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A NEW VIEW OF TO-CONTRACTION¹

Donald G. Frantz

All treatments of so-called to-contraction in English (Lakoff 1970, Bresnan 1971, Lightfoot 1976) attempt to deal with the phenomenon entirely in terms of contiguity. The purpose of this squib is to point out that the major constraint on this phenomenon is rather one of subject coreference, and furthermore that this coreference condition is identical to that for a universal rule which I have called 'equi-subject clause union' (Frantz 1976).

To illustrate, I will reconsider typical examples cited in discussions of this phenomenon, pointing out the relevance of coreference.²

- (1a) I want to leave now.
- (1b) I wanna leave now.
- (2a) I want to win that horse.
- (2b) I wanna win that horse.
- (3a) That's the horse I want to win.
- (3b) That's the horse I wanna win.
- (4a) Who(m) do you want to marry?
- (4b) Who(m) do you wanna marry?
- (5a) Who(m) do you want to marry you?
- (5b) *Who(m) do you wanna marry you?

(1b) is the contracted counterpart of (1a); the subject of *want* and the subject of *leave* (before Equi-NP deletion³) are coreferential. Likewise, in (2a) and (2b) the subjects of *want* and *win* are coreferential. On one reading of the relative clause in (3a) the subjects of *want* and *win* are coreferential, and so with this reading (3a) has (3b) as a synonymous counterpart. However on the reading of (3a) with *horse* as subject of *win*, there is no contracted counterpart, i.e., (3b) cannot be understood as having *horse* as subject of *win*. Similarly, (4a) has counterpart (4b), since *want* and *marry* have the same subject. But (5b) is no good, because it would be the contracted counterpart of (5a), which does not meet the coreference condition.

Given my claim that subject coreference is the major constraint on to-contraction, contiguity in the surface string is simply a prerequisite to the phonological processes which are the consequence of this syntactic

rule. If something intervenes, the phonological effects of to-contraction are blocked, of course.

It should be evident that in derivational terms, the coreference condition I am assuming is a global one.⁴ The putative constraint evidently makes reference to the cycle-final ("cyclic") subject of the downstairs verb:

(6) You're the one I wanna be kissed by.

(7) *You're the one I wanna kiss me.

(8) I wanna seem (to be) nonchalant.

In (6) it is the subject of the passivized downstairs clause, rather than the initial subject of *kiss*, which is coreferential to the subject of *want*; compare (7) which of course does not meet the coreference condition. In (8) the coreference condition makes reference to the cyclic subject of *seem* which, according to standard analyses, has been raised from the complement of *seem*.

As for the upstairs verb, the coreference condition can make reference to a subject which has been deleted by Equi, as in (9), or raised as in (10):

(9) I tried to wanna be humble.

(10) You seem to wanna win very badly.

Thus far it looks as if the condition makes reference to the cycle-final subject of the upstairs verb (*want* in all the examples given) as well. But Paul Postal (personal communication) points out that if so-called quantifier floating is viewed as a raising from NP,⁵ then the cyclic (and final) subject of *want* in (11) is *the men*, while the cyclic subject of *go* must have been *all the men*:

(11) The men all wanna go.

Thus in terms of data we have considered, to-contraction requires that the downstairs cycle-final subject be coreferential with the upstairs subject after subject-to-subject raising but before any other rules affect the status of the upstairs subject; i.e., the first non-clausal subject of the upstairs verb. This attempt to specify the upstairs coreferent may seem ad hoc at this point, but should seem less so after the discussion of the next section.

Equi-Subject Clause Union

As discussed in Frantz (1976), it is very common for languages to collapse matrix and complement clause into a single clause under the condition that both clauses have the same subject. For example, compare Isleta (12) and (13); the latter is the single clause counterpart of (12). There is no such counterpart to (14), because the identity constraint is not met.⁶

- (12) te-na-beow-a ti-diru-tuwi - hi - 'i
1 - ?-want-pres 1:3-chicken-buy-fut-sub

I want to buy the chicken.

- (13) te-na- diru - kum - beow -a
1 - ?- chicken - buy - want -pres

- (14) te-na-beow - a a - dire - tuwi -hi-'i
1 - ?-want-pres 2:3-chicken-buy- fut -sub

I want you to buy the chicken.

