THE ANALYSIS OF *SEEM*-CONSTRUCTIONS FROM THE STANDPOINT OF GENERATIVE GRAMMAR

Ochkovska A. P.

Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University

The article is devoted to studying *seem*-constructions in the history of the English language from the standpoint of generative grammar. It analyzes the main functional and structural characteristics of *seem*-constructions. Taken in consideration functions and structure of *seem*-constructions it becomes evident that they emerge and are regularly used at the end of Middle English and the final formation of raising structures with *seem* takes place during Early Modern English. Raising structure is the structure with the type of movement operation when the argument is raised out of a lower clause to become the subject of a higher clause.

Key words: generative grammar, *seem*-constructions, subject raising structures.

У статті розглядаються *seem*-конструкції в історії англійської мови з позицій генеративної граматики. Проаналізовано основні функціональні та структурні особливості *seem*-конструкцій, які регулярно використовуються наприкінці середньоанглійського періоду, проте остаточно фіксуються в ранньоновоанглійській мові. З позицій генеративної граматики *seem*-конструкції з інфінітивним комплементом є рейзинговими конструкціями, які допускають пересув аргумента присудка з позиції підрядного речення до позиції підмета в головній клаузі.

Ключові слова: генеративна граматика, *seem*-конструкції, рейзингові конструкції з підметом.

В статье рассматриваются *seem*-конструкции в истории английского языка с позиций генеративной грамматики. Проанализированы основные функциональные и структурные особенности *seem*-конструкций, которые регулярно используются в конце среднеанглийского периода, однако окончательно фиксируются в ранненовоанглийском языке. С позиций генеративной грамматики *seem*-конструкции с инфинитивным комплементом являются рейзинговыми конструкциями, которые допускают поднятие аргумента сказуемого с позиции придаточного предложения к позиции подлежащего в главной клаузе.

Ключевые слова: генеративная грамматика, *seem*-конструкции, рейзинговые конструкции с подлежащим.

Generative grammar has had a huge impact on theoretical syntax since 1950s. During the last years the views on theoretical syntax have undergone a number of changes due to the developments in the syntactic theory referred to as the Minimalist Program [7, 8, 9]. The developments in the Minimalist theory have had a large influence on a more classical Government and Binding-type approach to the study of syntactic phenomena. Minimalism leads to re-examination of the concepts standardly assumed in previous works in syntax and to exploration of ways in which Minimalist concepts can be incorporated in a more classical approach [11, p. 1, 2].

The Minimalist Program is built on the idea that fundamental principles of the knowledge of a language are innate and differences between the grammars of languages can be reduced to parameters and language-specific idiosyncrasies [2, p. 13]. N. Chomsky suggests that three factors which influence the development of language are: genetic endowment, principles which select languages that are attainable so that language acquisition can take place; external data which has to do with experience that aids the selection of one language or the other; and certain principles that are not specific to the faculty of language such as principles of structural architecture and computational efficiency [5, p. 6]. An important

assumption in the Minimalist Program is that all syntactic parameters are associated with grammatical features of functional categories. Minimalist theories of linguistic variation try to identify which features of which category are responsible for grammatical differences between languages [8].

The *aim* of the paper is to analyze *seem*-constructions from the standpoint of generative grammar in the history of the English language. The *object* of the paper is *seem*-constructions. The *subject* of the paper is functional and structural characteristics of *seem*-constructions in the historical perspective.

The English language allows a number of clause-internal and clause-external syntactic operations which are either impossible or limited in other languages. One of the clause-internal effects is the relatively large degree of freedom in selecting the basic syntactic functions of subject and object which results in a great number of alternations, that is occurrences of a verb with a range of combinations of arguments and adjuncts in various syntactic contexts such as transitivity alternations or the middle construction. Among the clause-external effects are raising constructions, syntactic operations that move arguments across clause boundaries [4, p. 2].

