Answers to exercises SK chapter 9 (= Lecture 6)

9.1
A. In such sentences, the matrix predicate (i.e. *try*) imposes a selectional restriction on the subject in the matrix clause, namely that this subject must be able to volitionally perform some action. The PRO subject in the embedded clause must comply with whatever restrictions the embedded verb imposes on its subject. Given that PRO is controlled by the matrix subject, the upshot is that the matrix subject must be capable of volitional action *and* comply with the selectional restrictions the embedded verb imposes on its PRO subject. Consider for example the following:

(i)   a. #The lamp tried [PRO to shine]
         b. #John tried [PRO to shine]
         c. John tried [PRO to paint the shed]

(ia) is out because *the lamp* violates the selectional restrictions *try* imposes on its subject argument; (ib) is out because PRO, controlled by *John*, violates the selectional restrictions imposed by *shine* on its subject argument. But (ic) is fine because *John* satisfies the selectional restrictions of *try* and PRO, controlled by *John*, satisfies the selectional restrictions of *paint*.

B. *The children* has raised out of the complement clause to the raising verb *seem*, where its trace functions as subject. This trace, sharing all referential properties with *the children*, should satisfy the selectional restrictions that the embedded verb imposes on its subject argument. The subject of *elapse* or *evaporate* cannot be human, however, in contrast to the subject of *learn*.

D. Sentence (i) has two readings:

(i)   The children threatened to leave

In one reading ('the children made a threat, namely to leave'), the verb *threaten* assigns its own thematic role to its subject, as evidenced by the fact that it places a selectional restriction on its subject in this reading, namely that it must be human. A sentence like (ii) therefore cannot have a reading parallel to this (#'the weather made a threat, namely to turn bad'). This shows that, in the reading it has in (i), *threaten* is a control verb.

(ii)   The weather threatened to turn bad

In the second reading of the verb *threaten*, which results in the meaning 'it unfortunately looked like the children were going to leave' for (i), and 'it unfortunately looked like the weather was going to turn bad' for (ii), there is no such selectional restriction on the subject. In this reading, *threaten* can also occur with a meaningless (expletive) element in its subject position, as in (iii). In this reading, then, *threaten* is a raising verb.

(iii)   There threatened to be too many spectators in the stadium.

9.3
A. *appear* is an example of a verb that can be both a raising verb and a verb that licenses *there*:
(i)   a.   Mary$_i$ appeared [t$_i$ not to have noticed her mistake]
            b.   There appeared three strange creatures on the corner of the street

B. *threaten* (in its reading as a raising verb, see exercise 9.1) is an example of this:

(i)   a. The weather threatened to turn bad
            b. *It threatened that the weather would turn bad

C. *expect* also belongs to the class of subject control verbs:

(i)   Deborah$_i$ expected [PRO$_i$ to win the race]

(That *expect* is not a raising verb here is shown again by the fact that it imposes its own selectional restrictions on its subject: this subject must be a sentient being that is capable of having expectations: **the kettle expected to be boiling over*).

9.5
(1a): *seems* is not itself a *there*-licenser (in contrast to e.g. *appear*, see exercise 9.3A above)
(1b): *seem* does not assign a semantic role to its subject position; given that the subject in the main clause in this case has not raised out of the complement clause (so is also not semantically related to the lower verb), it should be a meaningless element – which *they* is not. Thus, since the meaningful (referential) element *they* remains without any semantic role in this sentence, the sentence cannot be interpreted.
(1c): Raising across a complementizer is impossible (see the handout to this lecture).
(1d): As in (1c). (Moreover, (1d) is *also* out because it violates Superiority, on which see the handout to the next lecture, lecture 7).