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## Pragmatics of the English *Tough*-Construction

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### 1. A Controversy about the Semantics of the English *Tough*-Construction

The (English) *tough*-construction (TC) is a syntactic pattern which is often considered to involve so-called *tough*-movement (i.e., a transformational rule which moves an NP out of the predicate of a complement phrase/clause in early generative transformational grammar), as is illustrated in (1) and (2):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) (a) Tom<sub>i</sub> is *tough* to please \_\_<sub>i</sub>.  
(b) Today's exam<sub>i</sub> will be *easy* to pass \_\_<sub>i</sub>.
- (2) (a) That old man<sub>i</sub> is *impossible* to argue against \_\_<sub>i</sub>.  
(b) Mary<sub>i</sub> is *hard* to work with \_\_<sub>t</sub>.

In the above examples of the TC, the syntactic subject of a *tough*-adjective such as *easy*, *hard*, and *difficult* is interpreted as semantically (and sometimes syntactically as well) being responsible for a gap in the infinitival complement phrase/clause.

Ever since the TC in English began to attract the attention of early transformational grammarians,<sup>2</sup> one of the most controversial semantic issues about the English TC has been whether the *tough*-subject position is thematic or not. This semantic issue concerns whether the *tough*-adjective (along with the following infinitival phrase/clause) in a *tough*-sentence assigns a semantic role to its syntactic subject. Although since Lasnik and Fiengo

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<sup>1</sup> In non-transformational frameworks such as Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (cf. Pollard & Sag 1994), the term (*tough*-)movement can be used metaphorically to refer to some mechanism which makes the *tough*-subject satisfy the selectional and/or semantic requirements of the gap in the infinitival phrase.

<sup>2</sup> Lee (1960) is probably the earliest paper on the English TC. The TC has been a focus of discussion ever since Chomsky's (1964: 61-5) discussion of pairs of sentences such as *John is eager to please* and *John is easy to please*, in which the NP *John* in the first sentence is the subject of *eager* whereas it is the understood object of *please* in the second sentence.

(1974) the position that the *tough*-subject is thematic (henceforth, the “thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis”) has widely been assumed in both derivational and non-derivational syntactic frameworks (e.g., Chomsky 1977: 102-110, Jacobson 1992, Pollard & Sag 1994), it is still highly controversial whether this widely-held assumption is a truly well-motivated position which correctly reflects the semantics of the English TC and its related constructions.

The thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis argues that (part of) the *tough*-predicate (consisting of a *tough*-adjective and the following infinitival phrase/clause) has a certain semantic effect on its syntactic subject, providing the *tough*-subject with a semantic role which is independent of the gapped element in the infinitival phrase and eventually making the given *tough*-sentence differ in meaning from its *it*-analog sentence. This hypothesis does not seem to be totally groundless because a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence can sometimes differ in meaning. This can be well demonstrated by the following set of classical examples of the TC and related constructions:

- (3) (a) It is hard to play this sonata on that violin.  
 (b) This sonata<sub>i</sub> is hard to play \_\_\_\_<sub>i</sub> on that violin.  
 (c) That violin<sub>i</sub> is hard to play this sonata on \_\_\_\_<sub>i</sub>.

Some speakers may feel that the above three sentences are different in meaning from each other although it is often difficult to precisely explain what the (possible) meaning differences are. Thus, sentence (3b) may be considered to involve an implicit comparison of ‘this sonata’ with other pieces of music which might be played on ‘that violin’, whereas (3c) may contain an implicit comparison of ‘that violin’ with other violins or musical instruments that ‘this sonata’ might be played on. More specifically, (3b) may be considered to mean that ‘this sonata’ is such a challenging piece of music that it is difficult to play on ‘that violin’ or other violins or instruments while, in (3c), the difficulty involved in playing ‘this sonata’ on ‘that violin’ could be ascribed to the referent of the *tough*-subject *that violin*. Note that sentence (3a) is also different from the other two related *tough*-sentences (3b) and (3c) in that it is difficult to consider it involving any additional meaning of a similar kind, as may be found in (3b) and (3c). All this means is that what is represented by one of the sentences may be considered different from what is represented by either of the others, arguing for at least certain differences in informational structuring or discourse contribution, if not different truth conditions, for the three sentences involved.