Raising has been an essential concept in syntactic analysis and linguistic theory since it first appeared in the works of P. Rosenbaum, N. Chomsky and P. Postal. Raising is a syntactic operation that causes certain types of matrix (main clause) verbs to trigger the movement of an NP/DP from the subject position of an embedded clause to the subject position of the main clause [13, p. 284]. It turns out to be another instance of the more general A-movement operation by which T attracts the closest nominal which it c-commands to move to spec-TP. Words like *seem/appear* (when used with an infinitival complement) have the following property: the subject of the *seem/appear*-clause is created by being raised out of a complement clause, and for this reason these verbs are known as raising predicates [14, p. 138].

Three types of raising are recognized in the linguistic literature and are exemplified below:
- subject-to-subject raising
(1) **Sue**$_1$ *seems to* t$_1$ *be tired.*
- subject-to-object raising
(2) *We believe **them**$_1$ to* t$_1$ *retire next week.*
- object-to-subject raising /*tough*-movement
(3) **He**$_1$ *is difficult to argue with* t$_1$.

In (1) and (2) above, the subjects of the subordinate clauses, *Sue* and *they* respectively, are moved to the subject/object position of the higher clauses. In (3), it is the object of the subordinate clause which is realised as subject of the matrix clause [4, p. 203].

In the case of subject-to-subject raising, there are two possible structural variants with complement clauses that are controlled by a number of verbs and adjectival predicates. D. Biber's findings show that in all registers subject-to-subject raising is used for the great majority of complement clauses that are controlled by *seem* and *appear*, *be likely*, *be unlikely*, *be certain* and *be sure* [3, p. 732].

In languages like English, the subject is the essential grammatical part in the structure of the sentence, i.e. the T-head is assumed to have the uninterpretable feature, called the EPP-feature. This feature is an implementation of what used to be the Extended Projection Principle, a principle which requires that the subject position of a sentence be filled [16]. But the EPP-feature was not always necessary. For example, in the Old English language the word order was not fixed and grammatical relations were expressed by morphological endings, so the subject was not explicated in the surface structure of the sentence. In the Middle English language when the word order became fixed and the presence of the subject in the structure of the sentence was necessary, frequent usage of raising structures with raising verbs like *seem, happen* is observed. During Middle English the subject became more structural and expressed more semantic roles due to the loss of the morphological endings [12, p. 28].

The verb *seem* is without a doubt the quintessential raising verb in English, that's why the syntactic properties of *seem* and peculiarities of subject raising constructions with this verb in the history of the English language are analyzed. According to the *English Oxford Dictionary* the verb *seem* is a borrowing from Old Norse but does not appear until Middle English. The earliest example in the *English Oxford Dictionary* dates from ca. 1200. In Old English the verb *þyncan* served the role of *seem,* for example:

(4) *Mæg þæs þonne **ofþyncan** ðeodne [MS -en] Heaðo-Beardna*

ond þegna gehwam þara leoda þonne he mid fæmnan on Xett gæð... (Beo 2032–8)

Can as then seem lord Heathobards and thegns each those princes when he with bride on Xoor goes...

*It can **seem** to go too far to the lord of the Heathobards, and to each of the thegns of those princes, when he walks on to the Xoor with his bride [19, p.112]...*

(5) *þinceð him to lytel þæt he lange heold; (Beo 1740–52)*

seems him too little that he long held;

*It **seems** too little to him, what he has long held [19, p. 97].*

Though in both sentences (4) and (5) the semantics of the verb *þyncan* is close to the raising verb *seem* as it expresses some shades of evidentiality. They are not considered to be raising constructions yet because there is not any formal subject in the structure of these sentences. In Old English the *hit*-pronoun is not frequently used with the impersonal two-place verb *þyncan*. The only case, when the verb *þyncan* occurs with *hit,* is in conjunction with a dative experiencer. The development of the raising verb behavior, for the verbs commonly referred to as raising verbs, seems to go together with the non-thematic use of the pronoun *hit* in clausal argument constructions [17, p. 2].

