

I Want You To Focus!

Quasi-Exceptional Case Marking and the subjunctive clause in Greek

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ABSTRACT: The existence of what appear to be Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions in Modern Greek (Greek, hereafter) has invited a substantial amount of discourse within the field of Greek syntax. In a language such as English, standard ECM has been attributed to a tense deficiency in the embedded clause that forces the subject of that clause to check accusative Case with the matrix verb. However, the embedded verb in Greek is not deficient, in that it is able to assign nominative Case to its subject, and displays variations for tense and agreement. Several analyses have been suggested for these constructions, most recently, that they are a subset of object control, where the ‘subject’ is base-generated in the object position of the matrix verb, and controls a *pro* in the embedded clause (Kotzoglou 2002, Kotzoglou & Papangeli 2007). In this paper, I will maintain that the subject of the embedded clause originates in, and remains within that clause throughout the derivation. Specifically, I propose that the temporal dependency of the subjunctive clause allows a degree of clausal transparency with the matrix clause; when the selectional properties of the matrix verb allow, a focused subject may raise to SpecCP of the embedded clause, an inherent focus position, and check accusative Case with the matrix verb.

1 The data: ECM constructions

ECM has traditionally been linked to a tense-related deficiency in a clause, which prevents nominative Case marking of its subject. In a language such as English, the infinitival clause is unable to assign nominative Case, and so, must resort to accusative Case marking by the matrix verb. A similar process has been proposed for ECM-like constructions in Greek, when the notional subject of an embedded subjunctive clause is marked for accusative case. However, Greek cannot be said to have ECM in the standard sense, since, unlike English, the subjunctive clause is finite, and is capable of assigning nominative Case. Such ‘quasi-ECM’ constructions are available to the canonical ECM *consider*-type verbs, but also to a limited class of verbs such as *thelo* ‘want’ (1), and *perimeno* ‘expect’ (2)

¹ ‘Quasi-ECM’ is also available to a number of other verbs in Greek, including *ipologhizo* ‘estimate’, *pistevo* ‘believe’, and *ksero* ‘know’ (Kotzoglou and Papangeli 2007).

Abbreviations: sub=subjunctive, refl=reflexive, pass=passive, ppt=past participle; sg=singular, pl=plural; NOM=nominative, ACC=accusative; cl=clitic; SUB=subjunctive marker, FUT=future marker, NEG=negative particle

Importantly, however, the accusative form may be alternatively rendered with a nominative embedded subject:

- (1) *Thelis i/ti mitera mouna min anakatevete sta*
 you.want the-NOM/ACC mother my SUB NEG interfere-sub.3sg in.the
prosopika mas.
 affairs-ACC our
 ‘You want my mother to not interfere in our affairs.’
 (Kotzoglou 2002)
- (2) *Den perimena i/ti Maria na grapsi toso kala.*
 NEG I.expected the-NOM/ACC Maria SUB write-sub.3sg so well
 ‘I did not expect Maria to write so well.’

This alternation makes a strictly Case-driven analysis problematic. Interestingly, there is a semantic difference between the two forms, where the accusative version puts greater emphasis on the subject of the embedded verb.

2 Object control-based analysis

In an attempt to explain the availability of this ECM-like variation, without resort to a tense deficiency analysis, Kotzoglou (2002) and Kotzoglou and Papangeli (2007) (K&P) propose that quasi-ECM is a subset of object control, where the accusative element is base-generated as the object of the matrix verb (as a proleptic object), and is associated with a *pro* in the embedded clause.

K&P adopt the assumption that the finiteness of the subjunctive clause, and thus its ability to assign nominative Case, would prevent an accusative ‘subject’ from being within the embedded clause at all. As evidence, they cite the similarities between quasi-ECM and object control constructions in relation to passivization, *wh*-extraction, licensing of Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), and idiomatic expressions. However, there remain crucial differences between the two that point to the need for more distinct structural analyses. We first address the most puzzling differences that remain unanswered by the K&P account, and then in Section 3, proceed to alternatively explain the object control-directed evidence via a new analysis.

2.1 Extraction across a quasi-ECM subject

As first noted in K&P, a discrepancy arises when the object of an embedded clause is extracted across the accusative marked subject. In object control constructions, embedded object extraction is grammatical, while in quasi-ECM constructions, it is not:

- (3) *Pion epises ton prothipourgo na entiposiasi?*
 whom-ACC you.persuaded the prime minister-ACC SUB impress-sub.3sg
 ‘Whom did you persuade the prime minister to impress?’