Despite some motivations for the thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis such as that above, however, it is not clear at all whether this hypothesis has sufficient empirical evidence and is more justifiable than the corresponding opposite position assuming the non-thematic *tough*-subject, which makes a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence equal in their semantics. Although many previous studies have emphasized the fact that a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence can sometimes have different meanings, thereby arguing for the thematic *tough*-subject position, none of these studies seem to have seriously considered whether the possible meaning differences between the TC and related constructions can really be deemed semantic rather than pragmatic. In the remainder of this paper, I will argue against the currently widely-held thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis and propose a way of pragmatically explaining the possible meaning differences between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence. In particular, I will demonstrate that despite the possible difference in meaning between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence, the *tough*-subject cannot be considered thematic because the presence and absence of the additional meaning that can occasionally be assigned to a *tough*-sentence or to its *tough*-subject is not inherent to the TC and can be pragmatically explained.

## 2. Does a *Tough*-Adjective Assign a Semantic Role to the *Tough*-Subject?

When an adjective assigns a semantic role to its syntactic subject, as in the complement object deletion (COD) construction, there is usually a certain necessary semantic relation between the subject and its predicate adjective, regardless of the presence of the following infinitival phrase. This is why there is a sort of entailment relationship between a COD-sentence and its corresponding simple adjective predicate sentence (i.e., the COD-sentence minus the following infinitival phrase), as in the following examples:<sup>3</sup>

- (4) (a) The bride was beautiful to look at.  
(b) The bride was beautiful.
- (5) (a) The sonata that she played last night was melodious to hear.  
(b) The sonata that she played last night was melodious.

Thus, if the *tough*-subject were truly thematic, then its predicate adjective would assign a certain semantic role to the *tough*-subject,<sup>4</sup> showing a similar semantic relation as above between the *tough*-subject and a *tough*-adjective.<sup>5</sup> However, there is no clear evidence, as in the above for the COD construction, that any necessary semantic relation holds between the *tough*-subject and its predicate *tough*-adjective. This is especially true when we are dealing with typical *tough*-adjectives such as *tough*, *easy*, *hard*, *difficult*, and *impossible*. Thus, without the infinitival phrase, a *tough*-sentence will have a different meaning or will be difficult to find a plausible interpretation of, as in (6) to (8) below.<sup>6</sup>

- (6) (a) This woman is easy to annoy.  
(b) ??This woman is easy.
- (7) (a) That city is difficult to get lost in  
(b) ??That city is difficult.
- (8) (a) That monster is impossible to kill.  
(b) ??That monster is impossible.

One might want to argue that at least some examples of the TC can show a sort of entailment relationship with their corresponding simple adjective predicate sentences (i.e., a *tough*-sentence minus the infinitival phrase), thereby suggesting the possibility of certain necessary semantic relation between the *tough*-subject and a *tough*-adjective, as follows:

- (9) (a) That exam is difficult to pass.  
(b) That exam is difficult.

<sup>3</sup> The (a)-sentence in each pair entails the (b)-sentence, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Another possibility is the case in which the whole predicate including a *tough*-adjective and the following infinitival phrase assigns a semantic role to the *tough*-subject. See Section 3.

<sup>5</sup> If this is the case, the *tough*-subject is both syntactically and semantically the subject of the *tough*-adjective. Thus, the TC itself will not be very different from the COD construction (e.g., *The girl<sub>i</sub> is pretty to look at \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>*), in which the gapped element, being coindexed with the *tough*-subject, is generally considered to have been deleted, not to have moved to the subject position of the main clause. The main difference between the TC and the COD will be that, unlike the COD, examples of the TC usually have their counterpart *it*-analog sentences.

