

The case for fake partial control in French and German

1. The phenomenon Obligatory control (OC) is typically characterized by referential identity between the infinitival subject and its controller (Landau's 2000 Exhaustive Control (EC); (1a)). Landau (2000) identifies yet another type of OC: partial control (PC; (1b)). These cases are characterized by an apparent non-identity between controller and PRO, in so far as the latter includes, but is not exhaustively determined by the former (indicated by the subscript 'i+').

(1) a. Peter_i tried [PRO_{i+/*i+} to win the game]. (EC)

b. Peter_i hoped [PRO_{i+/*i} to meet again soon]. (PC)

PC has played an important role in the analysis of control in general, and obligatory control in particular, and various different accounts have been provided to account for its properties (e.g., Landau 2000 et seq., Pearson 2013, 2015, Grano 2015, a.o.).

2. Our proposal. We argue that two different ways to derive a PC reading must be recognized. One of these relies on a genuine mismatch between the features of PRO and its controller (*true PC*; see e.g., Landau 2000 for an implementation). The other, *fake PC*, involves referential identity between controller and PRO (i.e. exhaustive control), and the additional event participants are introduced via a covert comitative (see Boeckx, Hornstein & Nunes 2010 for the original formulation of this idea). We show that languages like French have only *fake PC* (see also Sheehan 2012, 2014), whereas German makes available both mechanisms (Pitteroff et al. 2017). We also provide a number of experimentally tested new arguments in favor of *fake PC*, and respond to the arguments in Landau (2016) against the existence of such a mechanism.

3. Sensitivity to embedded predicate In French, the availability of PC is conditioned by the embedded predicate. We tested embedded comitative and non-comitative reciprocal verbs with very similar semantic values, and only the former were judged acceptable in a PC-context ((2); *entrer en collision* 'collide' undergoes the comitative alternation, *se heurter* 'collide' does not). (2) [...] il ne voulait pas entrer en collision / *se heurter. (**item mean: 5,6/1, SD: 1,85/1,05**)
he NEG wanted NEG enter in collision SE collide

In German, we see a more nuanced sensitivity of this kind (see Pitteroff et al. 2017 and below).

4. Sensitivity to matrix predicate Landau (2000) observed that *true PC* is only available with a certain class of matrix predicates (attitude predicates in Pearson 2013, 2015 and Landau 2015; e.g. *espérer* 'hope', *préférer* 'prefer', *penser* 'think', *vouloir* 'want'). Our results show, however, that in French, PC is also possible with predicates that obligatorily trigger exhaustive control (Landau's EC/non-attitude predicates; e.g., *essayer* 'try', *avoir pu* 'manage'; (3)).

(3) Richard a pu se réconcilier sans devoir s'expliquer sur tout.

Richard has managed SE.3 make.up without must.INF SE.3 explain for all

Combined with the data in 2., cases like (3) make a strong argument in favor of the existence of *fake PC* in French: No matter how *true PC* is derived (see Landau 2000, 2015, 2016; Pearson 2015), the mechanism is not expected to apply in the context of EC-type matrix predicates.

For German, Pitteroff et al. (2016) have shown that, unlike in French, a PC-reading with embedded non-comitative predicates is possible (*true PC*), but, crucially, only if the matrix predicate is attitudinal. As in French, PC is possible with an EC matrix predicate, in which case, however, the embedded predicate must undergo the comitative alternation.

5. First and second person reflexives: Many of the embedded predicates that license a PC-reading in French are marked by reciprocal SE. Based on the assumption that the ϕ -features of SE are valued by the infinitival subject, the form of SE reflects the feature composition of PRO. We experimentally investigated Sheehan's (2012, 2014) claim that in French, a first or second person singular controller in a PC-context requires an agreeing embedded SE, indicating that PRO has the same feature composition as the controller (4). Our data confirmed this claim.

