CAS LX 422 ∼ GRS LX 722 Intermediate Syntax   Homework #1
Spring 2020   DUE THU JAN 30

This is really a reading assignment more than anything. I'll ask one question in a bit.

> Chomsky, Noam (2005). Three Factors in Language Design. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36 (1):1–22.

A couple of notes as I read through it.

Page 4. *LSLT* is introduced as a referent for Chomsky (1955). That is in the references, but it is a manuscript called *Logical structure of linguistic theory*. It is referred to in much of what follows, rhetorically used to highlight how much of the research program was already kind of laid out back then.

Page 7, last paragraph.

> Early proposals were the A-over-A Principle, conditions on *wh*-extractions from *wh*-phrases (relatives and interrogatives), simplification of T-markers to base recursion and cyclicity … later John Robert Ross's (1967) classic study of taxonomy of isalnds, … attempts to reduce islands to such properties as locality and structure preservation, and so on.

You don't need to know the details, but just for reference: A-over-A is something roughly like an economy constraint requiring operations to work on the structurally closer option when two options are in principle available, the conditions on *wh*-extractions part refers essentially to what we called "*wh*-islands" ("*wh*-extraction" is *wh*-movement). A T-marker is a tree, basically. Cyclicity relates to the idea that you work on a small part of the structure first, then, when you are done with that, you move out to larger parts of the structure (leaving the part you're already finished with unchanged). That comes up again a fair amount, but it was originally implemented in the phonology for computing where stress should go.

Page 10.

> A well-known example is passive forms of exceptional Case-marking construc-tiosn, which seemed at one time to be generated by both raising and passive transformations.

An ECM form is something like "I believe them to have eaten lunch"—the relevant point there is that the subject of the embedded sentence is in the accusative case, *them*. The passive form of that is "They were believed to have eaten lunch." The issue being referred to there is that that same sentence might be derived either as I just did it (by passivizing—promoting the object to the subject), or by "raising" by analogy to "They seemed to have eaten lunch." And the point he makes just after this is looking at this redundancy suspiciously (based on an assumption that the system should be simpler and not have redundancy) resulted in an advance of the theory.

Page 12.

> ...the familiar displacement progery of language. That property had long been regarded, by me in particular, as an "imperfection" of language that has to be somehow explained, but in fact it is a virtual conceptual necessity.

The reference here is to the idea that if you were designing a language-like system, you would not have movement rules, they seem like an unnecessary addition. What Chomsky is trying to do here is say that in fact the existence of movement rules is kind of a subcase of structure building rules anyway, and that it would take a stipulation to *prevent* having movement rules, rather than requiring a stipulation to *have* them.

Page 13.

> ...both kinds of Merge to A will leave A intact. That entails merging to the edge, the "extension condition," which can be understood in different ways, including the "tucking-in" theory of Nrovin Richards (2001), which is natural within the probe-goal framework of recent work, and which can also be interpreted to accommodate head-adjunction.

That is a super-dense chunk of text. The idea is that you build the structure from the bottom up, and you are always extending it, meaning that you are always adding to the top. The "no tampering" (cyclicity) idea leads to saying that you always Merge to the top. The reference to "tucking-in" and head-adjunction are pointing to places where it doesn't quite seem like you are adding things to the top. We'll come back to those, but what Chomsky is trying to say here is that those issues are not insurmountable and are not going to count against the idea of the extension/"no tampering" conditions.

Page 13. The copy theory of movement: The idea that when you move something from one place to another in a tree, you basically just wind up with two copies. Rather than removing the copy in the source position and leaving a hole, the thing you are moving is just in two places now. If we assume the copy theory, then the apparent "deletion" of the copy in the source position winds up being a fact about phonology rather than about syntax.

Page 13. "Filler-gap" refers to a moved element and a trace. The gap is where it moved from, the filler is the thing you moved. So in "What did you buy?", "what" is the filler, and there is a gap after "buy"—and syntactic processing procedures in particular must relate those two positions in some way.

Page 13. At the phase level. I don't think "phase" was defined yet, but this is a syntactic "cycle" point. Chomsky is talking about a subpart of the structure that is completed, and discussing possibilities of what happens when the structure is completed. Commonly the idea is that it is "spelled out" (meaning that the pronunciation becomes fixed in some form, essentially), and there is a question about whether movement happens before or after this spell out point. Movement that happens after spell out would be "covert" (since it would not affect the pronunciation).

Page 14.

> External Merge ... D-structure is not only superfluous, but unformulable ...
> bar levels can also be eliminated ...

Chomsky is imploding the conceptual basis for a lot of the Government and Binding era theory, which took D-structure and X' levels to be fundamental. Which kind of forces a rethink.

Page 15. Linearized means put in order. In order to pronounce it, something needs to be first before something else.

> **Your task.**   Um. Read the paper, think about questions it raises. Write me two thoughts/comments/questions.