

**What Seems to Every Experiencer to Be Bound by It:
On the complement structure of *seem* class verbs**

**Eytan Zweig, New York University
CUNY/SUNY/NYU mini-conference, March 8 2003.
ez255@nyu.edu**

1. Background – A Catalogue of Complements

The English verb *seem* can take several types of complements, in two classes; full clauses, which can be either finite CPs or non-finite IPs (in which case, the subject raises out of the IP to matrix subject position):

1. It seems that Santa Claus is stuck in the chimney.
2. Santa Claus seems to be stuck in the chimney.

And small clauses, which can have either an AP, PP or DP predicate (which also exhibit subject raising):

3. Santa Claus seems jolly. (AP)
4. Santa Claus seems at home. (PP)
5. Santa Claus seems a decent man. (DP)

In addition to the clausal complement, *seem* also optionally takes a dative experiencer:

6. Santa Claus seems Jolly to me.

Hebrew, on the other hand, has a somewhat more limited inventory. Its *seem* analogue has CP complements, but no IP ones:

7. Nir?e Je-Yossi ohev glida.
seems that-Yossi likes ice-cream.
“It seems that Yossi likes ice-cream.”
8. * Yossi Nir?e le-?ehov glida.
Yossi seems to-like ice-cream.
“Yossi seems to like ice cream”

It also has small clause complements, similar to the English ones:

9. Yossi Nir?e sameax.
Yossi seems happy.
“Yossi seems happy” (AP)
10. Yossi Nir?e ba-bayit.
Yossi seems in-DEF-home.
“Yossi seems at home” (PP)
11. Yossi Nir?e adam hagun.
Yossi seems man decent.
“Yossi seems a decent man” (DP)

As in the case of English *seem*, *Nir?e* also has dative experiencers:

12. Yossi Nir?e li sameax.
Yossi seems to-me happy.
“Yossi seems happy to me”

2 English Asymmetries

2.1 Word order Asymmetries

If the clausal argument is a CP or IP, then the experiencer can appear on either side of it:

- 13a. It seems [_{PP} to me] [_{CP} that John is angry].
13b. It seems [_{CP} that John is angry] [_{PP} to me].
14a. John seems [_{PP} to me] [_{IP} t to be angry].
14b. John seems [_{IP} t to be angry] [_{PP} to me].

In the case of SC arguments, however, many speakers of English show a strong preference to having the experiencer in final position:

- 15a. % John seems [_{PP} to me] [_{AP} t angry].
15b. John seems [_{AP} t angry] [_{PP} to me].

2.2 Variable Binding Asymmetries

In full-clause *seem*, when the experiencer comes first, a quantifier within it can bind a variable within the clausal complement, but not when the order is reversed:

16a. John seems [_{PP} to every man_i] [_{IP} t to be angry at him_i].

16b. * John seems [_{IP} t to be angry at him_i] [_{PP} to every man_i].

Even among those English speakers who find sentence (15a) fully acceptable, it is impossible to have a quantifier in a *to*-phrase bind a variable within a small clause, regardless of order:

17a.* John seems [_{PP} to every man_i] [_{aP} t angry at him_i].

17b.* John seems [_{aP} t angry at him_i] [_{PP} to every man_i].

This cannot be explained by stipulating that SC complements cannot be bound into, as shown below:

