LINGUIST 752: Head movement in linguistic theory

Course # 12989   UMass Amherst · Spring 2017

Instructor   Location & Time

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1 Overview

This Seminar will focus on the status of HEAD MOVEMENT in syntactic theory. We will be looking at the empirical phenomena it is meant to explain, its interaction with other syntactic operations, and various modern theoretical implementations. The main goals will be to familiarize students with core properties of head movement and introduce the ongoing debate about the proper place of head movement in the grammar: Is it properly movement, in the syntactic sense, or is it some other sort of morphological or PF phenomenon, as Chomsky (2001) suggests?

2 Reading

Reading in will be drawn from various primary sources, plus the occasional handbook article. Participants are encouraged to do as much of the reading as possible, and there will be certain core readings that everybody will be expected to have read. The calendar below provides a proposed view of the topics we should cover and some associated readings, but we may deviate from this based on student interests and time constraints. Information about what should be read and when will be kept up-to-date on the website.

3 Course Requirements

All participants will be required to present material from the papers we are reading or to present original work during the seminar. You will notice that many days have multiple papers scheduled; consequently, presentations of reading should not be meticulous goings-over of the details of each paper, but overviews of main ideas, preferably connecting to work that has been previously discussed.

Registered students are required to submit a term paper, and other participants are encouraged to do so as well. Papers will be due on *11 May 2017*. You should set up a time with me to discuss possible topics by *13 April*. Papers must deal with head movement in some way, and they should be a minimum of ten pages in length. If you need to deviate from either of these requirements, please come talk to me first. The paper may not be a lit review. If you wish to two-paper the course, you should also let me know by 13 April.

4 Topics

4.1 Background and history

We will begin with some background and history on the origins of head movement and its current place in linguistic theory. Roberts (2011) provides an overview of the status of head movement in modern Min-

imalist theory, and this will provide an overview of the current state of affairs.

Head movement is distinguished from phrasal movement since it displays a number of properties that phrasal movement does not (for a clear summary, see the discussion in Platzack 2013). For instance, head movement is an intensely local operation: It is widely thought that head movement cannot skip any intervening head (Travis 1984). Along with this, it seems to be impossible (or at least very difficult) to move material out of a complex head; head movement must target a complete complex head rather than any of its subparts. Further, the standard syntactic analysis of the phenomenon posits that all head movement results in adjunction structures rather than merging at the root, contravening Chomsky's (1995) Extension Condition (which requires merge to be affected at the top of the tree). It is claimed to be clause bounded (*i.e.* no C°-to-V° movement).

Chomsky (2001) proposes that head movement might not be part of narrow syntax but instead relegated to the "phonological component" of the grammar. This would sidestep a number (though not all) of the issues enumerated above, but it leaves open the question of how the displacement of heads should actually be implemented. Several authors have since tried to adduce evidence in favor of each view, while others have proposed novel theoretical implementations of the phenomenon, but the results of this discussion remain inconclusive.

4.2 Word order

One of the main empirical phenomena that head movement has been used to explain is the displacement of individual words in an utterance. Much of this work has its origins in explaining variation in Germanic verb-second ordering, beginning with den Besten 1977, and placement of verbs in French (Emonds 1978). The touchstone theoretical work establishing the core properties of head movement is Lisa Travis's (1984) dissertation, followed by Mark Baker's (1988) book on incorporation, and Sten Vikner's (1995) influential book on Germanic word order.

One place that may be particularly interesting to investigate, in light of recent theoretical innovations, is Scandinavian object shift. Movement of objects out of VP in Scandinavian is, apparently, dependent on the verb moving out of the verb phrase as well (Holmberg 1986). The reason for this has remained elusive. However, Müller (2001) has proposed that object shift is, perhaps, due to PF constraints on constituent order, which may dovetail with the independent hypothesis that head movement is not properly syntactic.

Head movement has also played a significant role in word order outside of Germanic. Pollock (1989) – which I assume everybody has read – identifies a primary difference between English and French word order as having to do with the position of the verb in the clause. Ordóñez 1998 argues, in a similar vein, that Spanish VSO and VOS orders are not derived by movement of the subject but movement of the verb, and idea that is still influential (see Depiante and Vicente 2012).

