

**Underlying and Surface Grammatical Relations in Greek *consider*
Sentences**

Brian D. Joseph

The Ohio State University

Abbreviated Title

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Brian D. Joseph
Department of Linguistics, Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1298
+1-614-292-4981
+1-614-292-8833
joseph.1@osu.edu

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Chapter 12

Underlying and Surface Grammatical Relations in Greek *consider*

Sentences

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12.1 Introduction

A hallmark of Relational Grammar (RG) has always been that it states syntactic generalizations directly in terms of grammatical relations rather than by reference to word order or to other sorts of configurational representations. Moreover, within RG, it has been a basic tenet that this reference to grammatical relations need not be restricted just to the superficial relations one can observe in the actual production of a sentence; rather reference to relations at different levels of syntactic analysis (known as “strata”) is often needed.

In this tribute to David, I offer a brief analysis of some facts from Modern Greek in which reference to nonsuperficial grammatical relations, i.e. grammatical relations at a level other than the final stratum (roughly, the surface structure), is needed. Moreover, this is so even in a sentence that appears to be “monostratal” in its syntax, i.e. to have a rather “flat” syntactic structure with the syntax essentially read off of the surface, a sentence that seemingly can be generated just by a simple phrase structure rule.

The sentence type in question is illustrated in (1):¹

(1) (eyo) theoro ton jani eksipno

I/NOM consider/1SG the John/ACC smart/ACC.MASC.SG

‘I consider John smart’.

Such a sentence, with a verb *θεωρο* ‘consider’, an accusative NP object, *τον jani* ‘John’ and an adjective *eksipno* ‘smart’ predicated of the object, might be argued to be a relatively flat structure with *τον jani* governed by the verb and *eksipno* as an adjunct modifying *jani*; indeed, accusative case-marking on *τον jani* is expected for the object of a verb and masculine accusative singular is the expected form of an adjective modifying a noun of that sort. Admittedly a small clause analysis could be entertained for such a sentence, but even that is not fully biclausal.

There are two fuller sentence-types that (1) seems to be related to, with a complete clausal complement; these are given in (2):

- (2) a. *θεωρο* *pos* *o jani* *ine* *eksipnos*
 consider/1SG COMP the John/NOM is/3SG smart/NOM.MASC.SG
 ‘I consider that John is smart’
- b. *θεωρο* *τον jani* *pos* *ine* *eksipnos*
 consider/1SG the John/ACC COMP is/3SG smart/NOM.MASC.SG
 ‘I consider John to be smart’ (literally: “I consider John that (he) is smart”)

Such sentences also contribute to the impression that (1) is a monostratal and basically flat (S => (NP) V NP) structure, since it is clear in (1) that there is no other

verb besides *θεωρο* and that moreover complement clauses with verbs are possible with *θεωρο*.

The English parallel to (1), given in (3):

(3) I consider John smart

while the object of considerable discussion in the literature (especially regarding a small-clause, e.g. Stowell 1981 and 1983, versus a predication analysis, e.g. Williams 1980 and 1983), offers some evidence showing it to be monostratal.² In particular, English seems to allow *tough*-Movement on direct objects only with “nonderived” (“thematic”) objects, as argued by Berman (1973),³ and as demonstrated by the sentences in (4):

(4) a. *Mary is easy to give *e* presents

(compare: Mary is easy to give presents to *e* / Presents are easy
to give *e* to Mary)

b. *John is hard to believe *e* to have committed that crime

Importantly, *tough*-Movement on *John* in (3) is perfectly grammatical, as in (5):

(5) John is easy to consider *e* smart

a fact which suggests that *John* in that sentence is a thematic, i.e. underlying, object of *consider*, and that English sentences like (3) therefore are monostratal and thus relatively flat in structure.

A consideration of some additional facts, however, reveals that the Greek sentence in (1) is different from its apparent English counterpart in (3) with respect to monostratalness and flatness of structure. That is, it turns out that there is a process in the language – one type of reflexivization – for which crucial reference must be made to the status of *ton jani* in (1) in terms of the grammatical relation it bears at different levels of analysis (“strata”); in this reference to multiple levels, *ton jani* must be specified as a superficial object that is underlyingly a subject, in RG terms, a final stratum 2 (object) that is also an initial stratum 1 (subject). The structure of (1) is therefore more complex than its superficial would suggest and more so too than the English (3).