- (4) **Pion itheles ton prothipourgo na entiposiasi?*
 whom-ACC you.wanted the prime minister-ACC SUB impress-sub.3sg
 ‘Whom did you want the prime minister to impress?’

(K&P)

However, this is puzzling given the proposed site of the accusative subject. Base-generating the accusative element in the matrix clause should not prevent extraction of an embedded object, as indeed it also does not in object control.

2.2 Animacy condition

Another area of mismatch with object control involves the semantic properties of object control verbs, and the resultant restrictions on the object NP type. Object control constructions bear an assumption of animacy of the accusative element, something capable of consciously responding or reacting. It is pragmatically odd to have sentences of the following type, where this assumption of animacy is defied:

- (5) #I persuaded the sun to shine.
 (6) #I reminded the car to run smoothly.

The translation equivalents of (5) and (6) in Greek are also deviant, under the same presupposition of object animacy. However, quasi-ECM structures are compatible with any accusative-marked subject, regardless of animacy:

- (7) *Thelo ton Yanni na veltiosi ti simperifora tou.*
 I.want the Yannis-ACC SUB improve-sub.3sg the behavior-ACC his
 ‘I want Yannis to improve his behavior.’
 (8) *Thelo ton kero na veltiothi.*
 I.want the weather-ACC SUB improve-refl.sub.3sg
 ‘I want the weather to improve.’

Despite these contrasts with regard to extraction and animacy, K&P’s claim of quasi-ECM as a more restricted subset of object control could explain away a number of such discrepancies. In the following section however, I will provide evidence that placing an accusative subject in SpecCP of the embedded clause, accounts not only for any similarities seen with object control, but is better able to handle the distinguishing differences as well.

3 An embedded SpecCP analysis

3.1 Semantic motivation

The motivation for accusative Case-marking in quasi-ECM constructions must be seen as semantically driven. Accusative case alternations in an embedded clause often indicate a semantic difference, and can additionally encode a focus interpretation. That a nominative/accusative Case variation has semantic

consequences in other syntactic environments can be seen in the following examples:

- (11) *Fantazome o Kostas na tiganizi psaria.*
 I.imagine the Kostas-NOM SUB fry-sub.3sg fish-ACC
 ‘I find it likely that Kostas is frying fish.’
- (12) *Fantazome ton Kosta na tiganizi psaria.*
 I.imagine the Kostas-ACC SUB fry-sub.3sg fish-ACC
 ‘I visualize Kostas frying fish.’

Iatridou (1993)

The availability of accusative marking for the subject NP appears to be specifically linked to the presence of the subjunctive marker in the embedded clause. We can relate the difference in interpretation to the position of the NP ‘Kostas’ in SpecCP, which allows for a closer relation to the matrix verb.

In relation to quasi-ECM, which I will argue encodes focus on the accusative NP, a closer relation to the matrix clause alone does not force such a focus reading; however, the features of the subjunctive SpecCP position are responsible for such an interpretation. Perhaps more tellingly, as shown below, accusative subjects are compatible with, and can be used to indicate, contrastive focus:

- (13) **Q:** *Thelete i nosokoma na eksetasi ton patera sas?*
 you.want the nurse-NOM SUB examine-sub.3sg the father-ACC your
 ‘Do you want the nurse to examine your father?’
- A:** *Oxi, thelo to yiatro na ton eksetasi.*
 no I.want the doctor-ACC SUB him examine-sub.3sg
 ‘No, I want the doctor to examine him.’

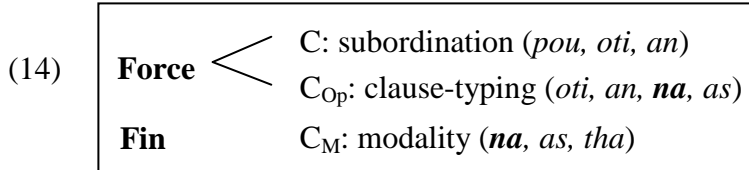
3.2 Transparency in subjunctive clauses

Kenesei and Ortiz de Urbina (1994), claim that the mood of a complement can affect the interpretation of the construction as a whole. Subjunctive complements seem to engage more locally with the matrix clause than indicative complements, as demonstrated by their frequent dependence on the matrix clause for temporal interpretation. Since it cannot be interpreted without reference to the matrix, we can say that a subjunctive clause licenses a shared temporal interpretation with the matrix clause, which prevents it from being fully independent (Picallo 1984, among others). This dependence licenses the matrix verb to assign accusative Case to the subject of an embedded *na*-clause, as long as that subject is sufficiently close to it, with no intervening material.