<sup>6</sup> The question marks in the (b)-sentences indicate that the given examples, although syntactically grammatical, are semantically or pragmatically hardly acceptable or appropriate. Note that (6b) is OK, especially with a female subject, meaning 'easy to have sex with'. Note also that *This man is difficult* has a meaning, but only 'difficult to get along with', which is why (7b) is very strange. Thus, those specialized senses are presumably idiomatic.

- (10) (a) This book is easy to read.  
(b) This book is easy.
- (11) (a) These problems are hard to solve.  
(b) These problems are hard.

However, even though the (b)-sentence may appear to follow from or to be closely comparable to the (a)-sentence in each pair of the above examples, this is mainly due to the fact that how easy or difficult it is to pass an exam, to read a book, or to solve a problem is what we are most likely to refer to when we talk about the ease or difficulty of exams, books, or problems, respectively. Thus, if we replace the given event in each *tough*-sentence above with another event that has little to do with the intrinsic properties or main functions of the referent of the *tough*-subject, such a pseudo-entailment relationship as one could argue for, as above, becomes very difficult to maintain, often resulting in two sentences which are semantically quite different and unrelated or even contradicting each other, as follows:

- (12) (a) That exam is difficult to flunk.  
(b) That exam is difficult.
- (13) (a) This book is easy to get perplexed by.  
(b) This book is easy.
- (14) (a) These problems are hard to misunderstand.  
(b) These problems are hard.

One might also argue that there are still some *tough*-adjectives such as *pleasant* and *nice* that are quite consistent in showing a certain semantic relationship with their syntactic subject in a *tough*-sentence, thereby making it difficult to avoid a natural parallelism or entailment relationship between a *tough*-sentence and the corresponding simple predicate sentence, as in (15a) and (15b) below. However, for the most part, this also reflects the fact that the referent of the *tough*-subject is readily interpreted with regard to its main functions or to some events that are easily related to the *tough*-subject.

- (15) (a) That room is pleasant to sleep in.  
(b) That room is pleasant.

Again, we can easily show that such a natural parallelism as above does not necessarily hold even with the same *tough*-adjective, as in (16), and even when the *tough*-subject occurs with an event that is closely related to the intrinsic properties of the referent of the *tough*-subject, as in (17):

- (16) (a) That dirty and uncomfortable room was pleasant to clean and fix up.  
(b) ??That dirty and uncomfortable room was pleasant.
- (17) (a) That long-standing problem will be pleasant to resolve.  
(b) ??That long-standing problem will be pleasant.

### 3. Do a *Tough-Sentence* and Its *It-Analog Sentence* Differ in Meaning?

Another possible way that the *tough*-subject can be thematic is for the *tough*-adjective and the following infinitival phrase/clause as a whole to assign a semantic role to the *tough*-subject, resulting in a certain difference in meaning between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence. As we have already considered, we can indeed find instances of a *tough*-

sentence and its *it*-analog sentence whose meanings may be deemed different. Since the first possibility (of the *tough*-adjective assigning a semantic role to the *tough*-subject) has turned out to be difficult to maintain, the presence of such a potential meaning difference may be used to argue for the *tough*-subject receiving a semantic role from the whole *tough*-predicate (including a *tough*-adjective and the infinitival phrase) and thereby being thematic.

In fact, some previous studies have tried to explain the possible meaning differences between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence by more precisely stating the semantic role(s) that the whole *tough*-predicate assigns to the *tough*-subject. For example, Schachter (1981) describes the *tough*-subject as "having the characteristic in question by virtue of some property or properties of an entity" while Bayer (1990) proposes the *tough*-subject as an "avenue of perception". Similarly, Grover (1995: ch.5) claims that the *tough*-subject has an enablement relationship with the semantic content of a *tough*-sentence. More generally, it has been proposed that the semantic difference between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence comes from the *tough*-subject being responsible for the ease or difficulty of the given event (e.g., van Oosten 1986, Hukari & Levine 1990, and Cipollone 1996).