12.2 Reflexivization in Greek

Greek has two types of reflexivization. There is a syntactic construction that makes use of the reflexive nominal *ton eafto* ‘the self’ with a possessive pronoun indicating the coreferent nominal in the reflexivization, as in (6):

- (6) i maria xtipai ton eafto tis
 the Mary/NOM hit/3SG.ACT the self/ACC her
 ‘Mary is hitting herself’.

In addition, there is a morphological reflexive in which the coreferential linking is expressed through so-called “nonactive” verbal morphology, also known as “mediopassive” or “middle” voice forms;⁴ in the case of ‘hit’, the equivalent to (6) using this morphological strategy would be (7a) and some other such reflexives are given in (7b) and (7c):

- (7) a. i maria xtipjete
 the Mary/NOM hit/3SG.NON-ACT
 ‘Mary is hitting herself’.
- b. i maria plenete
 the Mary/NOM wash/3SG.NON-ACT
 ‘Mary is washing herself’.
- c. i maria kitazete s ton kaθrefti
 the Mary/NOM look-at/3SG.NON-ACT in the mirror/ACC
 ‘Mary is looking at herself in the mirror’.

While the syntactic reflexive is rather free in terms of what sorts of coreferential linkages can be expressed, Modern Greek morphological reflexivization is constrained such that only underlying, i.e. thematic, direct objects can be linked with coreferent subjects. In RG terms, this constraint would mean that only final level 2 that is also (simultaneously)⁵ an initial 2 can be linked with a subject in this reflexivization strategy. The evidence for this constraint comes from the

reflexivization possibilities in two constructions that have a “surface” (final level) direct object which is not an initial direct object and cannot be linked to a subject in a nonactive voice reflexive construction. Although presented in Joseph 2000, the relevant evidence is briefly recapitulated here.

First, in the Greek “Dative Shift” construction, illustrated in (8), the notional indirect object, corresponding to the prepositional phrase in (8a), occurs as an final level direct object, a 2 in RG terms, marked with accusative case, as in (8b); however, this accusative-marked final 2, corresponding as it does to a semantic indirect object, is a noninitial 2, and, as (8c) demonstrates, it cannot be linked with the subject via the morphological reflexivization strategy – (8c) has only a passive reading and not a reflexive reading:

- (8) a. $\partial i\partial asko$ $\gamma ramatiki$ s $ton\ jani$
 teach/1SG.ACT grammar/ACC to the John/ACC
 ‘I teach grammar to John’
- b. $\partial i\partial asko$ $ton\ jani$ $\gamma\ ramatiki$
 teach/1SG.ACT the John/ACC grammar/ACC
 ‘I teach John grammar’
- c. $o\ janis$ $\partial i\partial askete$ $\gamma\ ramatiki$
 the John/NOM teach/3SG.NON-ACT grammar/ACC
 ‘John is taught grammar’ / *‘John teaches himself grammar’.

Second, the full complement structure with *θεορο* ‘consider’, given in (2) above, admits of an analysis whereby (2a) reflects the underlying structure more or less directly and (2b) is a “derived” structure, in which the surface accusative NP, the final level 2, is a noninitial (i.e. nonthematic) object, taking on final 2 status as the result of what has elsewhere been called Subject-to-Object Raising (see Joseph 1976, 1990, 1992). Important for the argument here is the fact that this final (and noninitial) object cannot feed into the morphological reflexive strategy, as shown by the unavailability of a reflexive reading for (9b), where only a passive sense is possible for *θεοριτε*:

- (9) a. *θεορο* *τον jani* *pos* *ine* *jeneos*
 consider/1SG.ACT the John/ACC COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG
 ‘I consider John to be brave’
- b. *ο janis* *θεοριτε* *pos* *ine* *jeneos*
 the John/NOM consider/3SG.NON-ACT COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG
 ‘John is considered to be brave’ / *‘John considers himself to be brave’

Furthermore, there is an instructive contrast between (9) and similar-appearing structures with *πιθο* ‘persuade’, as given in (10). With *πιθο* there is a post-verbal accusative object which is an initial object (in (10a)), and in the nonactive voice (in (10b)), while a passive reading is possible, as with *θεοριτε* in (9b), so too is a reflexive reading:

- (10) a. episa ton jani pos ine jeneos
 persuaded/1SG.ACT the John/ACC COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG
 ‘I persuaded John that he is brave’
- b. o janis pistike pos ine jeneos
 the John/NOM persuaded/1SG.NON-ACT COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG
 ‘John was persuaded that he is brave’ / ‘John persuaded himself
 that he is brave’.

