Tough-constructions in minimalism

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(1) John is easy to please

(2) Dit tentamen is makkelijk te maken
   this test is easy to make-INF
   'This test is easy to make.'

(3) John is eager to please

(4) easy [ OP_i to please t_i ] (Chomsky 1977)

(5) a. This violin is easy [ OP_i to play sonatas on t_i ]
   b. * [What sonatas]_i is this violin easy [ OP_i to play t_j on t_i ]

(6) reanalysis (Chomsky 1981:312)
   [AP easy [ OP_i to please t_i ] ] > [AP [A easy-to-please ] t_i ]

2. Reanalysing reanalysis (Zwart 2006)

(7) een makkelijk te maken tentamen
   INDEF.SG easy to make-INF test
   'a test that is easy to make'

(8) een eenvoudig tentamen
   INDEF.SG simple test
   'a simple test'

(9) a. Dat tentamen is makkelijk om te maken
    that test is easy C to make-INF
    'That test is easy to make.'

    b. * een makkelijk om te maken tentamen
       INDEF.SG easy C to make-INF test
       (intended: same as (7))

    c. een makkelijk tentamen om te maken
       INDEF.SG easy test C to make-INF
       'an easy test to make'

(10) [That the Matterhorn is tough to climb] is easy to see
a [far from simple] matter
He left for [I think (it was) Budapest]
Tasman discovered [what he took to be part of New Holland]

interface effects (Zwart 2009)

a. conventional meaning (e.g. idiomaticity)
b. categorization (e.g. transition into a different word class)
c. morphological realization (e.g. inflection or the insertion of linking morphemes)
d. opacity (e.g. creating islands for subextraction)
e. linearization (e.g. creating special word order effects)
f. special interpretation (e.g. having to do with information structure)

This violin is easy \( \text{OP}_1 \) to play sonatas on \( t_i \)

\[ \text{Die opdracht is goed te doe-n} \]
\[ \text{Die opdracht is goed om te doe-n} \]

‘That assignment is doable.’
‘That assignment is (a) good (assignment) to do.’

3. Arguments against reanalysis (Levine 1984a,b; Hicks 2009)

Right Node Raising breaks up the construction

John is difficult, and Marjorie (is) impossible, to please

Tasman heeft het Noord- \( \text{en} \) Cook (heeft) het Zuid-

eiland verkend

‘Tasman explored the North Island and Cook explored the South Island.’

Dat heeft Tasman be- \( \text{en} \) Cook ont-kend

‘Tasman confessed and Cook denied that.’

(bekennen ‘confess’, ontkennen ‘deny’)

Internal structure still relevant

My car was hard for the people John, said he, used in such cases to fix
(19) een makkelijk (* voor de studenten) te maken tentamen
a easy for the students to make-INF test

(20) een voor de studenten makkelijk te maken tentamen
een makkelijk te maken tentamen voor de studenten

(21) Dat tentamen is makkelijk (om) te maken voor de studenten
that test is easy to make-INF for the students
‘That test is easy to make for the students.’

Extraposition
(22) Mary would be hard for someone to deal with who was unprepared for her eccentricities

(23) een makkelijk aan kinderen te geven koekje
INDEF.SG easy to children to give-INF cookie
‘a cookie that is easy to give to children’

(24) koekjes aan kinderen geven die van Donald Duck houden
cookies to children give-INF REL of Donald Duck hold-INF
‘give cookies to children who like Donald Duck’
(houden van ‘love’) (intended: ‘a cookie that is easy to give to children who like Donald Duck’)

Reconstruction
(26) [Pictures of his friends] are hard for [every photographer] to sell

Idiom split
(27) kick the bucket ‘die’ (no idiom split)
a. passive: *The bucket was kicked
b. tough: *The bucket was easy to kick

(28) make headway ‘move forward’ (idiom split allowed)
a. passive: *Headway was made
b. tough: *Headway was difficult to make

4. The passive character of the construction

(1) John is easy to please
(29) It is easy to please John
(30) John is easily pleased

(31) Het is makkelijk (om) dit tentamen te maken
   ‘It is easy to make this test.’

(32) Het tentamen is makkelijk gemaakt
   ‘The test is easily made.’

(33) Het tentamen is { snel / zo } gemaakt
   ‘The test is made in no time.’

(34) a. Het tentamen is zo gemaakt door de studenten
   ‘The test is made by students in no time.’

   b. Het tentamen is al gemaakt
   ‘The test has already been made.’

(35) Het tentamen is (nog) te maken
   ‘The test still needs to be made.’

(36) Het (nog) te maken tentamen
   ‘The test that still needs to be made’

Verbs that don’t passivize cannot be used in ‘easy-to-please’ (Postal 1990)

(37) a. * John is easy to be pleased

   b. * Het tentamen is makkelijk gemaakt te worden

(38) a. * John is easy to arrive

   b. * Het tentamen is makkelijk te ontstaan

(39) a. * John is easy to hear sing a song

   b. * Studenten zijn makkelijk een tentamen te zien maken

(40) a. It is easy to hear John sing a song
b. Het is makkelijk (om) studenten een tentamen
   it is easy C students a test

   te zie-n mak-en
to see-INF make-INF

   'It is easy to see students make test.'

(41) * Studenten zijn zo een tentamen ge-zie-n mak-en
   students are so a test GE-see-N make-INF

(42) a. Dit boek lees-t lek-ker
   this book read-3SG tasty

   'This book reads well.'

   b. * Dit boek is lekker te lez-en
      this book is tasty to read-INF

Problems (Postal 1990)

(43) a. Prince Fielder was signed without committing {himself/*ourselves} to a nine-year deal
   b. Prince Fielder will be hard to sign without committing {ourselves/*himself} to a nine-year deal

(44) a. * Eddie was mailed the coke to
   b. Eddie is easy to mail coke to

(45) a. * Gordon was gotten to know (by Mary)
   b. Gordon is easy to get to know
   c. * Eddie was taken pictures of
   d. Eddie is easy to take pictures of

5. Evidence for wh-movement?

(46) Evidence for empty operator movement
a. island sensitivity
b. licensing of parasitic gaps

(47) a. ? [Which sonatas], do you wonder [ how_j to play t, t ]
   b. * How_j do you wonder [ [which sonatas], to play t, t ]

(48) a. * [Which sonatas], did you take a shower [ after you recorded t ]
   b. * How_j did you take a shower [ after you recorded the sonata t ]

(49) a. * [What sonatas], is this violin easy [ to play t, on ]
   b. * How_j is this violin easy [ OP_j to play sonatas t, on ]
6. Solving Chomsky's paradox

Consider the reanalysis approach to [[(50)] discussed in Chomsky [[1981:312]]. If that analysis is correct, then [t] is in effect an NP-trace in [[(51)]]. However, [[(50)] indicates that it still retains its status as an A'-bound trace at S-structure. The reanalysis approach requires that reanalysis occur in the syntax, prior to S-structure; otherwise, there will be a 6-criterion violation at S-structure. Thus, we cannot account for these facts by assuming reanalysis to be a rule of the LF component [i.e. the interfaces]. We are led, then, to an interpretation of reanalysis that assumes both the reanalyzed and the nonreanalyzed structures to be available at S-structure. This is entirely feasible, if we regard phrase markers as sets of strings rather than tree-like structures. (Chomsky 1982:57)

7. Conclusion

- Reanalysis yields a single adjective which can be used as such in the next derivation layer in an attributive or predicative adjective construction.
- No movement, no gaps.
- Expanded easy-to-please constructions are in a different category

References