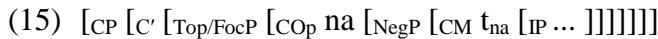
If correct, then the tense deficiency of the subjunctive clause, while not sufficient to block nominative Case assignment, may be sufficient to motivate raising to SpecCP for accusative Case marking of a focused subject.

3.3 Articulated CP structure (Roussou 2000)

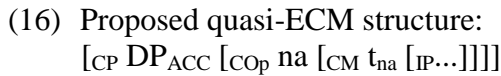
Expanding on Rizzi's (1997) Force/Fin distinction within the CP, Roussou (2000) further segments the Greek CP based on the functions and relative positions of its complementizers, as shown in the following hierarchy:



Under this model, subjunctive marker *na* plays the dual role of expressing modality, and acting as a clause-typing operator, and hence, raises from C_M to C_{Op}:

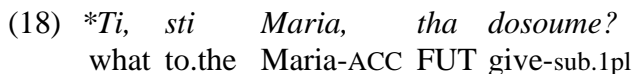
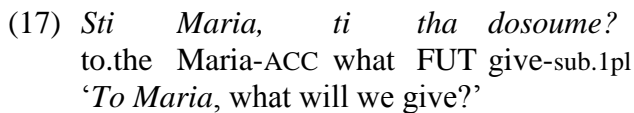


As C_M is the projection associated with finiteness, I will assert that the temporal dependence in subjunctive clauses is a result of a tense limitation within C_M, the base generation site of *na*. One effect of this limitation is to reduce the positions available for subject raising. I propose that while in the CP layer of a main or embedded indicative clause in Greek, a dedicated FocP is available, in subjunctive clauses, it is not². Preverbal nominative subjects are topicalized, and may occupy a TopP position (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998); however, accusative subjects are only licensed in SpecCP, which is compatible with focus, and where they may check accusative Case with the matrix verb.



3.4 Evidence against FocP in subjunctive clauses

Assuming a CP-TopP-FocP hierarchy, it is evident that *wh*-elements (and thus, focused elements) in both main and embedded indicative clauses target a dedicated FocP and not CP, since they are only licit when following a topicalized phrase (topicalized elements italicized in translation):



² It may be the case that in languages with a special subjunctive marker, both indicating mood and serving as a complementizer, CP and FocP 'merge', permitting CP to host a focus-marked element in its specifier.

*‘What, *to Maria*, will we give?’

- (19) *Den ksero ston Ilias ti tha doso.*
NEG I.know to.the Ilias-ACC what FUT give-sub.1sg
‘I don’t know *to Ilias*, what I will give.’
- (20) **Den ksero ti ston Ilias tha doso.*
NEG I.know what to.the Ilias-ACC FUT give-sub.1sg
*‘I don’t know what, *to Ilias*, I will give.’

However, it would appear that a FocP position below TopP is not available in subjunctive clauses, as the equivalent of (19) is degraded:

- (21) ?**Den ksero ston Ilias ti na doso.*
NEG I.know to.the Ilias-ACC what SUB give-sub.1sg
*‘I don’t know *to Ilias*, what to give.’

The unavailability of a dedicated FocP position in subjunctive clauses is further indicated by the following example, where *kouzina* ‘kitchen’ is topicalized and precedes *Petro*:

- (22) **Perimena tin kouzina ton Petro na katharisi.*
I.expected the kitchen-ACC the Petros-ACC SUB clean-sub.3sg
*‘I expected *the kitchen*, Petros to clean’

On the other hand, (23), with the correct prosody, is acceptable:

- (23) *Perimena ton Petro tin kouzina na katharisi.*
I.expected the Petros-ACC the kitchen-ACC SUB clean-sub.3sg
‘I expected Petros *the kitchen* to clean.’