Since more studies seem to prefer the concept of "assignment of responsibility" or "enablement relationship", let us try to explain the possible meaning difference between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence by means of these concepts:

- (18) (a) This exam will be very difficult to pass.  
(b) It will be very difficult to pass this exam.
- (19) (a) My cousin is very easy to make friends with.  
(b) It is very easy to make friends with my cousin.

Speakers often notice some difference in meaning between the two related sentences of each pair above. That is, the referents of the *tough*-subjects in (18a) and (19a), but not necessarily the referents of *this exam* in (18b) and of *his cousin* in (19b), can be considered to have some properties which make each of them responsible for/capable of causing the difficulty or ease of the given event, respectively, thereby making the meanings of the two related sentences different in each pair.

However, although it is true that a *tough*-sentence may differ in meaning from its *it*-analog sentence, there is good reason to believe that the additional meaning which can sometimes be assigned to a *tough*-sentence is not inherent to the TC and can be explained pragmatically on the basis of relevant contextual information. First, the possible additional meaning such as the connotation of responsibility or enablement often cannot be found in many examples of the TC, as in (20) to (23) below:

- (20) (a) A good baby-sitter is hard to find these days.  
(b) It is hard to find a good baby-sitter these days.
- (21) (a) Books are easy to locate in this library.  
(b) It is easy to locate books in this library.
- (22) (a) Water is easy to find around this area.  
(b) It is easy to find water around this area.
- (23) (a) Justice is difficult to fight for in any country.  
(b) It is difficult to fight for justice in any country.

In each pair of related examples above, it seems to be very difficult to find any difference in meaning between the (a)-sentence and the (b)-sentence or to assign (the referent of) the *tough*-subject any property which makes it responsible for the state of affairs involved, respectively.

Similarly, although non-NP elements can often occur as the *tough*-subject, it seems that no additional meaning such as the connotation of responsibility can be assigned to the *tough*-subject of that kind in the resulting *tough*-sentences, as follows:

- (24) (a) His ignoring his wife's infidelities is difficult to understand.  
 (b) It is difficult to understand his ignoring his wife's infidelities.
- (25) (a) That such a tradition lies behind the Iliad and the Odyssey is hard to deny.  
 (b) It is hard to deny that such a tradition lies behind the Iliad and the Odyssey.  
 (*Brown Corpus*)<sup>7</sup>

One may want to say that (some of) such cases as those above are exceptions which can be ascribed, for example, to the *tough*-subject being generic. The absence of the possible connotation of responsibility, however, is not due to a *tough*-sentence having a special kind of NP such as a generic NP as its *tough*-subject. This is because even a *tough*-sentence that has a generic subject can sometimes be assigned a similar connotation, as follows:<sup>8</sup>

- (26) (a) A bestseller is hard to write.  
 (b) A faithful dog is easy to live with.
- (27) (a) Dogs are easy to train.  
 (b) Goats are hard to drive in one direction.
- (28) (a) Water is very difficult to cut.  
 (b) Glass is usually easy to break.

Second, a more crucial piece of evidence that the possible meaning difference is not inherent to the TC actually comes from examples of the TC that can easily be considered to have certain additional meaning such as responsibility assigned to the *tough*-subject. That is, even when an additional meaning such as responsibility can be assigned to the *tough*-subject, it can easily be canceled by the addition of further context which explains the source of responsibility, as in (29) to (31):

- (29) (a) This sonata is hard to play on that violin – because I've never done it before.  
 (b) That violin is hard to play this sonata on – because I've never done it before.  
 (c) It is hard to play this sonata on that violin – because I've never done it before.
- (30) (a) This book is difficult to read – because it is too dark in this room.  
 (b) It is difficult to read this book – because it is too dark in this room.
- (31) (a) This exam will be almost impossible to pass – because I didn't study for it at all.  
 (b) It will be almost impossible to pass this exam – because I didn't study for it at all.