A particularly interesting body of work, in fact, investigates how verb-initial word orders are derived. An influential body of work on Irish by McCloskey (1991, 1996, 2011) has argued that verb movement over a low subject position is responsible for deriving that language's rigid VSO order, similar to what Ordóñez proposes for Spanish. As a point of comparison, there are clearly languages that utilize verb phrase or predicate fronting instead, as argued by Chung (2005, 2006), Massam (2001), and others. Müller (2004) attempts just this as a way of explaining Germanic V2, in contradistinction the traditional view that V2 is the result of head movement.

4.3 Syntax–morphology

Behind a lot of the discussion of head movement is the idea that the phenomenon plays a substantial role in word-building, and this in turn deals directly with the underlying motivation for head movement (see Section 4.5). Pollock (1989) relates the difference between the position of verbs in French and English to the amount of inflectional verbal morphology in the language: If a language has 'rich agreement', then a language will have V°-to-Infl movement. This is the so called RICH AGREEMENT HYPOTHESIS. There have typically been two overlapping debates in this literature. The first question is what counts as 'rich' and how 'rich' should be defined. The second is focused on how strong the condition is – while it is fairly well accepted that rich agreement requires verb movement, it remains contentious whether movement can only happen if agreement is rich.

Bobaljik (2002), building on Bobaljik and Jonas 1996 and Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998, argues for the position that rich agreement necessitates one head for each agreement morpheme, which in turn requires verb movement, but this does not preclude verb movement when inflection is poor. Challenging this view, Alexiadou and Fanselow (2002) argue that there is no real correlation between inflectional complexity and verb movement. More recently, Koeneman and Zeijlstra (2014) argue for a strong rich agreement hypothesis, proposing that agreement is rich if verbal agreement involves at least the same featural distinctions as those manifested in the smallest subject pronoun inventories universally possible.

A related, but distinct proposal is the STRONG AGREEMENT HYPOTHESIS, which proposes that words. Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998) is a difficult, fascinating paper which explores this idea by proposing that some languages might satisfy the EPP with V°-to-I° movement.

4.4 Verb stranding

Head movement interacts with other syntactic phenomena, including phrasal movement and ellipsis. One phenomena in which head movement plays a roll is verb-stranding verb phrase ellipsis. Beginning with work in the late 80s and early 90s by Doron (1990), McCloskey (1991), and Raposo (1986), it started to become clear that languages other than English had a verb phrase ellipsis operation, but that this operation was obscured by the fact that verbs appear in inflectional positions outside VP. Since the verb moves out of the ellipsis site, it originally appeared as though some sort of non-constituent deletion had taken place, but movement of the verb actually allows it to escape ellipsis, STRANDING it without any *v*P-internal material.

Recent work has attempted to show that verb stranding is a natural consequence of our theories of ellipsis and head movement. Lotus Goldberg's (2005) dissertation remains the touchstone work, focusing on Hebrew, Irish, and Swahili. Gribanova's (2013a, 2013b) recent work on Russian is a particularly lucid argument for verb stranding verb phrase ellipsis in Russian, and McCloskey (2011) includes it as part of his summary of evidence for verb movement in Irish. Sailor (2014) attempts to explain why the phenomenon does not occur in Scandinavian, where one might reasonably expect it to occur, criticizing Lipták and Saab's (2014) argument that head movement out of NP does not occur in Spanish.

Verb stranding, importantly, is not just the result of ellipsis. The same effect can be found in the movement domain – a fact that is often overlooked. Many languages appear to have remnant verb phrase movement as well, where a verb moves out of a verb phrase that undergoes topicalization. This, too, is obscured, since in a variety of languages it appears possible to pronounce copies of the verb both in the topicalized *v*P and in a lower inflectional position (Abels 2001, Bastos 2001, Landau 2006, Vicente 2007, 2009). LaCara (2016) provides an overview of this phenomenon.

4.5   Theoretical implementations

Head-movement has traditionally been considered a syntactic phenomena and part of the narrow syntax, but its place in the grammar has come under increased scrutiny in the last fifteen years. Chomsky (2001:37) writes that "[t]here are some reasons suspect that a substantial core of head-raising processes […] may fall within the phonological component." He points out that verbs are not interpreted differently in languages where they stay in vP, move to T°, or even all the way to C°, suggesting that there are no LF differences between these structures. He goes on to note several theory-internal reasons to exclude head movement from syntax: Amongst other issues, it is unclear what motivates X° movement instead of XP movement (under Minimalist assumptions), head movement is itself a countercyclic adjunction rule (violating the extension condition), and the head does not c-command its trace after movement. Since then, there have been several attempts to show either that Chomsky's suggestion is on the right track or that, despite his reasoning, it remains a properly syntactic operation.