The reflexive possibility in (10b) is consistent with the constraint on nonactive voice reflexivization, because unlike *ton jani* in (9a), *ton jani* in (10a) is an initial (and final) 2.

12.3 Reflexivization in ‘consider’ Sentences

With this constraint, it is now possible to test for the type of object that *ton jani* in (1) is. As (11) shows, the morphological reflexivization strategy based on the structure of (1) is ungrammatical; that is, in (11):

- (11) o janis teorite eksipnos
 the John/NOM consider/3SG.NON-ACT smart/NOM.SG

only a passive interpretation ‘John is considered smart’ is possible and not a reflexive reading, ‘*John considers himself smart’. This fact means that *ton jani* in (1), even though clearly a final stratum 2 (surface direct object) is not an initial 2, being rather a nonthematic object.⁶ What its initial grammatical relation is perhaps is not clear, but it could well be an initial 1 (a subject), if sentence (1) above is taken to be a reduction in some way from the structures indicated in (2). In any case, though, given the constraint on the morphological reflexive, (11) fits in with a pattern of reflexivization possibilities in Greek focusing on final stratum objects that are also initial stratum objects; the morphological reflexive strategy is not possible with a final object that is a different initial stratum grammatical relation, as in (8c), (9b), and (11).

It is important to note that the problem with reflexivization in (12) is not a semantic problem since the syntactic reflexive can be employed to provide a reflexive reading:

- (12) *θεορο* *τον εαυτο* *μου* *εξσιπνο*
 consider/1SG the self/ACC my smart/ACC.SG
 ‘I consider myself smart’

Moreover, it is not a morphological problem since the nonactive form *θεοριτε* does occur, but only in a passive sense, not a reflexive sense.

12.4 Conclusion

The result of this discussion is that reference to multiple levels of grammatical relations is an essential part of the statement of nonactive voice reflexivization in Greek – it operates with final 2s (roughly, surface direct objects) that are simultaneously initial 2s (underlying direct objects). No other combination of grammatical relations allows for this reflexivization strategy. While one could explore the possibility of stating this on a semantic basis in terms of the thematicity of the direct object to be linked with a coreferent subject, it is not clear that “theme” or “affected entity” is a coherent semantic notion; the entity hit or washed in (7ab) clearly is affected in some way but is the entity persuaded in (10b) affected in the same way, or is the entity viewed in (7c) even affected at all? Most likely not, making a purely semantic characterization less compelling. Moreover, restricting the morphological reflexive to a layer of lexical derivation could produce the desired results, but the basic fact remains that there is a syntactic dimension to reflexivity in Greek in that the realization of argument structure in nonactive verbs is different from that seen with active verbs; furthermore, reflexivization participates in that argument reduction. Consequently, one way or another, reference to grammatical relations at different levels of analysis must be recognized to account for the full range of reflexivization facts in Greek.

This paper was completed while I was a Special Visiting Fellow at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe University in the Melbourne, Australia area. I would like to thank its director, Bob Dixon, and its associate director, Sasha Aikhenvald, for kindly inviting me to spend some time at the Centre in the summer of 2006. It was a fitting place to write this tribute to David Perlmutter, as he always emphasized to me that linguistic theory was about accounting for the ways in which all languages are similar and the ways in which they are different, and this is a basic goal of linguistic typology as well.

What I present here is an application of an analysis that David helped me with years ago having to do with the interaction of raising and reflexivization in Modern Greek (some of which were published in the Appendix to Joseph 1990). I happily dedicate this present piece to him.

1. Here is a key to the abbreviations used in glossing the examples: NOM = nominative, SG = singular, ACC = accusative, MASC = masculine, COMP = complementizer, ACT = active, NON-ACT = nonactive
2. These facts from English and other aspects of the Greek sentence-type here are discussed in greater detail and with a different goal in Joseph 2000.
3. Berman stated the constraint as follows: “Tough movement may move a noun phrase only from its position in underlying structure”, and this can be interpreted as given here in terms of thematicity of the direct object.
4. These forms can have passive or, with plurals, reciprocal, meanings, as well as other functions all of which are irrelevant to the matter at hand here.

5. RG is a nonderivational framework (hence the “scare quotes” around terminology below like “derived” object, which are intended in a metaphorical sense), so it is not the case that an initial relation turns into a final one, but rather a given nominal has properties from its initial status and its final (and other level) status at all points in the generation/interpretation of a sentence.

6. As discussed in Joseph 2000, this is different from the ostensibly parallel English sentence-type, to judge from the facts in (4) and (5), but it seems one has to simply take each language on its own terms.

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