

snippets

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That sentential subjects are (linked to) DPs is explained herein

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We present evidence that the argument position associated with sentential subjects ((1)) is always a DP. This is compatible either with Davies and Dubinsky's (2000) claim that the sentential subject is a CP embedded in a DP shell, or Alrenga's (2005) claim that the CP is in topic position, linked to a null DP in argument position.

(1) That John left early upset me.

Observations about the verb *explain* by Pietroski (2000, 2005), combined with new observations of the results of passivization, shed light on this question. Pietroski notes that the thematic relation between *explain* and its lower argument is different when that argument is a bare (declarative) CP ((2a)) than when it is a DP ((2b,c)). In the former case, the CP is the *explanans*, or what serves to help one understand, while in the latter the DP is the *explanandum*, or thing to be understood.

(2) a. John explained that Fido barked.

b. John explained the fact that Fido barked.

c. John explained that.

Pietroski analyzes this pattern by claiming that DPs and CPs must occupy different slots in the theta grid of *explain*. Of note, then, is what happens with a sentential subject of passivized *explain*.

(3) That Fido barked was explained.

In (3), *that Fido barked* is understood as an *explanandum*, like the DPs in (2). This contrast between subject and object CPs receives a ready explanation if in order to be a sentential subject, the phrase merged in argument position must always be a DP. For Davies and Dubinsky, the CP itself first merges with a silent D before merging in its theta position, which must, following Pietroski's generalization, be a position that bears the *explanandum* thematic relation.

Note also that the so-called extraposed sentential subject of passivized *explain* ((4)) is an *explanans*. This supports the claim (e.g. Stroik 1996) that postverbal sentential subjects appear in their base position--or at least have never been in subject position--and hence are CPs. Framing the alternation in terms of movement ties in Bresnan's (2001) observation that some passivized or topicalized CPs are grammatical where an *in situ* CP counterpart is not (*in situ* cases require a DP).

(4) It was explained that Fido barked.

Since the *explanans* reading in (2a) is obligatory, the Davies and Dubinsky analysis requires that there is no legitimate structure for (2a) where the CP merges with a D but remains in object position. CPs as complements of null D can only appear in derived

positions. On Alrenga's account, this pattern arises because "moved" CPs are in fact linked to null DP arguments.

An Acc-Ing gerund also must be an *explanandum* ((5)). If Reuland (1983) and Pires (2007) are correct that Acc-Ing is clausal (modern TPs), then a DP or TP can be an *explanandum*, while a CP must be an *explanans*. A simpler theory is that Acc-Ing gerunds, like sentential subjects, are DPs (Abney 1987), though unlike sentential subjects they can appear in base or derived positions.

(5) John explained Fido barking.

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