

The Application of Transfer is Case-sensitive and Deducible

I. Problem

A central goal of phase-based theory is to formalize and explain the empirically correct "cross-linguistic" application of the timing of Transfer. Transfer-timing, of course, determines the empirical effects of the phase-impenetrability condition, arguably the most fundamental locality condition of contemporary theory. However, in current analyses, Transfer-timing is both stipulated and empirically problematic.

Chomsky (2000) postulates that the complement domain of the phase-head v is not accessible to operations outside of the phase vP . Thus, as desired in the following case, T cannot agree with NP_{OBJ} inside the phase-head-complement VP:

- (1) a. * John like these socks
 John.NOM like.PL these socks.PL.ACC
- b. * ... T.PL ... [vP V [vP V NP.PL.ACC]] (where T agrees with NP_{OBJ} in number)

This follows from the stipulation that Transfer removes the phase-head-complement VP from the workspace of Narrow Syntax at the completion of the phase vP . So when T is introduced, the VP (containing NP_{OBJ}) is "gone."

However, it has been widely discussed that in languages like Icelandic, T can agree with NP_{OBJ} , as illustrated in (2) (an example discussed in Jónsson 1996, also cited in Bobaljik 2008):

- (2) a. ^{OK} Jóni líkuðu þessir sokkar
 Jon.DAT like.PL these socks.PL.NOM
- b. ^{OK} ... T.PL ... [vP V [vP V NP.PL.NOM]] (where T agrees with NP_{OBJ} in number)

To allow this, Chomsky (2001, 2004) delays Transfer-application (removing the VP) until the merger of the next "higher" phase-head (= C). T – inherently bearing lexical phi features of its own – thus can agree with NP_{OBJ} , exactly when T is merged, and hence before the subsequent merger of C, which triggers Transfer of VP.

Crucially however, Chomsky (2007, 2008) proposes that T does not inherently bear phi features of its own, but instead inherits phi features from C. But this feature-inheritance analysis creates a new thus far unnoted problem: Before the merger of C to TP, T (lacking phi features of its own) cannot possibly phi-agree with NP_{OBJ} . But after the merger of C to TP, T (now bearing phi features inherited from C) cannot find the NP_{OBJ} , because the phase-head-complement VP (containing NP_{OBJ}) has been removed by Transfer.

We overcome this problem, presenting a new empirically (and explanatorily) preferable universal formulation of Transfer – accounting for such T- NP_{OBJ} agreement without recourse to an independent agreement parameter.

II. Descriptive Generalization

We propose the description: Transfer removes the phase-head-complement PHC if and only if the head of PHC values Case. Consequently, in (1), Transfer removes the PHC (= VP), whose head values Case, thereby blocking T- NP_{OBJ} agreement. By contrast, in (2), Transfer does not remove the PHC (= VP), whose head does not value Case, thereby allowing T- NP_{OBJ} agreement. Thus, (1) vs. (2) follows, and the English-Icelandic "parameter" is reduced to independent morpho-lexical Case-variant properties of heads.

III. Consequence

We also explain why T-NP_{OBJ} agreement occurs with passive/raising verbs, as illustrated in (3) (an example discussed in Zanen, Maling, and Thráinsson 1985, also cited in Bobaljik 2008):

- (3) a. ^{OK} Um venturinn voru konunginum gefnar ambáttir
In the winter were.PL the king.DAT given slaves.PL.NOM
"In the winter, the king was given (female) slaves."

- b. ^{OK} ... T.PL ... [_{VP} V [_{VP} V_{passive} NP.PL.NOM]] (where T agrees with NP_{OBJ} in number)

Legate (2002) argues that a verbal phrase with a passive/raising verb is phasal. Chomsky (2001) stipulates that these are "weak" phases, which, unlike his original "strong" phases, escape from Transfer-application. We eliminate this *ad hoc* distinction, reducing it to independently motivated Case properties.

IV. Deducing the Description

But why does Transfer remove the PHC if and only if the head of PHC values Case? Under the feature-Inheritance analysis, in order for V/T to value Case, they must first inherit unvalued phi from later-Merged v/C respectively. This merger in turn projects vP and CP. But then "EPP" satisfaction (creation of Spec-V and Spec-T) is necessarily "counter-cyclic" i.e. it is merger but not at the root. We argue: such "counter-cyclic" merger necessarily yields a structure with "two peaks" – formally a tree with no single root (to merge to) – causing the derivation to (deducibly) halt. To continue, one peak (= PHC) must be removed from the workspace. We thus seek to entirely deduce the timing and Case-sensitivity of Transfer.

References

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