

It is kind of you to do soの構文について

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ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF SENTENCES LIKE

*It is kind of you to do so**

Mikio Namoto

1. Introduction

There are a good many interpretations on the construction exemplified by the sentence *It is kind of you to do so* from the point of view of traditional grammar. In this paper, the author tries to analyze the construction from a transformational generative point of view. As for *it* of this construction, two interpretations are found in traditional grammar: one is a formal subject *it*, the other is an unspecified *it*. As for the *to-infinitive* of this construction, there are also two interpretations: one is a noun phrase which functions as a logical subject, the other is an adverbial phrase which indicates a reason of statement or judging.

This paper proposes that the *it* is an unspecified *it* and *to-infinitive* is an adverbial phrase.

2. On *It*

As mentioned above, there are two kinds of *it* used in this construction: one is an unspecified *it*, the other is a formal subject *it*.

2.1 In each of the following sentences, *it*, which is often to be replaced by *this* or *that*, is considered to be an unspecified *it*.

1. *It* was nice of him, wasn't *it*? Maughmm, *Cakes and Ale*
2. And if you don't think *it's* immodest of me why I'd like to send you a copy of my book when I get back to paris. H. Miller, *Via Dieppe-Newhaven*
3. *That's* very kind of you. Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*
4. *This* is very good of you Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
5. Don't you think *that's* bright of me to figure *that* out?
Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
6. How sweet of you to say *that*! Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*
7. *It* was reckless of me, but I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him.
Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
8. *That* was very stupid of me. Maugham, *Ashenden*

* I express my profound thanks to Saburo Ohye, professor of Kyushu University, who read my paper and gave me valuable comments.

9. *This* is very good of you, *this* is downright good of you.

Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

2.2 In each of the following sentences, *it* is considered to be a formal subject *it*.

10. *It's* silly of me to ask. H. Miller, *Astrological*

11. *It's* hateful of them to leave me out. Selinko, *Désirée*

The reason why the *it* in these sentences is a formal subject is that the *to-infinitive* phrases in them serve to provide concrete contents to the pronoun. According to Egawa, although we can find different uses of *it* historically, it is very difficult to classify *it* in accordance with uses of *it* in modern English. For example, we often fail to discriminate between an unspecified *it* and a formal subject *it* in the sentence *It is five minutes' walk from here to the station*. Therefore, it is very doubtful whether we can say that *it* is a formal subject in *It is silly of me to ask* or not. In the following examples, a comma which indicates a pause is found before the *to-infinitive* in each sentence.

12. That was smart of me, *to slow down* my deliveries before reaching the Bumstead house. C. Young. *Blondie*

13. It was a brute part of him, *to kill* so capital a calf there.

Sh., *Hamlet*. III. 11. 110

The occurrence of this comma suggests that adjectives like *kind* should be closely connected with *you*, but not with the *to-infinitive* and leads to the phenomenon that we have such a construction as *It was nice of him, wasn't it?* without a *to-infinitive*. In general, therefore, the *it* in this construction may be appropriately treated as an unspecified *it*. From this conclusion, it follows that the *to-infinitive* in this construction is treated as an adverbial phrase. In the following section, certain properties of the *to-infinitive* in this construction are discussed.

3. On *to do so*

When we say *It is kind of you to do so*, we make a pause between *you* and *to do so*, while in saying *It is necessary for you to do so*, we make a pause between *necessary* and *for*. The difference in the pause between the two sentences results in a different meaning between the *to-infinitives* of the two sentences. Namely, the *to-infinitive* in *It is kind of you to do so* means a finished action and the one in *It is necessary for you to do so* means an unfinished action. It has already been mentioned that the *to-infinitive* in the above-mentioned construction is an adverbial phrase, because *it* in the construction is regarded as unspecified *it*.

Wilkinson calls the following adjectives Class W adjectives: *wise, smart, kind, stupid, brave, rash, foolish*, etc. According to him, Class W adjectives have complements which are thought to be a kind of factive complement in the Kiparskys' analysis. Exploring the presuppositions both in the affirmative sentence and in the negative sentence proves whether the complements are factive or not.

- 14. Bernie was wise to run away from the bear.
- 15. Bernie was not wise to run away from the bear.