Thus, there is not a *general* ban on the co-occurrence of a topicalized and a focused NP in the same clause, rather just on their relative order. Assuming a CP-TopP-FocP hierarchy, (19) is in direct contrast with (21) in that *ti* ‘what’ of the embedded clause in (19) must reside in FocP. Additionally, (22) and (23) demonstrate that focused *Petros* may only precede the topicalized *kouzina* ‘kitchen’, supporting the hypothesis that the only available position for it is in SpecCP, above TopP.

4 Addressing object control evidence

Espousing this view of the subjunctive clause, we can begin to address the evidence gathered for an object-control based analysis. For this, parallels can be

drawn with causatives in Greek, where an accusative embedded subject is less disputably in the embedded clause³⁴.

4.1 Passivization

As stated by K&P, the passivization of quasi-ECM constructions results in a different interpretation – much like the passivization of object control. However, this is not unique to accusative subjects; passivization of the same sentence with a nominative embedded subject also alters the interpretation:

- (24) *Perimena o yiatros na eksetasi ton Yanni.*
I.expected the doctor-NOM SUB examine-sub.3sg the Yannis-ACC
'I expected the doctor to examine Yannis.'
≠
Perimena o Yannis na eksetasti apo ton yiatro.
I.expected the Yannis-NOM SUB examine-pass.sub.3sg by the doctor-ACC
'I expected Yannis to be examined by the doctor.'

As when the embedded subject is accusative, the passive version places more emphasis (although not 'focus' in a syntactic or discourse-related sense) on 'Yannis', expressing surprise at his not being examined by the doctor.

Similarly, passivization of a causative also results in a different interpretation:

- (25) *Ekana ton yiatro na eksetasi ton Yanni.*
I.made the doctor-ACC SUB examine-sub.3sg the Yannis-ACC
'I made the doctor examine Yannis.'
≠
Ekana ton Yanni na eksetasti apo ton yiatro.
I.made the Yannis-ACC SUB examine-pass.sub.3sg by the doctor-ACC
'I made Yannis be examined by the doctor'

Thus, the semantic difference between the active and passive forms is not necessarily due to the similarity of quasi-ECM constructions with object control. The reversal in interpretation can instead be attributed to the semantics of the matrix verb, and the effect of passivization on that verb.

4.2 Extraction data

Addressing the data relating to extraction, placing the accusative subject in the embedded SpecCP would easily allow further movement to the matrix SpecCP. In

³ I restrict this claim to Greek for the moment, in order to sidestep the debate concerning Romance *faire*-infinitive clauses.

⁴ Additional diagnostics presented by K&P – adverbial placement and clitic doubling – are more difficult to accommodate under the proposed analysis. An explanation may be found in the temporal dependence of the embedded clause on the matrix. However, the actual mechanism behind such a cross-clausal relationship requires further investigation.

addition, the unavailability of extraction across an ECM subject is readily explained since the accusative subject in SpecCP would effectively block the ‘escape hatch’ for embedded object extraction to the matrix clause.

Extending the comparison with causative constructions, this effect may also be responsible for the degraded rating of embedded object extraction in causative constructions⁵:

- (26) *?*Pion ekanes to yiatro na eksetasi?*
 whom-ACC you.made the doctor-ACC SUB examine-sub.3sg
 ‘Whom did you make the doctor examine?’

4.3 Negative polarity items

K&P use the ungrammaticality of accusative PI *kanena* ‘anyone; no one’ in quasi-ECM as evidence that it is base-generated in the matrix clause, and thus is never within the scope of the embedded negation:

- (27) *Perimena kanis/*kanena [na min to pari.]*
 I.expected anyone-NOM/ACC SUB NEG cl take-sub.3sg
 ‘I expected nobody to take it.’

I argue that this view does not address the differences in the licensing of emphatic and nonemphatic PIs, and any ungrammaticality is primarily due to this type of incompatibility. Giannakidou (1999) lucidly differentiates between two forms of the Greek PIs, emphatic and nonemphatic, which are semantically and syntactically distinct with regards to interpretation and licensing. She supports that while nonemphatic PIs (e.g., *kanis* ‘anyone’) are compatible with the broader category of nonveridical operators, emphatic PIs (e.g., *KANIS* ‘no one’) are only compatible with the stricter subset of *antiveridical* operators. Applying Giannakidou’s (1999) analysis to the case of quasi-ECM, I will claim that in a sentence such as (27), *kanis* is grammatical under this nonemphatic reading, while emphatic *KANIS* ‘no one’ would be considered ungrammatical since it is not within the scope of the negative particle *min*⁶. This contrast is given below⁷:

- (28) *Perimena kanis/*KANIS na min me voithisi.*
 I.expected anyone-NOM SUB NEG me help-sub.3sg
 ‘I expected not to be helped by anyone.’/*‘I expected to be helped by no one.’

