

Agnostic Movement

The Problem. The question of what drives movement has been a recurring theme of generative grammar. Under minimalism, where all operations require motivation, a standard answer has been to posit some feature (either of the item that moves, aka “Move” or of its target, aka “Attract”) that drives the movement. There exist, however, some persistent apparent counterexamples to feature driven movement, most notably intermediate *wh*-movement and successive cyclic A-movement, where *wh* and Case features are only licensed in the ultimate landing site. Standard examples are given in (1) and (2); unpronounced copies/occurrences are stricken through and no special significance should be ascribed to choice of node labels. Various effects evidence these intermediate steps, such as subject-auxiliary inversion in Belfast English for *wh*-movement (3) and Q-float for A-movement (4). See Henry (1995) for T-to-C movement in embedded clauses as a diagnostic that a *wh*-phrase passed through SpecCP and Bošković (2004a) for Q-float as an indicator of intermediate structure (and why it is impossible in Θ -positions); see also McCloskey (2000) for *wh*-movement Q-float in West Ulster English. In the system of Chomsky (1999, 2000), where movement takes place to satisfy the target’s EPP requirement, intermediate movement is handled simply by endowing the relevant head this property. As such, however, this solution is not only stipulative, counterintuitive, and runs up against “look ahead”, but it is also empirically suspect; see Bošković (2002) and especially (2004b) for critical discussion. The present paper argues instead that the theory needs to accommodate non-feature-driven movement and proposes a specific way of instantiating it. The proposal draws into question the current phase-based approach to derivation and the probe-goal model of feature valuation. It is shown that, for the purposes of Case, every *phrase* in fact constitutes an opaque domain and that probe is little more than a way of sneaking government back into the system.

A Solution. I assume a standard bottom-up syntax and that lexical items are inserted with unvalued features for everything that ultimately needs to be syntagmatically determined. Earlier Move gave way to Attract primarily to accommodate Superiority, but subsuming all movement under Attract means the complete rejection of “self-interest” as a motivating force. Since under intermediate movement it is always the item that moves which has a feature deficiency, I argue that it moves “agnostically” in the sense of Franks and Lavine (forthcoming): failure to move would be fatal to the derivation whereas movement has at least the potential for convergence. Franks and Lavine describe OV constructions in ordinarily VO Lithuanian as in (5). In their account, which assumes the PIC, the object shifts to the left-edge of the ν P phase in order to remain syntactically active, with some higher functional head eventually merging to probe down to value dative (5a), genitive (5b), or nominative (5c). I show that these constructions can be reanalyzed in terms of a generalized notion of ECM, so that the shifted object is really in the specifier position of a clause which is itself in the relevant dative, genitive, or nominative position. Probe thus reduces to a chain of more local relations, between a head and its specifier (or complement?) phrase, between that phrase and its head, and finally between that head and its specifier. Agnostic movement nonetheless causes the boldface NPs in (5) to move, even though this movement does not result in the immediate valuation of features. English ECM, following e.g. Lasnik (1999), may have an additional step of movement into the matrix clause, but there is still intermediate movement to SpecTP (and SpecVP?), which is evidenced by Q-float but I would argue is neither feature- nor EPP-driven; cf. (6). I hypothesize that all intermediate movement is of this ilk. Finally, this system suggests a way of reconciling the Attract–Move controversy. Bošković (1998, 1999) describes multiple *wh*-fronting in Bulgarian as showing Superiority effects for the highest *wh* phrase but allowing free relative ordering for subsequent ones. He originally characterized this in terms of the differential application of Attract vs. Move, both of which were understood in terms of a feature deficiency, but later replaced the Move effect with “Attract All”. I argue that the latter is really Agnostic movement, which is not feature-driven hence should not respect Superiority. All intermediate movement should thus be similar. And indeed we find that adjunct time phrases can receive dative (rather than the normal accusative) in infinitival purpose clauses in Lithuanian, that both the object and adjunct undergo Agnostic movement, and that either order is equally possible, as in (7).

Examples

- (1) I wonder [_{CP} what C° [_{TP} Mary claimed [_{CP} ~~what~~ that [_{TP} they stole ~~what~~]]]]?
- (2) [_{TP} The students [_{VP} ~~the students~~ seem [_{TP} ~~the students~~ to [_{AspP} ~~the students~~ have [_{VP} ~~the students~~ been [_{AspP} ~~the students~~ [_{VP} invited ~~the students~~]]]]]]].
- (3) [_{CP} what did [_{TP} Mary claim [_{CP} ~~what~~ did [_{TP} they steal ~~what~~]]]]?
- (4) [_{TP} The students [_{VP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ seem [_{TP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ to [_{AspP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ have [_{VP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ been [_{AspP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ [_{VP} invited (***all**) ~~the students~~]]]]]]].
- (5) a. Pastatė daržinę [šieniui sukrauti].
built hayloft:ACC hay:DAT to-keep
'They built a hayloft to keep hay.'
- b. Išvažiavo [kelio taisyti].
went road:GEN to-repair
'They went to repair the road.'
- c. Man nusibosta [laikraštis skaityti].
me:DAT is-boring:[-AGR] newspaper:NOM to-read
'It is boring for me to read the newspaper.'
- (6) [_{VP} expect [_{AspP} (**all**) the students [_{VP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ [_V expect [_{TP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ to [_{VP} (**all**) ~~the students~~ [_{AspP} have left ...
- (7) a. Až nuspirkau kirvį [malkoms visai dienai kirsti].
I bought axe:ACC wood:DAT all:DAT day:DAT to-chop
'I bought an axe to chop wood all day.'
- b. Až nuspirkau kirvį [visai dienai malkoms kirsti].
I bought axe:ACC all:DAT day:DAT wood:DAT to-chop

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