(4) Je veux absolument me/ *nous/ *se réconcilier. (**item mean : 5.36/2.22/0**)

I want absolutely SE.1SG/ SE.1PL/ SE.3.SG/ make.up.INF

For German, our study showed that only in contexts of an embedded comitative predicate were

first and second person singular reciprocal markers acceptable ((5), contra Stiebels 2015).

(5) Ich hoffe, mich vor Weihnachten wieder zu versöhnen. (item mean: 5.18, SD: 1.88)

I hope SE.1SG before Christmas again to make.up

‘I hope that we will make up before Christmas.’

Sentences where *true PC* was the only option (matrix PC- and embedded non-comitative predicate) received significantly lower ratings with an embedded first or second person singular reciprocal marker (arithmetic mean: 3,0-3,5). The different profiles of the two languages in this domain clearly argues in favor of the existence of *fake PC*. Another noteworthy fact supporting the claim that two mechanisms must be distinguished is that German permits 1st/2nd plural reciprocal markers only in true PC contexts.

6. Symmetrical and asymmetrical events. In English, there is a clear difference between comitative (6b) and non-comitative (6a) uses of verbs like *collide*. In PC contexts, as expected under *true PC*, *collide* appears to denote a symmetrical event, hence the strangeness of (5c).

(6) a. #John and the tree collided. (non-comitative; symmetric event)

b. John collided with the tree. (comitative; asymmetric event)

c. #John saw a tree and stepped to the side as he didn’t want to collide.

The difference between (6a)/(6b) holds in French also: our speakers judged (7) as degraded.

(7) ?Il n’a pas eu le temps de s’arrêter donc Jean et l’arbre sont entrés en collision.

he NEG has NEG had the time to SE stop.INF so Jean and the tree are entered in collision

‘He didn’t have time to stop so Jean and the tree collided.’ (item mean: 3.88, SD: 2.85)

Our experimental data show, however, that no effect of this kind arises in instances of PC. E.g., one context provided for (8) evoked a non-symmetrical collision with a tree. Still, the high degree of acceptability indicates that, unlike (6c), (8) was not perceived as semantically odd by French speakers. This is expected if PC in French is derived via a covert comitative (*fake PC*).

(8) Il a du faire une embardée à gauche parce qu’il ne voulait pas entrer en collision.

he has had make a detour to left because he NEG wanted NEG enter into collision

‘He was obliged to veer to the left as he didn’t want to crash.’ (item means: 5, SD 1.87)

We also experimentally investigated German, where the same contrast in (6a,b) holds. The results indicate that German PC patterns with French in this regard – as is expected if German may express a PC-reading via a covert comitative. Note furthermore that these results are evidence that the relevant factor for a PC-reading is comitativity, rather than (event) symmetry.

7. Subject-oriented adjunct-clauses/adverbs. Another diagnostic we used in our investigation concerns the scope of subject-oriented adverbs. All of the French and German participants who accepted examples like (9b) in the context of (9a) picked from a set of possible interpretations the one in (9c). Once the matrix controller was changed into a collective singular noun, speakers picked the reading where a semantically plural entity controls PRO in the adjunct clause.

(9) a. Context: Peter and his girlfriend often argue with each other. Typically, Peter gets so upset, that the discussion gets totally out of control.

b. Deshalb versucht Peter dieses Mal, sich zu streiten, ohne allzu wütend zu werden.
therefore tries Peter this time se to argue without too angry to become

c. This time, Peter attempts to argue (with his girlfriend) without him getting too angry.

If PRO had to be semantically plural to produce the PC-reading, speakers should disfavor reading (9c) in favor of one where (the plurality of) Peter and his girlfriend controls the adjunct clause. None of our participants interpreted (9b) in this way. Note that we ensured that the adjunct is not interpreted as modifying the matrix event. Again, this result is unexpected under a *true PC* account, and testifies to the existence of *fake PC* in French and German.

Potential Counterarguments: Landau (2016) provides three counterarguments to the existence of *fake PC* in French, all relying on the observation that the infinitival subject does not behave as if it was semantically singular. We review his arguments and show that none of them holds upon closer investigation.