6.

Hidekazu Tanaka - *University of York*
Not so **tough***: a response to Harley*

ht6@york.ac.uk

In *Snippets* 2, Heidi Harley points out the grammaticality of (1).

(1)   [How tough to please] is the tenure committee?

Based on this sentence, she argues against the *tough*-movement (NP-movement) analysis of "*the tenure committee is tough to please*" type constructions. Her reasoning is that if *tough*-constructions involved raising, (1) should be ungrammatical, since raising a phrase containing a trace in it out of the c-command domain of the trace's antecedent results in ungrammaticality due to Proper Binding Condition, as noted by Lasnik and Saito (1992).

(2)   a.   *[How likely *t* to be a riot] is there?
       b.   *[How likely *t* to be taken of John] is advantage?

Since this prediction is not borne out, Harley argues, the preposed phrase in (1) cannot contain a trace of NP-movement. As a matter of fact, if her reasoning is on the right track, (1) also poses a problem for Chomsky's (1977) *wh*-movement analysis of *tough*-constructions, as long as traces of *wh*-movement must be bound. In this snippet, I show that the grammaticality of (1) does not point to her conclusion.

Note that *tough*-adjectives can take a beneficial phrase, headed by *for*, as in (3a), or can have unbounded dependency, as in (3b). (There is some variation with respect to the judgments on these sentences.)

(3)   a.   The tenure committee is tough for all the assistant professors to please.
       b.   The tenure committee is tough to persuade all the assistant professors
            to please.

Note that these types of sentences do not allow the relevant portion to be preposed.

(4)   a.   *[How tough for all the assistant professors to please *t*] is the tenure
            committee?
       b.   *[How tough to persuade all the assistant professors to please *t*] is the
            tenure committee?

The ungrammaticality of these examples contradicts Harley's claim: (4) in fact should be grouped with (2). It thus seems reasonable to suppose that *tough*-

constructions involve movement (either NP-movement or *wh*-movement).

The problem then is why (1) is grammatical. It is true that, as Harley argues, if (1) had a trace in the preposed phrase, the example should be ungrammatical, on par with (2) and (4). I would like to suggest that sentences like *the tenure committee is tough to please* are derivationally ambiguous, but (3) is not. In particular, *tough-to-please* seems to form an adjective, as evidenced by the fact that it can appear prenominally.

(5)   a [tough to please] tenure committee

In English, prenominal adjectives cannot have a complement.

(6)   * a [good at syntax] student (cf. a student [good at syntax])

This suggests that *tough-to-please* in (5) behaves like a bare adjective without a complement in syntax. Perhaps it is stored as an adjective in the lexicon. This would give us a principled reason why (1) does not have a trace: it is not a *tough*-constructions in the same way as (3).

The *tough*-phrases in (3) cannot be bare adjectives due to the presence of the beneficial *for* phrase or long-distance dependency: these examples necessarily involve a trace, resulting in violation of the PBC in (4). For this reason, they cannot be prenominal modifiers. (7) is ungrammatical.

(7)   * a [tough for the assistant professor to please] tenure committee
       * a [tough to persuade the assistant professor to please] tenure committee

To summarize, I have shown that Harley's sentence in (1) should be treated separately from typical cases of *tough*-constructions in (3).

References
Chomsky, N. (1977) "On wh-movement," in P. Culicover, T. Wasow, and A.
Akmajian eds, *Formal Syntax*, Academic Press, New York.
Harley, H. (2000) "Tough-movement is even tougher than we thought," *Snippets* 2, 11-12.
Lasnik, H. and M. Saito (1992) *Move-alpha: Conditions on its Application and Output*, Current Studies in Linguistics 22, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.