<sup>7</sup> The example of the TC from *Brown Corpus* was brought to my attention by Martin Jansche.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the *it*-analog sentences corresponding to the given examples can also have a similar connotation, resulting in little difference in meaning from their counterpart *tough*-sentences.

Note that the addition of further context neutralizes the otherwise possible difference in meaning between (a) and (b) sentences. Thus, it seems to be difficult to argue that the (a) and (b) sentences of each pair above are semantically different in any significant way, for example, with respect to responsibility or enablement. Note also that the *tough*-subject in each of the (a)-sentences, without the respective further context added, could easily be considered responsible for the difficulty of the given event, thereby making the *tough*-subject appear to be thematic.

Moreover, not only can the possible additional meaning be canceled by the addition of further context but even a contradictory situation denying the possible connotation that is otherwise easily assignable to the *tough*-subject can also turn out to be true. For example, the referent of the *tough*-subject in (32) below, who otherwise (i.e., without the further context) could be considered an easy-to-please person in general, actually turns out to be a person who, although hard to please in general, is easy to please for the speaker who has much experience in dealing with fastidious people.

- (32) That man is easy (for me) to please – because I have dealt with so many fastidious people during the last 10 years of my career.

Similarly, the following conversation between an instructor and a student in (33) shows that it is possible not only to cancel the possible connotation that is easily assignable to the *tough*-subject of the first sentence but also to assert the opposite of the potential connotation:

- (33) A: Tomorrow's exam will be difficult to pass.  
 B: Are you gonna make the exam really hard?  
 A: Not really. The exam itself will be as easy as before  
 but I will be honest in grading this time.

Third, there are some *tough*-type adjectives and verbs that do not cause a similar meaning difference between *tough*-sentences and their *it*-analog sentences at all. Thus, although *worth*, *take*, and *cost* in the examples below trigger (a type of) TC and are treated in the same way as ordinary *tough*-predicates in many syntactic frameworks including HPSG, it is very difficult to differentiate the two sentences of each pair in meaning.

- (34) (a) His advice is worth listening to.  
 (b) It is worth listening to his advice.
- (35) (a) The airport took three hours to drive to.  
 (b) It took three hours to drive to the airport.
- (36) (a) This computer cost \$500 to repair.  
 (b) It cost \$500 to repair this computer.

Finally, even the additional meaning that can sometimes be assigned to the TC can be explained on the basis of contextual information, in particular, the notions of "comparison sets" and "pragmatic salience".<sup>9</sup> Note that most *tough*-adjectives can be considered a sort of degree adjective such as *tall*, *fast*, and *old*. Degree adjectives are often assumed to provide the scale or dimension along with relevant entities which can be compared and the rating that their subjects receive relative to the scale and to other comparable entities in the contextually determined comparison sets (Kamp 1975, Klein

<sup>9</sup> Cipollone (1996) also uses the concept of comparison sets in order to show how *tough*-sentences come to differ in meaning from their *it*-analog sentences. However, he claims that the meaning difference between the two related constructions is consistent and semantic.



1980). Note also that an entity in subject position can be easily singled out or highlighted because of the special pragmatic salience which often goes along with its being a subject.

Given this, we can explain why the *tough*-subject can sometimes be assigned certain additional meaning, making a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence differ in meaning. With a *tough*-sentence, we normally determine the degree of ease/difficulty of the event by comparing the referent of the *tough*-subject with other comparable individuals in a pragmatically determined comparison set, whereas entire events are more readily compared or no comparison is done in an *it*-analog sentence. Since, in a *tough*-sentence, the *tough*-subject alone (mainly due to its special prominence such as pragmatic salience) determines where in the comparison set the event ranks in ease/difficulty, the resulting judgment of ease/difficulty may be fully attributable to this subject. This is why a *tough*-subject is often correlated with the connotation of responsibility or enablement.