I call this 'equi-subject clause union (ESU)'. In Spanish, ESU does not combine verbs into a single word as in Isleta, but dependents of the complement verb clearly become dependents of the matrix verb, as Aissen and Perlmutter (1976) have shown. This accounts for the position of the clitic pronouns in (15) and (16).

- (15) Te los quiero mostrar.

I want to show them to you.

- (16) Luis las suele comer.

Luis tends to eat them.

This positioning is not possible unless the subject of the upstairs verb is coreferential with the downstairs cycle-final subject. Observe that this constraint is met in (16) as a result of subject raising.

Furthermore, the upstairs subject in a clause union can subsequently lose that status by being raised to a higher clause, as in (17)⁷, or by being replaced as subject by copy-advancement of the union direct object ("reflexive passive") as in (18):

- (17) Luis parece solerlas comer.

Luis seems to tend to eat them.

- (18) Los mapas ya se empezaron a preparar.

The maps have already begun to be prepared.

So it appears that ESU requires coreference between the cyclic subject of the downstairs verb and the first non-clausal subject of the upstairs verb. This is precisely the constraint seen to obtain for to-contraction in English.⁸

What may appear to be an ad hoc rule or constraint in a given language may emerge as a "natural" rule or constraint when seen in the broader context of universal grammar. Thus, having compared the constraint on to-contraction with the constraint on ESU, the former does not appear as ad hoc as it might have at first.

NOTES

¹I am indebted to Paul Postal for pointing out serious inadequacies in a much different earlier version of this paper. Of course, he is not responsible for the remaining inadequacies.

²The alert reader will observe that I have excluded so-called purpose complements from consideration here. Actually, I do not consider these to be complements. Be that as it may, to-contraction never takes place if the to marks such purpose clauses, regardless of whether or not an NP intervened at some stage of the derivation:

- i. We're going to eat.
- ii. *We're gonna eat. [bad with the purpose reading.]
- iii. This is the wrench you need to fix that.
- iv. *This is the wrench you needa fix that.

³Through the bulk of this discussion I will speak in derivational terms typical in transformational literature, although many of my implicit assumptions and some terms are borrowed from relational grammar. However, if I were using only relational grammar terminology, it would be incorrect to speak of 'deletions', the 'cycle', or even 'derivations' as these are understood in transformational grammar (Postal 1977).

⁴Many who work within transformational grammar hope to strengthen the theory by formally constraining the class of possible rules, and hence make every effort to avoid adding the additional power. But in universal grammar, the class of possible languages is constrained primarily by highly valuing universal rules and constraints. Consequently, overlooking such a generalization as that which I have stated above in order to avoid sanctioning global rules is not at all motivated, since not only are there other phenomena in languages which are best described by making reference to the notion of cyclic subject (e.g. agreement often is best stated with reference to cyclic terms, and sometimes must be (Andrews 1971; Napoli 1975)), there is at least one universal rule which must meet exactly the condition stated for to-contraction. This is the rule 'equi-subject clause union' which I discuss below.

It is important to recognize also that in uninetwork relational grammar (Postal and Perlmutter (in preparation)), 'globality' vs. 'non-globality' cannot be an issue.

⁵In relational grammar (Postal and Perlmutter (in preparation)), quantifiers "float" as a consequence of the quantified NP displacing the quantifier as 'head'.

⁶Isleta is a Tanoan language of New Mexico. Data are from Barbara Allen. Abbreviations in the glosses include: pres = present tense, fut = future tense, sub = subordinate clause marker. The prefix na- glossed '?' may be either an incorporated dummy or an antipassive marker.

⁷While (17) is grammatically well-formed, it is difficult to imagine a context in which the combination of ESU and raising would be either semantically governed or discourse governed (Rhodes 1977), and hence Spanish speakers prefer the non-union counterpart Luis parece soler comerlas.

⁸If we could go so far as to say that to-contraction was actually a consequence of ESU in English, then we would have an explanation for why to-contraction is constrained as it is. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any convincing evidence for the single-clause status of sentences with to-contraction as opposed to their uncontracted counterparts. There are, however, some subtle phenomena which seem to distinguish between the 'clausehood' of equi-subject and subject-to-object raising infinitive complements. For one, see Postal (1974; last paragraph of footnote, p. 93). Another is the degree of acceptability of complement negation:

(i) I want John not to go.

(ii) I want not to go.

In my opinion, (ii) is less acceptable than (i). I suggest that this is because the equi-subject complement is more tightly integrated (in some sense) than the complement of (i).

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