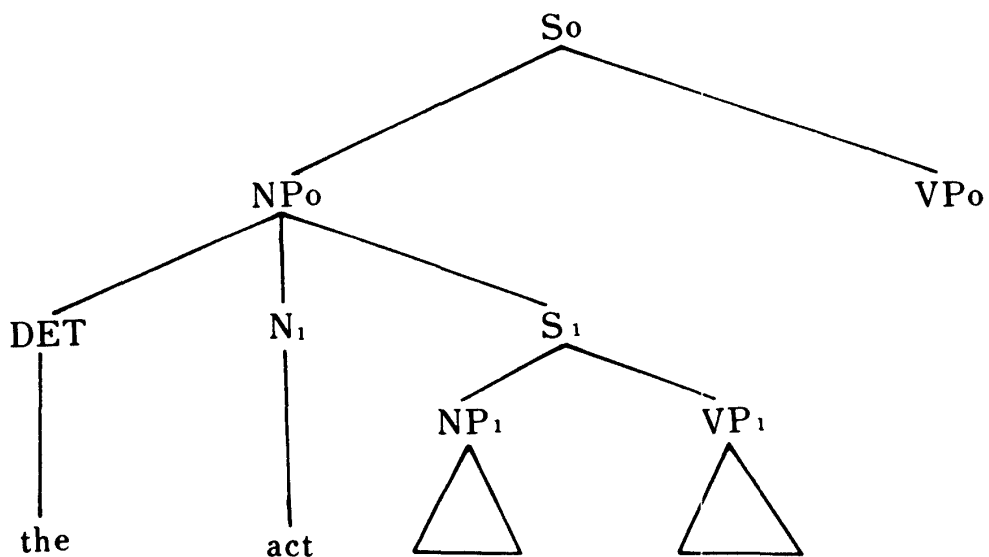
(14) involves the presupposition on the speaker's part that Bernie did run away from the bear; the same is true of (15). The fact that the same presupposition can be found both in the affirmative and the negative sentences satisfies the semantic criterion for factivity as defined by the Kiparskys. However, the following linguistic phenomena indicate that the complements associated with Class W adjectives are different from the factive complements defined by the Kiparskys in that they cannot permit the presence of the head noun *fact* in the underlying structure.

- 16. *the fact that the men volunteered was wise.
- 17. *a wise/ kind/ foolish/ polite fact
- 18. *the fact that the boy helped the girl was wise/ kind/ foolish/ polite

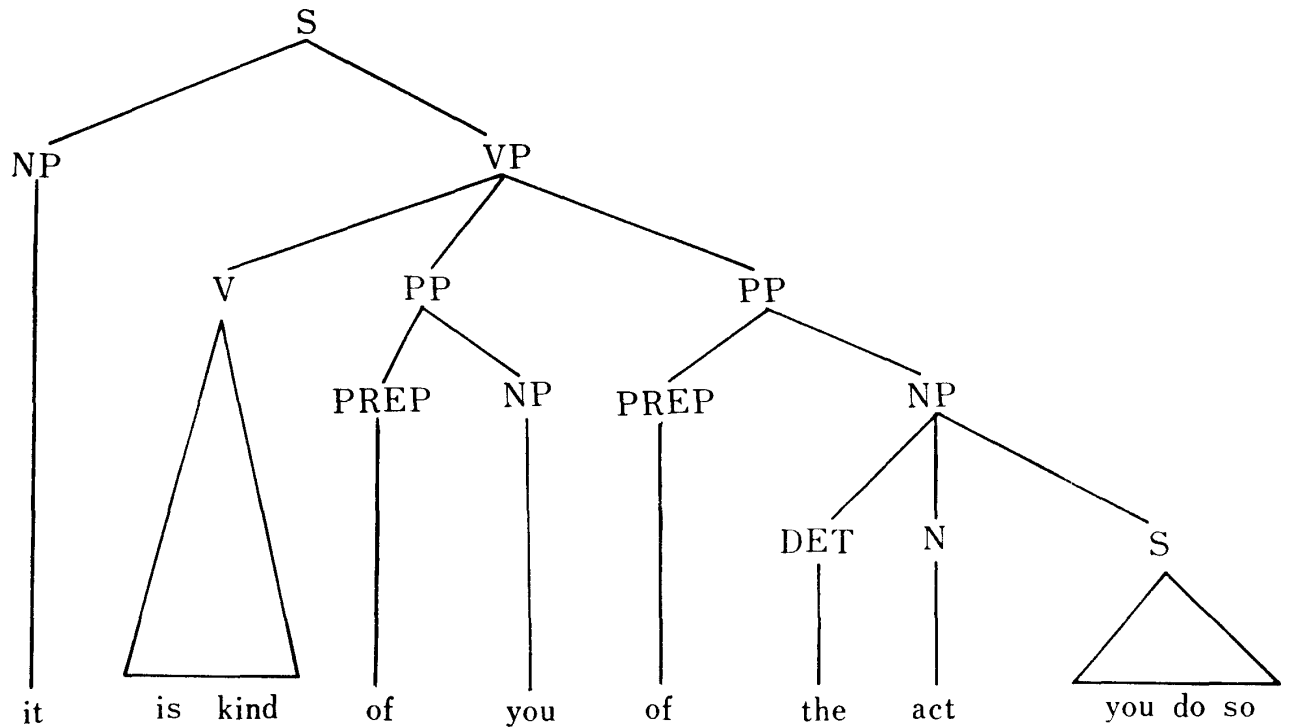
Instead of *fact* as a head noun in the underlying structure, Wilkinson proposes that *action, act, deed* are all perfectly compatible with Class W adjectives semantically.

- 19. the act of your leaving was wise/ kind/ smart.
- 20. your act in leaving/ your act of leaving was wise/ smart/ kind.
- 21. a wise/ smart/ kind act

On the basis of the above-mentioned linguistic facts, Wilkinson supposes that action complements have the following underlying structure.