Note, however, that when the given *tough*-predicate does not easily allow such a comparison, mainly because it is not a degree adjective or predicate that readily provides a relevant comparison set, it becomes very difficult to assign a similar connotation to its *tough*-subject, despite its pragmatic salience due to its position. This is why some *tough*-predicates such as *take*, *cost*, and *worth*, as in (34) to (36) above, do not cause any significant meaning difference between a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence.

Furthermore, when some further context cancels the pragmatic responsibility of the *tough*-subject, as in (37) below, a *tough*-sentence ends up with only the semantics of its *it*-analog sentence, resulting in no meaning difference between the two related sentences:

- (37) (a) This paper is difficult to write (right now) – because somebody already checked out many of the references I need for writing the paper.  
 (b) It is difficult to write this paper (right now) – because somebody already checked out many of the references I need for writing the paper.

What is interesting here is that the assignment of the additional meaning to the *tough*-subject is most appropriate when the ease or difficulty of the given event is closely related to the intrinsic properties of the referent of the *tough*-subject. Thus, when the ease/difficulty of the event has little to do with the intrinsic properties of the referent of the *tough*-subject, as in the examples below, repeated for ease of reference, a *tough*-sentence again is not allowed to have even the potential for the additional meaning assignable to its *tough*-subject and comes to have only the semantics of its *it*-analog sentence.

- (38) (a) Books are easy to locate in this library (but video tapes are not).  
 (b) A good baby-sitter is hard to find these days.  
 (c) Water is easy to find in this country.

Note that the ease involved in locating books in a library does not have much to do with the intrinsic properties of books themselves but has more to do with how the librarian organizes books. Similarly, the difficulty involved in finding a good baby-sitter or a good person has more to do with what our society is like but very little to do with the intrinsic properties of a good baby-sitter or a good person.

Thus, although generic *tough*-subjects may often turn out not to have the additional meaning, this is not due to their being generic. Rather, it is mainly because the ease or difficulty of the given event is often difficult to ascribe to their intrinsic properties, as we have observed above. This means that even generic *tough*-subjects can be assigned the connotation of responsibility if they have an event whose ease or difficulty is closely related to or can easily be attributed to certain intrinsic properties of their referents, as follows:

- (39) (a) A mudfish is difficult to hold with one's hands.  
 (b) Children are often hard to keep indoors all day long.

Furthermore, even with *tough*-subjects that can easily be assigned the connotation of responsibility, as in (40) below, if the given events are replaced with other ones whose ease or difficulty is more readily ascribed to other sources, it becomes very difficult to maintain a similar connotation, as in (41):

- (40) (a) This violin is easy to play almost any sonata on.  
 (b) This book is hard to read.
- (41) (a) This violin is easy to break with this big hammer.  
 (b) This book is hard to return at this late hour.

Given the understanding of how a *tough*-sentence sometimes comes to have some additional meaning, it becomes clear why the following classical examples of the TC involving an idiom chunk do not differ in semantics from their corresponding *it*-analog sentences (cf. Berman 1974: 261-2):<sup>10, 11</sup>

- (42) (a) (?)Tabs are easy to keep on this suspect.  
 (b) It is easy to keep tabs on this suspect.
- (43) (a) (?)Headway should be easy to make in cases like this, but I've gotten nowhere.  
 (b) It should be easy to make headway in cases like this, but I've gotten nowhere.
- (44) (a) (?)The hatchet is hard to bury after long years of war.  
 (b) It is hard to bury the hatchet after long years of war.