Some evidence for non-movement accounts has come from the literature on verb-stranding. Goldberg (2005) notes that in order for verb-stranding VPE to be licit, the verb stranded by ellipsis must match the verb in the antecedent verb phrase – the so-called verbal identity requirement. While she proposes that this indicates that verb movement must reconstruct obligatorily, in the footnotes she repeatedly suggests that this problem might be avoided if the verbs do not move in the syntax at all. Schoorlemmer and Temmerman (2012) argues that this is the proper way to account for the verbal identity requirement, and it plays a role in Boeckx and Stjepanović's (2001) discussion of pseudogapping as well. In LaCara (2016), I make a separate argument in favor of non-movement on the basis of verb copying in remnant vP topicalization.

Implementing the idea that head movement is 'phonological' has generally taken the form of sharing features between adjacent heads in a tree and might be more appropriately called NON-MOVEMENT accounts. Harley (2004, 2013) develops an idea proposed by Hale and Keyser (2002) where morphophonological features are shared between adjacent heads; Platzack (2013) and Zwart (2001) propose something similar. This is actually the view I attempt to defend in LaCara (2016). Adventurous linguists may be interested in Brody's (2000) Mirror Theory, which is a novel approach to the syntax–morphology interface which attempts to derive the difference between phrasal movement and head movement without directly stipulating that there are two separate operations. More recently, Gribanova and Harizanov (2016) propose a new post-syntactic approach linking head movement with affix hopping.

There are, of course, defenders of the more traditional view. Lechner (2007) provides arguments that head movement does induce semantic effects, though the assumptions that lead to this conclusion have recently been criticized by McCloskey (2016). Roberts (2010) also argues for the syntactic viewpoint. Hartman's (2011) account of ellipsis parallelism effects argues for the view that head movement leaves traces. More recently, Keine and Bhatt (2016) have argued that the correct interpretation of certain German verb clusters can only be derived by head movement.

Syntactic approaches that avoid head-to-head adjunction and respect Chomsky's extension condition have also been proposed. Matushansky (2006) rejects the claim that head movement and phrasal movement are different at the level of syntax and develops a system where the two differ only morphologically. Head movement targets specifier positions (a view adopted by Vicente 2007), and a subsequent morphological operation joins the moved head with the head of the phrase to which it moves.

This debate is ongoing, and while a lot of recent work has tended toward non-movement accounts, it has often been suggested that there needs to be something like Matushansky's proposal to account for certain cases that do not behave like run-of-the-mill verb movement (see the papers presented at the Workshop

on the Status of Head Movement in Linguistic Theory). There are also a handful of related phenomena we will not get to talk about, most notably incorporation (Baker 1988), which deserves a seminar of its own, and cliticization, which may involve long-distance movement of heads in some languages.

5   Calendar

This is a rough outline of the course. Subject to change if necessary!

Wk	Date	Topics & Notes	Reading
1	25 Jan	Background	Roberts 2011
2	1 Feb	Word order: V2	Müller 2004, Travis 1984, Vikner 1995
3	8 Feb	Word order: V-initial	Massam 2001, McCloskey 2011, Ordóñez 1998
4	15 Feb	Verb movement and arguments	McCloskey 1996, Müller 2001, Vikner 2005
5	22 Feb	Rich agreement	Alexiadou and Fanselow 2002, Bobaljik 2002
6	1 Mar	Rich/Strong agreement	Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998
7	8 Mar	Head movement in DP?	Delsing 1993, Lipták and Saab 2014
		Spring Break	
8	22 Mar	Verb-stranding: Ellipsis	Goldberg 2005, Gribanova 2013b, Sailor 2014
9	29 Mar	Verb-stranding: Topicalization	Landau 2006, Vicente 2009
10	5 Apr	Is it PF?	Boeckx and Stjepanović 2001, LaCara 2016, Schoorlemmer and Temmerman 2012
11	12 Apr	Is it syntax?	Hartman 2011, Lechner 2007, Matushansky 2006
12	19 Apr	Implementations: Non-movement	Brody 2000, Harley 2004, Platzack 2013
13	22 Apr	Implementations: Movement	Keine and Bhatt 2016, Matushansky 2006
14	29 Apr	Wrapping up	

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