ECM vs. Object Control

**Question:** Why can the ECM subject in (1) not be analyzed as an argument of the higher verb, as in (1)a, as opposed to the subject of the embedded predicate, as in (1)b?

On the object control analysis of (1), the subject Θ-role of the lower predicate could be assigned to PRO in the lower SpecTP (see (1)a).

(1) I expect him to win
   a. I expect himₚ [CP PROₚ to win]
   b. I expect [TP him to win]

Analyzing sentence (1) as in (1)a generates two predictions:

**Predictions:**

I. If (1) is analyzed as an instance of object control (see (1)a), the construction should share (all) properties of object control verbs.

II. If (1) is analyzed as an object control construction (see (1)a), him should behave like an object and not like a subject.

Below, I list four generalizations demonstrating that Prediction I is not borne out. This indicates that expect and the other verbs in this class have to be analyzed as ECM predicates that involve raising to the object position, and not object control. (The arguments against Prediction II are more technical in nature, and will therefore not be discussed here.)

**Contrasts I: Expletives**

- An expletive subject cannot control PRO (see Handout #4, Test I):

(2) a. There seemed to be riots on the street → raising
    b. *There wanted to be riots on the street → control

The incompatibility between PRO and expletive is a more general property of control constructions, as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of the object control examples in (3). (3) is ill-formed, because PRO is controlled by the expletive there in object position of the higher clause:

(3) *I ordered/demanded/begged there, [CP PRO₁ to be (no) riots]

- On the other hand it is possible to find corresponding constructions involving ECM-predicates such as expect and believe that are well-formed. This demonstrates that expletives may serve as subjects of the ECM construction.

(4) We expected/believed [TP there [T TO BE riots]]

The contrast between (3) and (4) can be explained, if the expect construction is analyzed in a different way than structures involving object control. (Otherwise, the expect construction should
behave exactly like object control in being incompatible with expletives.) Thus, ECM and object control predicates fall into two distinct groups.

**CONTRAST II: ANTECEDENT SWITCH**

- Object control verbs switch to subject control verbs, if they are combined with certain embedded predicates:

  (5)  
  a. John begged Bill, PRO, to leave  
  b. John, begged Bill PRO, to be allowed PRO, to leave  

- This switch is not observed with ECM predicates, a result which is unexpected on the control analysis, but predicted by the ECM account:

  (6)  
  a. Mary expected Bill, PRO, to leave  
  b. *Maryi expected Bill PROi to be allowed to leave  
  c. Mary expected Bill, PRO, to be allowed to leave

**CONTRAST III: IDIOMS**

Control predicates do not license idiomatic interpretations, while raising verbs do. If expect were an object control verbs, it should not be able to support idioms. The verb is predicted to allow idiomatic readings if it is analyzed as ECM verb, though, because ECM verbs involve raising (to the object position SpecArgOP of the higher clause). The facts support the ECM account:

(7) I want the cat to be let out of the bag.  

*idiomatic interpretation possible  
(Carnie 2006, p.404, ex. (30))

**CONTRAST IV: NULL COMPLEMENT ANAPHORA**

- All object control verbs partake in the formation of an ellipsis construction called Null Complement Anaphora (NCA), illustrated by (8).

(8) Mary persuaded (/convinced/asked/ordered) Sam to leave,  
    but I don't think she has persuaded (/convinced/asked/ordered) Bill △  
    △ = to leave

In NCA, the verb and the object is followed by an empty node (designated by △) that takes up the same interpretation as the preceding infinitive. (This preceding infinitive is also called the ANTECEDENT. The empty node △ is referred to as the ELLIPSIS site.)

- ECM verbs do not license NCA, as evidenced by the ill-formedness of the examples in (9):

(9) *Mary expected (/believed/imagined/reported/considered) Bill to be obnoxious,  
    but I don't think she expected (/believed/imagined/reported/considered) Sam.