Note that the *tough*-subject NP in each of the (a)-sentences can have the given idiomatic meaning only when it occurs in the relevant idiom (i.e. *keep tabs*, *make headway*, and *bury the hatchet*) and cannot stand alone referring to an entity independently of the remaining part of the idiom. This makes it virtually impossible to imagine either any intrinsic properties which can be connected to each *tough*-subject or a plausible comparison set containing NP denotations which could be compared with the given *tough*-subject. Thus, none of the (a)-sentences involving an idiom chunk can be assigned the additional meaning and therefore the two sentences of each pair come to have the same meaning.

#### 4. Some Apparent Counterexamples

There are still some cases in which a *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence can differ in meaning. These cases include examples of the TC containing a quantifier, as follows:

- (45) (a) Nobody is easy to please.  
 (b) It is easy to please nobody.

It seems to be clear that the *tough*-sentence and its *it*-analog sentence in (45) are different in meaning and that their difference in meaning is not a matter of pragmatics because it cannot

<sup>10</sup> Some speakers may find (some of) these examples less than perfect.

<sup>11</sup> The subject NP of each (a)-sentence above (i.e., *tabs*, *headway*, and *the hatchet*) in the given sense occurs only as object of the verb in the corresponding infinitival phrase (i.e., *keep*, *make*, and *bury*) in the idioms *keep tabs*, *make headway*, and *bury the hatchet*, respectively. Thus, the possibility of having parts of idiom chunks in the *tough*-subject position is considered strong evidence for syntactic connectivity between the *tough*-subject and the gap in the infinitival phrase.

be canceled without bringing about contradiction. Thus, one might want to say that this fact constitutes a strong argument for the thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis.

However, even though it is true that the meanings of the two examples are different, this does not necessarily mean that the *tough*-subject is thematic or that the semantic contribution of the two constructions involved (i.e., the TC and its *it*-analog construction) are different. Note that (derivationally speaking) we can still derive the TC (or the *tough*-sentence in (45a)) from its *it*-analog counterpart, maintaining the structural meaning from D-structure, and explain the difference in the meanings of the whole sentences by means of different quantifier scopes, which must be dealt with separately from the two constructions involved themselves and must be read off S-structure.

Similarly, in non-derivational approaches such as HPSG, the syntactic and semantic relationship between the two sentences in (45) can be explained by a lexical rule which will relate the same *tough*-predicate *easy* to the two constructions (as in (45a) and (45b)) that have different structures but make the same semantic contribution to sentences containing them. The difference in meaning between (45a) and (45b), on the other hand, can be attributed to operations on quantifiers in quantifier storage (cf. Pollard & Sag 1994: 47-8, 318-25).

The following examples involving a so-called "subject-oriented" adverb or progressive aspect may also appear to argue for the thematic *tough*-subject hypothesis (cf. Lasnik & Fiengo 1974, Jackendoff 1975):

- (46) (a) Tom is intentionally easy to please.  
 (b) \*It is intentionally easy to please Tom.
- (47) (a) Tom is being easy to please.  
 (b) \*It is being easy to please Tom.

Since the *it*-analog sentences corresponding to the two *tough*-sentences in (46a) and (47a) do not exist, one might want to claim that the *tough*-subject in each of the two *tough*-sentences must be assigned a semantic role (in the subject position) by its syntactic predicate, thereby arguing for the *tough*-subject being thematic.

However, the ungrammaticality of (46b) and (47b) and the difference in grammaticality between (a) and (b) in each pair above have nothing to do with the *tough*-subject being thematic. These mainly represent the fact that the given predicates involving a "subject-oriented" adverb or progressive aspect need a special type of (surface) subject. That is, "subject-oriented" adverbs require their (surface) subject to be agentive or to have reference while (certain) progressive copulas must select animate subjects (Jackendoff 1975: 438, 440). Note that these restrictions concerning legitimate subjects can be dealt with independently of the semantics of the TC itself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in HPSG, the ungrammaticality of (46b) can be explained by the incompatibility of the features of the dummy *it*, lacking agentivity or reference, and those of the "subject-oriented" adverb, requiring agentivity or reference in the subject. Note that although the ungrammaticality of (46b) and (47b) may be problematic in derivational approaches (if those approaches assume that such restrictions on agentivity or reference must be satisfied at D-structure), it causes no problem in non-derivational approaches such as HPSG because there is no derivation involved and therefore one structure does not need to be derived from another.

