

The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present

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speaking on

A new take on (fake) partial control

based partly on joint work with Marcel Pitteroff

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9:00 AM (PST) via Zoom

Zoom Information: Will be emailed on Thursday, April 22, 2021

Abstract:

Partial control is a phenomenon first discussed in detail by Landau (2000), illustrated for English in (1a):

- (1) a. Does he_i want PRO_i+ to meet later on today?
b. *He met this morning.

The phenomenon is best illustrated with predicates requiring a semantically plural subject in English (1b), though it is also possible with other predicates. In this talk, I argue that not all instances of partial control are alike, building on Sheehan (2014, 2018), Pitteroff & Sheehan (2018). Whereas, in some instances of partial control, PRO has some plural properties, in other cases it does not. Focusing on French and English, I show that French has only what I will call ‘fake partial control’ whereby the partial control reading results from the presence of a covert comitative object whereas English has both ‘true’ and ‘fake’ partial control. The most immediate effect of this difference is that French partial control is possible only where the embedded predicate is comitative:

- (2) a. *Jean **s’est embrassé** avec Marie hier. [-COM]
 J **SE=is kissed** with Marie yesterday
b. *Ça fait deux semaines que Jean sort avec Marie,
 that makes two weeks that Jean goes.out with Marie
 et il voudrait **s’embrasser** maintenant.
 and he would.like **SE=kiss** now
 ‘Jean’s been going out with Marie for two weeks now and he would like to **kiss** soon.’
- (3) a. Marie **s’est réconciliée** avec son père. [+COM]
 M **SE=is reconciled** with her father
 ‘Marie made up with her father.’
b. Kim a pardonné à Jean. Elle voudrait **se réconcilier.**
 Kim has forgiven to Jean she. would.like **SE=make.up**
 ‘Kim has forgiven Jean. She would like to **make up**.’

In English, this effect is visible only where the matrix predicate is not an attitude predicate (5), ruling out the possibility of true partial control. Example (6) is provided by way of contrast:

- (4) a. *Celine kissed with Susan. [-COM]
 b. Celine held hands with Susan. [+COM]
- (5) a. *Celine has told Mark that she can kiss on their next date.
 b. Celine has told Susan that she can hold hands on their next date.
- (6) a. Celine has told Mark that she wants to kiss on their next date.
 b. Celine has told Susan that she wants to hold hands on their next date.

These contrasts are supported, in both languages, by quantitative data come from large-scale contextualized acceptability judgement questionnaires, which also support a number of other distinctions between fake and partial control. I will outline these data and respond to the potential issues raised by Landau (2016) before sketching a new analysis of fake partial control. A crucial ingredient for this account is the fact, observed by Authier and Reed (2018), that fake partial control is limited to inherently reciprocal verbs in French. Following Siloni (2008), I adopt the idea that, with inherently specified reciprocals, SE is specified as part of the verbal complex and so the internal argument position remains available with these verbs, unlike with syntactically derived reciprocals for which SE is the internal argument. Inherent reciprocals are nonetheless unergative and so no case is available for this internal argument hence the fact that it must be realized as a (comitative) PP. If we further adopt Hornstein’s (1999) proposal that, in non-finite contexts, *pro* can be inserted as a last resort in non-Case-positions, yielding Non-Obligatory Control, then an account emerges of fake partial control. Essentially, with these verbs, *pro* can be inserted into the object position in non-finite clauses, yielding the illusion of partial control.