, it follows that *hope* must assign Case to special pronouns. As CPs can also form passives in exactly those languages which license these special pronouns, the implication is that some predicates assign a special kind of case to clausal complements. Crucially, though, the data

---

strongly suggest that not all CPs have Case. Verb such as *complain* fail to license Case on either DP or CP complements. This suggests that a more nuanced version of Stowell's (1981) Case Resistance Principle, or whatever replaces it, is required. It is not the case that DPs require Case whereas CPs do not. Some, in fact, most CPs do require a kind of Case, though not the kind assigned to full DPs with non-propositional content.

### References

- Alrenga, P. (2005) "A sentential subject asymmetry in English and its implications for complement selection." *Syntax* 8(3), 175-207.
- Moltmann, F. (2009) "Attitudinal objects." Ms., IHPST (Paris).
- Stowell, T. (1981) *Origins of Phrase Structure*. Ph.D. thesis, MIT.