

Being forced into an analysis

Considering some of the mess that Collins (2005) gets himself into.

Collins (2005) presents a novel analysis of the passive that involves moving the “PartP” (participle phrase), which contains the participle form of the verb and the entire VP, into the specifier of VoiceP.

This homework is kind of a “reading homework”—the point is to read the paper, really, but I need to have you hand *something* in.

For various reasons, Collins concludes that *by* is the pronunciation of Voice, with the “complement” DP being in the specifier of *v*P (where Agents usually are). What that means is that, if there is anything else inside the *v*P, “by John” is not actually a constituent—unlike seemingly similar PPs like “to Mary.”

By sticking to his guns on this point, Collins forces himself to reconsider a lot of things. There seem to be a number of predictions that this would make, but many of them do not seem to be straightforwardly met. So, in section 8, Collins winds up needing to make a number of assumptions to explain why “by John” seems so much like a constituent even when it is not.

In section 9, the same kind of exercise (though a bit less frantically) is conducted with respect to Binding Theory.

Here I want to focus on section 10 (“C-command of *by*-phrase”). Things go pretty well through (93)—the conclusion is that a PP that precedes the *by*-phrase must have been inside the PartP when it moved, and therefore does not c-command the *by*-phrase.

Then, Collins turns to examples like

- (94) a. Books were given to no student by any professor.
- (95) a. Books were given to each student by the other.
- (96) a. Books were given to every student by his mother.

The importance of these examples rests on the fact that for *any professor* to be licensed (it’s a Negative Polarity Item), it must be c-commanded by *no student* in (94a). Similarly, to get the relevant interpretations in (95a) and (96a), *each student* must c-command *the other* and *every student* must c-command *his mother*.

Ultimately, Collins’ answer to this is to suppose that there’s something special about these (*no student*, *each student*, *every student*) that requires them to move higher, out of the PartP. This movement might be covert. In fact, from the way he describes it, they are just undergoing Quantifier Raising (“QR”), which is commonly assumed to be necessary for quantifiers.

Quantifiers “bind” pronouns, like *her* in (1a) below, in order to get the meaning (for every person x , x hates x ’s roommate), and this is something that requires the quantifier to c-command the pronoun (after QR happens, which we can assume moves the quantifier to adjoin it to TP). However, something goes wrong in (1b)—it is bad, though we wouldn’t have expected it to be. The constraint that governs this is known as **weak crossover**—it prohibits a quantifier from moving *over* a pronoun it is supposed to bind. So, although (1b) can mean *something*, it can’t have the meaning where *everyone* binds *her*. The same phenomenon happens in *wh*-movement—(2a) is fine because *who* doesn’t move over *her*, but (2b) is ruled out because the path of *wh*-movement crosses over *her*.

- (1) a. Everyone hates her roommate.
- b. * Her roommate hates everyone.
- (2) a. Who hates her roommate?
- b. * Who does her roommate hate?

Task 1. Considering Collins’ solution to (94–96), think about the sentences in (3). They are ungrammatical. Is that what you’d predict? Explain (briefly) why or why not. If not, any ideas about what kind of additional assumptions/proposals you might make so that the examples in (3) are predicted to be bad?

- (3) a. * Books were given to any professor by no student.
- b. * Books were given to the other by each student.
- c. * Books were given to his mother by every student.

Now, let’s go back to the earlier examples in the section.

- (85) a. The book was given to him_i by $John_i$ ’s mother.
- b. * The book was given by him_i to $John_i$ ’s mother.
- (86) a. Testimony was given about him_i by $John_i$ ’s mother.
- b. * Testimony was given by him_i about $John_i$ ’s mother.

Task 2. Briefly restate what it is that rules out (85b) and (86b), and why (85a) and (86a) are ok.

Task 3. Now considering (4), notice that (4b) is ungrammatical. How could we explain this? Why might we have thought it should be ok? What kind of assumption/proposal might you make in order to predict that (4b) is bad?

- (4) a. The book was given to him_i by each of $John_i$ ’s teachers.
- b. * The book was given by him_i to each of $John_i$ ’s teachers.