VPo means a Class W adjective or other suitable predicate. Under the underlying structure proposed in the above, it is not easy to generate *It is kind of you to do so*. Therefore, I submit the following underlying structure.



The reasons for this are as follows:

- A. *It* is an unspecified *it* as we observed in the previous section.
- B. The presence of two prepositional phrases is due to the properties considered as inherent in Class W adjectives, namely, the adjectives express a remark not only about an actor but also about his act.
- C. In the underlying structure, the *to-infinitive* is thought to be an action complement with *of* in the initial position, because in the surface structure the *to-infinitive* functions as an adverbial phrase.

Thus, the transformation would be something like this. After Preposition Deletion Transformation and *act* Deletion Transformation are applied to *of the act* in the underlying structure, For-To Complementizer Placement Transformation is applied, so that we have:

22. It is kind of you for you to do so.

Complementizer Deletion Transformation and Complement Subject Deletion are applied to *for you* in (22). Finally we have:

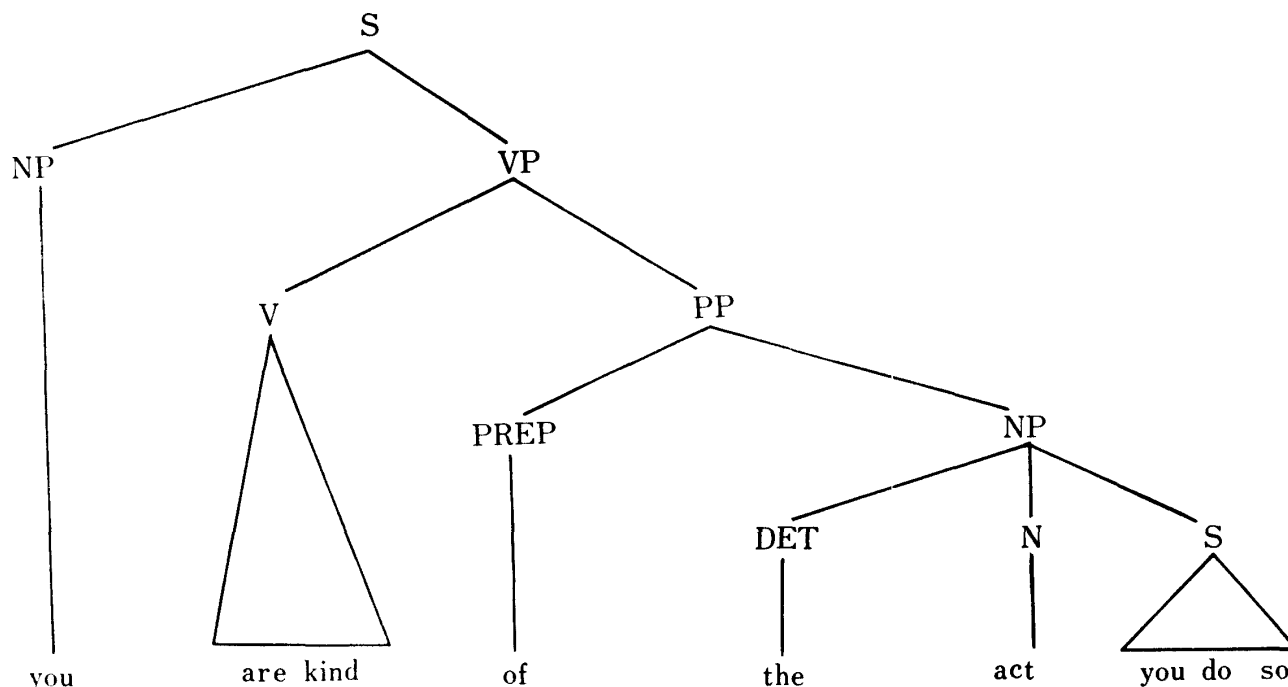
23. It is kind of you to do so.

Let us consider a construction which intuitively seems to be related to the one we have considered above, namely, the construction exemplified by the sentence:

24. You are kind to do so.

In both (23) and (24), there seems to be an essential difference since (23) is used to appreciate the actor's act on a particular occasion, while (24) is thought to describe his nature gathered from his particular act. Furthermore, in uttering sentence (23), we find the strongest stress on the adjective and a pause after it.

Judging from the above-mentioned differences in the two sentences (constructions), it seems appropriate that they have different underlying structures, I suggest the following underlying structure for (24).



The transformations relevant to the action complement in (24) would be the same as those relevant to the action complement in (23) except that they have different subject parts.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, the construction exemplified by the sentence *It is kind of you to do so* has been examined from a transformational generative point of view. As the result of examining it, it has become clear that the infinitive in this construction is semantically factive in the broad sense of the term due to the force of the adjectives in this construction which are analyzed as Class W adjectives by Wilkinson. It is expected that a more detailed comparison between this construction and the construction of sentences like *It is necessary for you to do so* will bring out many interesting linguistic facts.

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