⁵ I make no theoretical claim regarding the structure of Greek causatives, as that is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I tentatively suggest that the causee occupies *some* A'-position in the embedded clause, creating a similar (if not necessarily identical) effect on extraction.

⁶ This is also working under the assumption that PIs are not licensed via reconstruction.

⁷ I have taken some liberty in the English translations of (28) and (29) in order to better convey the readings of the Greek examples.

By assuming that syntactic focus is reflected in the emphatic NPI form, we can explain why the accusative NPI subject is ungrammatical in the quasi-ECM constructions. Similarly to emphatic nominative *KANIS*, accusative *kanena*, being inherently emphatic in this context, is not licensed except within the immediate scope of a negative particle, e.g., *den* in the example below:

- (29) *Den perimena KANIS/kanena na me voithisi.*
 NEG I.expected anyone-NOM/ACC SUB me help-sub.3sg
 ‘I expected no one to help me.’

Preliminary data have supported this claim, suggesting that it is not the matrix location of the accusative PI causing ungrammaticality, but the incompatibility of an *emphatic* PI outside the scope of negation.

4.4 Idioms

K&P attribute the loss of idiomatic readings in quasi-ECM constructions to the distance created by base-generation of the accusative subject in the matrix clause. There is evidence against this in that idiomatic readings will fail in a variety of other constructions, including causatives, where the accusative subject is indisputably situated in the embedded clause:

- (30) #*Ekana tous psilous na tou boun sta aftia.*
 I.made the fleas-ACC SUB cl enter-sub.3pl in.the ears-ACC
 ‘I made the fleas enter his ears.’ ✗ *‘I made him become suspicious.’
- (31) #*Ekana to diaolo na tous pari.*
 I made the devil-ACC SUB cl take-sub.3sg
 ‘I made the devil take them.’ ✗ *‘I made them be destroyed.’

The unacceptability seen in (30) and (31) is found not only with causative *kano* ‘I make’ and quasi-ECM verbs *thelo* ‘I want’ and *perimeno* ‘I expect’, but also with *valo* ‘I put/assign’, *ipohreono* ‘I require’, and perception verbs *vlepo* ‘I see’, and *akouo* ‘I hear’. The loss of the idiomatic reading would appear to be linked to multiple factors; in addition to possibly being too distant from the rest of the idiom, the accusative subject is also receiving a focus interpretation in the SpecCP position. Because idioms are incompatible with focus (Kenesei 1998, Geilfuss 1991, as cited in Penner and Roeper 1997, among others), this suggests that a figurative reading will always be lost in a focus structure, regardless of matrix verb type.

5 Summary and conclusion

From the data presented above, there is strong evidence that the semantic and discourse-driven focus reading of quasi-ECM can be accommodated via raising to SpecCP, where an accusative subject may receive the intended interpretation.

Unlike English ECM, quasi-ECM in Greek is not Case-driven, but is semantically motivated. Additionally, the diagnostics used to support an object control configuration can be alternatively explained via a SpecCP landing site, or influences external to a matrix/embedded clause distinction.

I have suggested that it is the very nature of the subjunctive clause that allows for accusative Case marking of the embedded subject. Although tense in subjunctive clauses is not altogether absent, it is limited, and it is this aspect that is ultimately responsible for the superficially puzzling alternations seen. The temporal dependency of the subjunctive clause reduces the positions available for subject raising. Although a dedicated FocP is not available, a focused element may raise to SpecCP, and receive the appropriate interpretation. This analysis not only accounts for the availability of accusative Case checking, but connects that availability with semantic and pragmatic effects in a structural way.

This analysis is not only able to accommodate quasi-ECM constructions, but may in the future provide a satisfactory account of other related constructions such as perception events and pseudorelatives. The parallels and characteristics shared by this extended family of constructions are striking, but a more detailed investigation into these ‘relatives’ of quasi-ECM would be necessary to reinforce this claim. I leave this to future research.

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