## 5. Conclusion

So far, we have seen that although a *tough*-sentence can sometimes differ in meaning from its *it*-analog sentence, this possible meaning difference is pragmatic rather than semantic in that it is highly context-dependent. In short, although the *tough*-subject can be considered 'thematic' in that a *tough*-sentence can sometimes have a certain additional meaning, this additional meaning can be pragmatically explained and therefore is not inherent to the TC. This conclusion about the semantics of the TC makes us reconsider the related syntactic issues of the TC.

As is well known, the English TC shows many special properties which make a simple and coherent (syntactic) analysis for it difficult,<sup>13</sup> often presenting even (seemingly) contradictory pieces of evidence about relevant main issues. Even though the position assuming weak connectivity (i.e., no syntactic connectivity) between the *tough*-subject and the gap in the infinitival phrase is more favored by most current syntactic frameworks in both derivational and non-derivational approaches, there is some considerable synchronic and diachronic evidence for strong connectivity (i.e., syntactic connectivity) which still needs to be better explained.<sup>14</sup> In conclusion, our discussion so far strongly suggests the need for an alternative analysis of the English TC which can not only more fully explain types of evidence for both strong and weak connectivity but which can also incorporate the semantics and pragmatics of the TC discussed in this paper.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the TC is like *wh*-constructions in that the filler (i.e., *tough*-subject) and the gap can be separated indefinitely and in that parasitic gaps are allowed, as in (ia) and (iia):

- (i) (a) Kim<sub>i</sub> is difficult to prevent Mary from criticizing \_\_<sub>i</sub>.
- (b) Who<sub>i</sub> do you think you are now talking to \_\_?
- (ii) (a) This paper<sub>i</sub> is hard to understand \_\_ without reading \_\_; more than several times.
- (b) Which items<sub>i</sub> did you take \_\_ out of the library without checking \_\_ out?

On the other hand, unlike *wh*-constructions, the TC has the filler of the gap (i.e., the *tough*-subject) in an argument position and it has a parallel construction which has the expletive *it* or *to*-infinitive phrase as its subject, as in (iiib) and (iiic):

- (iii) (a) Kim<sub>i</sub> is hard to bribe \_\_.
- (b) It is hard to bribe Kim.
- (c) To bribe Kim is hard.

<sup>14</sup> One piece of evidence for strong connectivity is the fact that parts of idiom chunks can occur in the *tough*-subject position, as shown in (42)-(44). Another important piece of evidence is that many non-NP constituents can occur in the *tough*-subject position, making it necessary for the *tough*-subject and the gap to share more than just an index (cf. Pollard & Sag 1994: 166-171):

- (i) (a) That [the colonel is a spy] is not easy to believe \_\_.
- (b) [For such a good boy to miss so many classes] would be difficult to expect \_\_.
- (c) [His father buying him a present] is hard to imagine \_\_.
- (d) [To get lost in such a big city] is not hard to expect \_\_.
- (e) [Swimming on such a cold day] would be hard for anyone to enjoy \_\_.

On the other hand, the diachrony of the TC and other related gapping constructions in the history of English argues for strong connectivity rather than weak connectivity between the *tough*-subject and the gap (Goh 1999). This diachronic argument, especially considering the reduced usefulness of the cross-linguistic evidence regarding the TC (Comrie & Matthews 1990), the relative diachronic stability of the TC, and the controversial synchronic status of the TC in Modern English, can be considered stronger than merely suggestive.

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