V: Chapter Five : Empty Categories

It is also believed in the Minimalist Program that syntactic structures also have "*empty* (= covert = null) *categories* ;i.e. categories which have no overt phonetic form, and hence inaudible or silent." (A.Radford,1997: 82) For example, English allows the empty category **PRO** as the subject of infinitive clauses that appear to be subjectless:

(1)
(i)We would like [**PRO** to stay]/ We would like [*you* to stay]
(ii) We don't want [**PRO** to upset them]/ We don't want [*anyone* to upset them]

Given this assumption then both infinitival clauses have "the same structure, except that the bracketed IP has an overt pronominal determiner *you* as it s subject" (A.Radford,1997: 82),"but a covert pronominal determiner **PRO** as it s subject" (A.Radford,1997: 82) in the second type of the infinitival clauses. Therefore, "we can say that the null subject **PRO**...is **controlled** by (i.e. refers back to) the subject *we* of the matrix (= containing = next highest) clause." (A.Radford,1997: 83) In other words, "*we* is the **controller** or **antecedent** of **PRO**"; and verbs such as *like*, which allow an infinitive complement with **PRO** as subject, are said to function as **control verbs**.

There are several reasons that motivated the assumption that there is a null PRO subject in the above structures.
First, this is in keeping with the notion of an *understood* or *implicit* subject that is found in traditional grammar. This implicit subject of the infinitival clause becomes explicit when the clause is finite *He has promised [to come to my party]/ He has promised [he will come to my party].*