

Advanced topics in syntax

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Provisional program; subject to minor changes.

Topic 1: Theoretical approaches to hyperraising

Abstract

A commonly held assumption is that syntactic positions are inherently A or \bar{A} , with Spec-CP being an instance of the latter type. We will first review the properties that distinguish these two types of syntactic positions (regarding e.g. weak crossover, the creation of new antecedents for binding, the crossing of clausal boundaries, etc). We then investigate a type of cross-clausal object shift that challenges this assumption. We will first examine in detail the general properties of this type of construction crosslinguistically and some analyses put forth to account for it. With this background in mind, we will focus on its instantiation in Mongolian (Mongolic) and conclude that cross-clausal object shift in this language leads us to the conclusion that Spec-CP can be an A-position, contrary to the conventional wisdom. We will review alternatives to the definition of syntactic positions that can account for both the data that motivates the traditional A vs. \bar{A} distinction and also data of the Mongolian type ([van Urk, 2015](#)).

Goals

- Examine empirical properties of hyperraising constructions and evaluate why they may challenge common assumptions of syntactic theory regarding:
 - Phase theory
 - case assignment/Activity Condition
- Expand personal theoretical toolkit by seeing how state-of-the art proposals are applied to hyperraising.
 - Phase deactivation ([Rackowski & Richards, 2005](#); [Halpert, 2018](#))
 - Probes and their horizons ([Keine, 2019](#))
- Acquire familiarity with or review the data that underlies the A vs. A-bar distinction and its relevance to syntactic operations like movement.
- Acquire familiarity with recent attempts to derive the distinction (specifically, [van Urk 2015](#)).
- Evaluate the consequences of these new attempts to Mongolian data and to the typology and nature of syntactic positions.

Program

Day 1: Background on hyperraising and its theoretical relevance; two types of theoretical tools that have been employed to analyse it, i.e. phase deactivation ([Rackowski & Richards, 2005](#)) and horizons ([Keine, 2019](#)); basics of A vs. \bar{A} distinction.

Day 2: Featural definition of syntactic positions ([van Urk, 2015](#)); composite probes ([Coon & Bale, 2014](#)).

Day 3: Continuation of Day 2; [Safir \(2019\)](#); hyperraising in Mongolian and the A vs. \bar{A} distinction ([Fong, 2019](#)).

Topic 2: The syntax and semantics of bare nominals in Wolof

Abstract

Several, often unrelated languages allow for their nominals to occur without any functional morphology, including determiners and number morphology. They are dubbed ‘bare nominals’. Bare nominals are often taken to be number-neutral, that is they do not have a commitment to either a singular or plural interpretation. For instance, the Brazilian Portuguese sentence *A Maria consertou carro no final de semana* (‘the Maria fixed car in.the weekend’; where *carro* is a bare nominal) is true whether Maria fixed one or more cars in the weekend. The same holds of bare nominals in Mandarin, Amharic, and Malagasy, among many other languages. In Wolof (Niger-Congo), however, bare nominals are not number-neutral, but rather exclusively singular. We will examine a few properties in favor of this claim, including binding and the saturation of collective predicates. We then review existing syntactic and semantic analyses for bare nominals. We will focus on Dayal’s (2011) analysis for Hindi, as Dayal shows that number neutrality in Hindi is derivative; specifically, the number interpretation of bare nominals in Hindi correlates with the telicity of the predicate. We will see that this analysis does not carry over to Wolof, which motivates a working analysis for the singular interpretation of bare nominals in this language. This analysis will be based on feature licensing (Béjar & Rezac, 2009; Kalin, 2017, 2019).

Goals

- Acquire familiarity with bare nominals and number neutrality, one of their main properties.
- Evaluate an analysis for bare nominals in Wolof that is based on feature licensing (Béjar & Rezac, 2009; Kalin, 2017, 2019).

Program

Day 4: Background on bare nominals, with a focus on number neutrality; background on Wolof; bare nominals in Wolof.

Day 5: Bare nominals in Wolof, *continued*. Dayal’s (2011) analysis; feature licensing analysis.

References

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