24.910 Topics in Linguistic Theory: Propositional Attitudes
Spring 2009

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For to Infinitives in Belfast English


1. Summary of the Data

1.1. For with lexical subjects – propositional subject / extraposition

[Assumption: “lexical” = full NP, including pronoun ?]

- Obligatory with lexical subjects in infinitive clauses

  [3a] For John to win would be amazing. \[^{\text{ok Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [3b] * John to win would be amazing. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{* Bel.}}\]

- Positioned to the left of the subject:

  [16a] For him to pay the mortgage would be just as expensive. \[^{\text{ok Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [16b] * Him for to pay the mortgage would be just as expensive. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{* Bel.}}\]
  [17a] It was stupid for them to do that. \[^{\text{ok Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [17b] * It was stupid them for to do that. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{* Bel.}}\]

- There can’t be two instances of for:

  [16c] * For him for to pay the mortgage would be just as expensive. \[^{\text{Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [17c] * It was stupid for them for to do that. \[^{\text{Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]

1.2. For with lexical subjects – complement of adjective

- Positioned to the left of the subject:

  [18a] Mary was keen for them to be there. \[^{\text{ok Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [18b] * Mary was keen them for to be there. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{* Bel.}}\]

- No double occurrence:

  [18c] * Mary was keen for them for to be there. \[^{\text{Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]

1.3. For with lexical subjects – complement of want-type verbs

- Positioned after embedded subject in complement of want:

  [20] I wanted Jimmy for to come with me. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
  [21] I don’t like the children for to be late. \[^{\text{* Std.} / \text{Bel.}}\]
… including with expletive constructions:

[25] I want there for to be some peace and quiet sometime. [*Std./OkBel.]
[26] I’d hate there for to be ill-feeling. [*Std./OkBel.]

Cannot appear before the subject:

[20] *I wanted for Jimmy to come with me. [?]Std./*Bel.

Not obligatory (in Standard or Belfast Eng.):

[23] I wanted Jimmy to come with me. [OkStd./OkBel.]

Special case: where something comes between the matrix verb and subject:

[19a] I want very much for him to get accepted. [OkStd./OkBel.]
[19b] *I want very much him for to get accepted. [*Std./*Bel.]

Again, no double for:

[19c] *I want very much for him for to get accepted.

Presumably, then, this means that Belfast Eng. has minimal contrasts like the following (check?):

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<td>[20] *I wanted for Jimmy to come with me.</td>
<td>[?]Std./*Bel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>[20'] I wanted very much for Jimmy to come with me.</td>
<td>[?]Std./OkBel.</td>
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| [19b] *I want very much him for to get accepted. | [*Std./*Bel.]
| [19b'] I want him for to get accepted. | [?] Std./OkBel. |

1.4. For with null subject (PRO / raising)

For to widely available in constructions thought to contain PRO:

Propositional subjects:

[9] For to stay here would be just as expensive. [*Std./OkBel.]
[10] For to pay the mortgage is difficult. [*Std./OkBel.]

Exclamatives:

[7] For to let that mongrel into my yard! [*Std./OkBel.]
[8] For to tell her like that! [*Std./OkBel.]

‘Subject control’:

[1] I want for to meet them. [*Std./OkBel.]
[2] It is difficult for to see that. [*Std./OkBel.]
[11] I tried for to get them. [*Std./OkBel.]
Notes:

- In purpose-type clauses as in [1], *for to* occurs in a wide variety of English dialects in a way similar to *in order to* (but Belfast English is different)
- In Standard English: *want* and *difficult* do take *for* complements in other contexts (with lexical subjects), but *try* doesn’t.
- *Try* doesn’t allow lexical embedded subjects in Belfast Eng.:  

[12] * I tried for him to go home.

➤ ‘Object control’ / ‘ECM’:

[13] I persuaded John *for to* go home. [*Std./ok Bel.]
[14] She convinced them *for to* give up. [*Std./ok Bel.]
[28a] I believe them *for to* have done it. [*Std./ok Bel.]

Compare to:

[28b] * I believe for them to have done it.

➤ But it’s not allowed with *whether*:

[15] * I don’t know whether *for to* go. [*Std./Bel.]

[Note: This suggests that *for* is a complementizer in Belfast Eng. *for to*]

➤ Raising:

[27a] John seems *for to* be better. [*Std./ok Bel.]

Compare to:

[27b] * It seems *for John to* be better. [*Std./Bel.]

1.5. With Negation

➤ If *for to* occurs with *not*, the order must be *for to not*:

[29a] I would prefer them *for to* not go. [*Std./ok Bel.]
[29b] *I would prefer them *for not to* go. [*Std./Bel.]
[29c] *I would prefer them not *for to* go. [*Std./Bel.]
[30a] * For to not go would be foolish. [*Std./ok Bel.]
[30b] *Not *for to go would be foolish. [*Std./Bel.]
[30c] * For not to go would be foolish [*Std./Bel.]

3
2. Implications

2.1. *For is not part of the infinitive marker [For to ≠ to]*

*For* is not part of the infinitive marker (T) because:

- *For to* is There are cases where to is allowed and for to is not:
  - with another *for* complementizer [*19c]
  - with *whether* [*15]

2.2. *For in for to is not P*

*For* is not a preposition selected for by embedding verbs because:

- *For to* infinitives occur in isolation [7, 8]
- *For to* infinitives can co-occur with the preposition *for*:

  [48] What I’m longing for is for to have a break.

2.3. **Conclusion: For is a C**

Conclusion: *For* must be a complementizer.

Issues this brings up [p. 90]:

- *For* (in *for to*) can occur with PRO.
  
  [Standard explanations of the restriction against *for to* in standard dialects depend on the assumption that PRO is not case-marked, and for appears to assign case to a lexical subject.]

- Lexical subjects can appear before the C *for*.

- Negation has surprising restrictions on its position.

- *For* appears with verbs that are thought to take IP (not CP) complements.

2.4. Analysis

The basic idea: *For* is a complementizer that cliticizes to the infinitive marker *to*.

3. Henry’s suggestions about other *for to* varieties

3.1. **Ottawa Valley English [Carroll 1983]**

[and possibly Ozark English, Chomsky 1981]

*for* only occurs with verbs that standardly select for *for*. Possibilities:

- *for* is a preposition [OR]

- *for* is only **optionally** an item that case-marks NPs (and thus is compatible with PRO)
3.2. “Weak” for to varieties of Northern Irish English

*For* only occurs in purpose clauses. Suggestion:

- *for* is an item like *in order* (as in *in order to*) – whatever that is.
  
  [perhaps *for to* / *in order to* are something like complex prepositions?]