During **Middle English** verbs like *thenchen* (*think*) and *thinchen* (*seem*) transform into *thenchen* and *thinken,* which in Modern English are used as verb *think* [1, p. 158]. Moreover in Middle English the pseudo-impersonal construction *me thincth* (6) is also used, which later undergoes the process of lexicalization (*methinks=it seems to me)* and is still occasionally found in Modern English (7):

(6) ***Me thinketh** thus, that nouther ye nor I Oughte half this wo to make skilfully.[18, p. 107]*

(7) **Methinks** *he is not mistaken.*

In the Middle English language the verb *seem* is used as a main verb meaning "*to be suitable, befit, beseem*". At the end of the Middle English period the frequent usage of constructions with the verb *seem* is observed, for example:

- *seem* as a link verb (56%):

(8) *He **seemed** such, his wordes were so wise, Justice he was full often in assize [18, p. 29].*

(9) *And yet he **seemed** busier than he was [18, p. 30].*

In the sentences (8) and (9) the verb *seem* is used with adjectives *such, busier* and adverb *well.* These sentences are examples of the copular use of *seem.*

- *seem + that clause* construction (44%):

(10) **It semeth** *nat **that** love dooth yow longe [18, p. 30].*

(11) *And if to lese his Ioye he set a myte, Than **semeth it that** Ioye is worth ful lyte [18, p. 67].*

(12) **It semed** *not she wiste what he mente [18, p. 131].*

Sentence (10), (11) and (12) are examples of unraised constructions *seem + that clause*. Thus, there is just the beginning of development of raising constructions in Middle English because during this period the endings are leveled (for example, the infinitive has only ending *-e(n)*), the word order becomes more fixed and particle *to* begins to be widely used with the infinitive [1, p. 279].

In **Early Modern English** final formation of syntactic structure and semantics of raising constructions takes place. During this period the verb *seem* is used in the following patterns:

- as a link verb (53%):

(13) *By this marriage All little jealousies, which now **seem** great, And all great fears, which now import their dangers, Would then be nothing [20, p. 123].*

- as a parenthetical construction (1%):

(14) *No, nor thy tailor, rascal, Who is thy grandfather; he made those clothes, Which, as **it seems**, make thee [20, p. 390].*

- as an unraised construction (*seem + that clause*) (11%):

(15) **It seems** *he hath great care to please his wife [20, p. 239].*

- as a subject raising construction (*seem + to infinitive*) (35%):

(16) *If I could meet that fancy-monger, I would give him some good counsel, for he **seems** to have the quotidian of love upon him [20, p. 210].*

The embedded clause in (15) is a CP. This implies that T has a complete set of grammatical features (φ-features and tense); therefore, the embedded subject *he* gets nominative case. Once the case feature of *he* has been valued, *he* becomes frozen in place (it becomes inactive) and can no longer be involved in any syntactic operation [6]. One distinctive feature of raising predicates like *seem* is that they are unaccusative and do not assign an external thematic role. For this reason, it is possible for an expletive, a semantically null element like *it,* to be inserted as the subject of a raising predicate.

In (15) the derived AP merges with *hath* (V) to form the VP *hath great care to please his wife.* The derived VP merges with the light verb *v* in order to derive the *v'*. The function of the light verb is to introduce the subject argument and to link the subject to the (VP) predicate. In the language like English the light verb is a null element – (it lacks phonological features but still has semantic and syntactic significance in the structure) [2, p. 23]. The light verb *v* is affixal in nature, it therefore triggers *have* (V) to adjoin it, an operation known as head movement. The *v'* further merges with its so-called *specifier*, the subject DP *he*, to derive the *v*P. The propositional content of a sentence is syntactically represented within the *v*P through the verb (plus light verb) and their arguments (subject, object). In order to be specified for tense, *v*P merges with the tense-head T to derive the T' –*he hath great care to please his wife*. Functional categories like T have grammatical features and these features are highly significant when syntactic relations between elements in the syntactic representation are considered.