18. Every student who cheated on the test_i seems apologetic of his_i behavior.

19. Everyone in the room_i thinks that John seems angry at him_i.

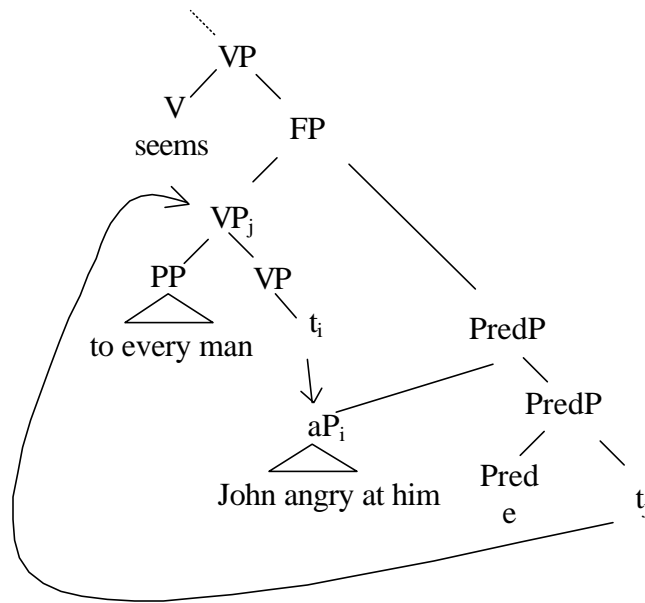
2.3 NPI Licensing

Another example of this asymmetry can be found in the licensing of NPIs; while pre-IP negative experiencers can license NPIs, pre-small clause ones cannot:

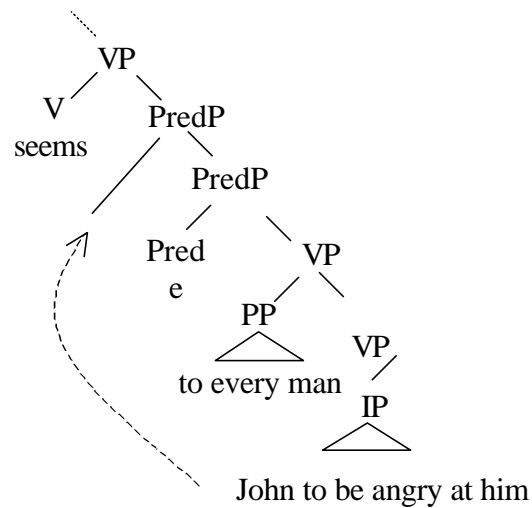
- 20. John seems to no man to be angry at anything.
- 21. * John seems to no man angry at anything.

3. Explanation

- 22. Proposed structure of (17a):



23. Proposed structure of (16a/b):



3 Hebrew

In Hebrew the facts are different. A lexical DP experiencer can appear either before or after the clausal complement, whether it is a CP or a SC:

24a. Nir?e [_{PP} le-Tamar] [_{CP} ∫e-Yossi ohev glida].
 seems [_{PP} to-Tamar] [_{CP} that-Yossi likes ice-cream].

“It seems to Tamar that Yossi likes ice-cream.”

24b. Nir?e [_{CP} ∫e-Yossi ohev glida] [_{PP} le-Tamar].
 seems [_{CP} that-Yossi likes ice-cream] [_{PP} to-Tamar].

“It seems that Yossi likes ice-cream to Tamar.”

25a. Yossi nir?e [_{PP} le-Tamar] [_{AP} ko?es].

Yossi seems to-Tamar angry.

“Yossi seems angry to Tamar”

25b. Yossi nirʔe [_{AP} koʔes] [_{PP} le-Tamar].

Yossi seems angry to-Tamar.

“Yossi seems angry to Tamar”

However, pronominal and universally quantified experiencers obligatorily precede the clausal complement, whether it is a SC or CP:

26a. Yossi nirʔe [_{PP} li] [_{AP} koʔes].

Yossi seems to-me angry.

“Yossi seems angry to me”

26b. * Yossi nirʔe [_{AP} koʔes] [_{PP} li].

Yossi seems angry to-me.

“Yossi seems angry to me”

27a. Yossi nirʔe [_{PP} le-kol yeled] [_{AP} koʔes].

Yossi seems to-every child angry.

“Yossi seems angry to every child”

27b. * Yossi nirʔe [_{AP} koʔes] [_{PP} le-kol yeled].

Yossi seems angry to-every child.

“Yossi seems angry to every child”

28a. Nirʔe [_{PP} li] [_{CP} ʃe-Yossi ohev glida].

seems to-me that-yossi likes ice-cream.