The resulting TP is subsequently merged with the verb *seem* to form the VP *seem he hath great care to please his wife*. A finite T has an EPP-feature requiring it to have a subject and one way of satisfying this requirement is to merge expletive *it* with the resulting T-bar [15], to form the TP shown in (17):

(17)
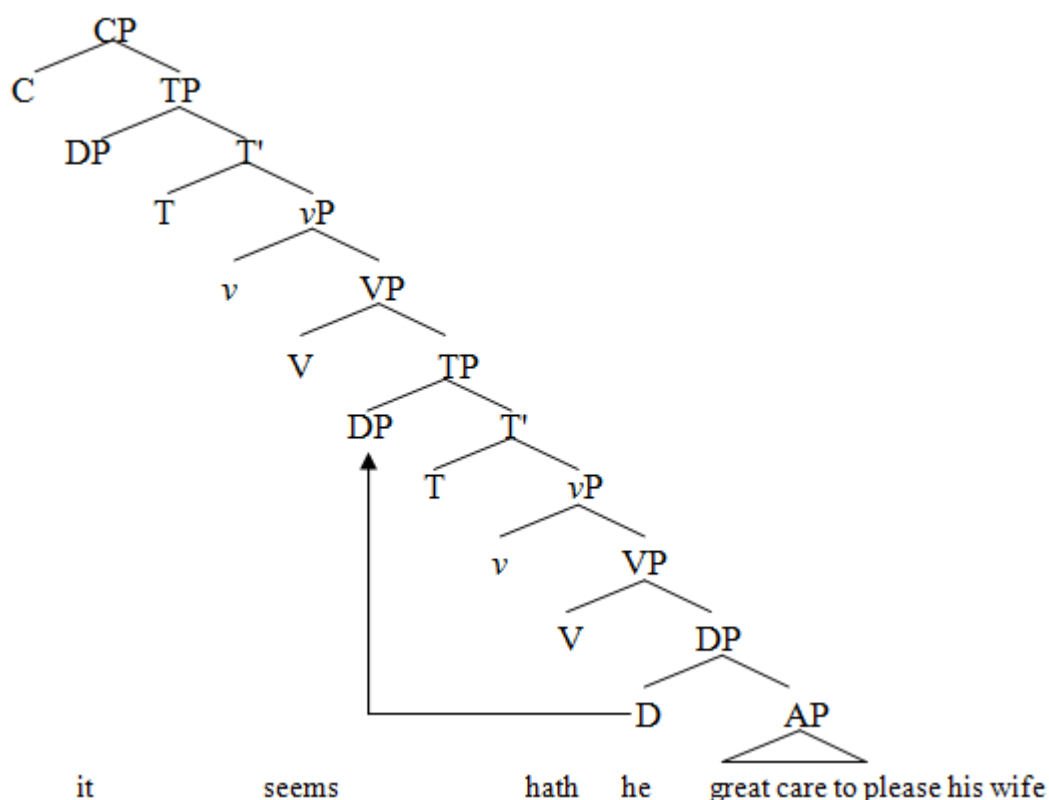
When the verb *seems* selects an infinitival complement clause in (16), the structure changes. The thematic subject of the embedded infinitive *he* is now in the matrix subject position, which means that it has undergone the process of raising, namely movement to [Spec, T] of the matrix clause.

In (16) the derived NP merges with *have* (V) to form the V-bar *have the quotidian of love upon him.* This V-bar then merges with (and assigns the agent θ-role to) its external argument/thematic subject *he*. The resulting VP *he have the quotidian of love upon him* is then merged with the infinitival tense

particle *to*, so forming the TP *to he have the quotidian of love upon him*. This in turn merges with the raising verb *seem* to form the VP *seem to he have the quotidian of love upon him*.

Without a C-head from which T can inherit its features, the embedded T lacks tense and agreement features (T is defective). The defective T cannot value the case feature of a DP, the infinitival T-head *to* in is unable to assign nominative case to the embedded subject-DP *he* in [Spec, *v*]. Without its case feature valued by the embedded defective T, the embedded thematic subject remains active. The derivation now proceeds with TP combining directly with the raising verb *seems* in order to derive the VP, which in turn merges with the affixal null light verb in order to derive the matrix *v*P. Since *seems* is unaccusative and does not have a full argument structure (there is no external argument in the matrix [Spec, *v*]), the matrix *v*P is not a phase. The *v*P combines with matrix T to form the T'. Since matrix T is finite and has uninterpretable φ-features, it acts as a Probe and searches a Goal in its c-command domain.

Matrix T can enter an agreement relation with the embedded subject and assign case to it. The EPP-feature of T subsequently causes the embedded subject to raise to the matrix subject position [2, p. 23]. The subject DP *he* then merges with the T' to derive the TP. The derived TP finally merges with a null declarative complementiser to form the CP (18):

(18)
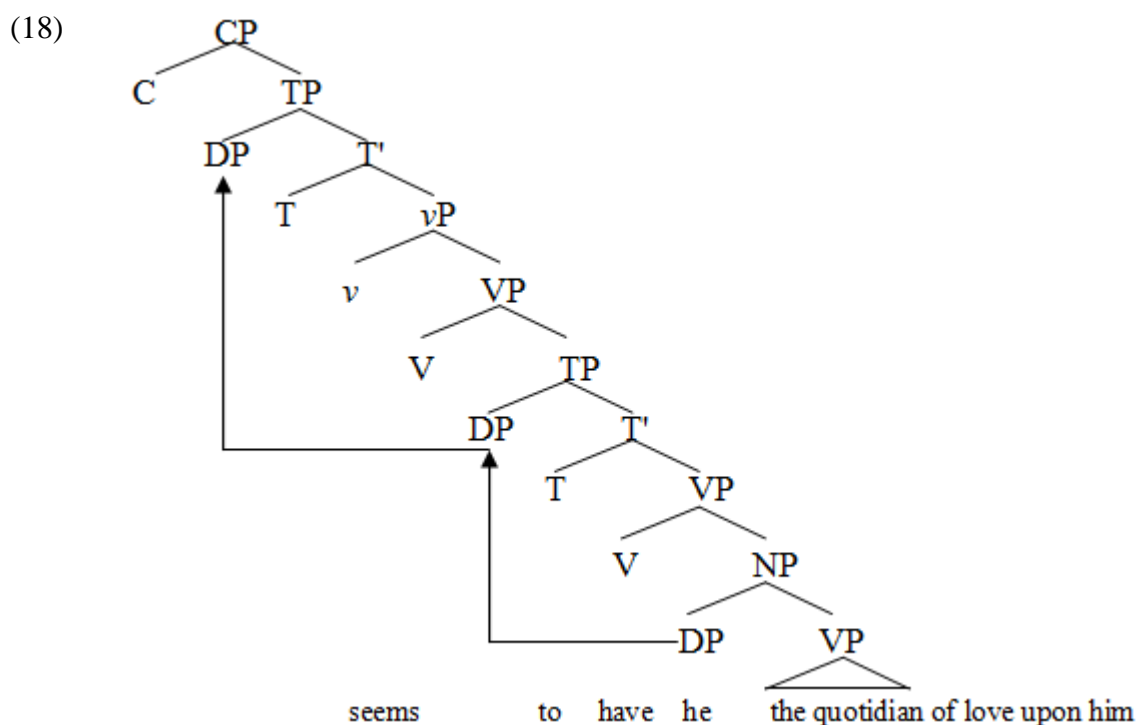
Thus, in the Early Modern English language there is a final formation of subject raising constructions with the verb *seem* due to the following factors:
- the subject is explicated in the surface structure of the sentence because of the fixed word order;
- T-head has the EPP-feature requiring the position of the subject to be filled;
- subject raising is only possible with bare infinitival TPs;
- the verb *seem* is unaccusative and doesn't have a full argument structure;

- the verb *seem* is a one-place predicate whose only argument is its infinitival TP complement, to which it assigns an appropriate θ-role – perhaps that of theme argument of *seem*. This means that the VP headed by *seem* has no thematic subject.

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