“It seems to me that Yossi likes ice-cream”

28b. * Nirʔe [_{CP} ʃe-Yossi ohev glida] [_{PP} li].

seems that-yossi likes ice-cream to-me.

“It seems that Yossi likes ice-cream to me”

- 29a. Nir?e [_{PP} le-kol yeled] [_{CP} ∫e-Yossi ohev glida].
 seems to-every child that-yossi likes ice-cream.
 “It seems to every child that Yossi likes ice-cream”
- 29b. * Nir?e [_{CP} ∫e-Yossi ohev glida] [_{PP} le-kol yeled].
 seems that-yossi likes ice-cream to-every child.
 “It seems that Yossi likes ice-cream to every child”

One possible explanation of this is that there is an independent movement of pronominal and universally quantified experiencers that moves it to a high position under *seem*. This may be motivated by a need of the to-phrase to be adjacent to the verb (suggestion and examples below due to Danny Fox(p.c.)).

A similar contrast may be found in sentences like:

- 30a. ?? Be-yom xamishi natan Yossi la et ha-sefer.
 In-Thursday gave Yossi to-her ACC-DEF-book.
 “On Thursday, Yossi gave her the book”
- 30b. Be-yom xamishi natan la Yossi et ha-sefer.
 In-Thursday gave to-her Yossi ACC-DEF-book.
 “On Thursday, Yossi gave her the book”

Whether it is the PP that moves, or the VP that contains it, would have consequences for the binding data; if it were the former, variable binding should be possible, while it should be impossible with the latter.

Unfortunately, I have received conflicting data and can not make a claim

either way at this point. Note, however, that it is possible to bind in Hebrew from the experiencer into the SC when the experiencer is topicalized:

31. [PP le-kol yeled_i], Yossi nir?e [AP ko?es alav_i].
to-every child_i, Yossi seems angry at-him_i.
“To every child, Yossi seems angry at him”

In English, this seems to be impossible.

4. Further Problems and Open Questions

4.1 Variation

My data indicated that there is considerable variation among English speakers about whether the experiencer can precede a small-clause. In Hebrew, there seems to be variation about whether binding from the pre-SC position is possible.

4.2 *Likely*

The entire analysis brought above is complicated once an additional raising predicate, such as *likely* is involved. In both English and Hebrew, the dative experiencer can come between *likely* and its complement:

- 32 It seems likely to me that John will arrive.

Note that *likely* does not normally take an experiencer:

33. * It is likely to me that John will arrive.

Therefore, there has to be some movement involved that separated *likely* from its complement and allows the experiencer to intervene. However, data collected at this point is very inconclusive, with considerable variation among speakers about what is possible and what not.

References:

- Cinque, Guglielmo (1990) Ergative Adjectives and the Lexicalist Hypothesis. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 8: 1-39.
- Fox, Danny (1999) Reconstruction, Binding Theory, and the Interpretation of Chains. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30: 157-196.
- Koopman, Hilda and Szabolsci, Anna (2000) *Verbal Complexes*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Koster, Jan. (1994) Predicate incorporation and the word order of Dutch. In *Paths toward Universal Grammar. Studies in Honor of Richard S. Kayne*, G. Cinque, J. Koster, J.-Y. Pollock, L. Rizzi, R. Zanuttini (eds.) 255-276. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP.
- Larson, Richard K. (1988) On the Double Object Construction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19: 335-391.
- Matushansky, Ora (2002) Tipping the Scales: The Syntax of Scalarity in the Complement of Seem. *Syntax* 5:219-276.
- Rogers, Andy (1972) Another Look at Flip Perception Verbs. *Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*: 303-315.
- Zwart, C. Jan Wouter (1994) Dutch is Head Initial. *The Linguistic Review* 11:377-406.
- Zwart, C. Jan Wouter (1997) *Morphosyntax of Verb Movement. A Minimalist Approach to the Syntax of Dutch*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.