

Differential Behavior of Definite Objects

Ananda Lima, University of Queensland

0. Introduction

Definites and specifics:

- (1) Chomsky wants to meet a UQ student.
(Non-specific and specific readings)
- (2) Chomsky wants to meet the UQ student.
(Definite)

Differential Object Marking

Definite/specific direct objects trigger differential behaviour in a number of ways crosslinguistically:

Agreement (Swahili):

- (3) U -me -leta kitabu?
2.SG -PERF -bring book
'Have you brought a book?'

- (4) U -me -**ki** -leta kitabu?
2.SG -PERF -**3SG(ki-class)** -bring book.
'Have you brought the book?' (Adapted from Croft, 1988: 161)

Other behaviours include:

- Case Marking (DOM)
- Cliticization
- Change in verb class
- Overtiness
- Overt movement (Scrambling and Object shift)

Do all these types of differential behaviour (DB) have a common syntactic base?

→ My hypothesis is that all cases of differential object marking are related to object movement out of VP, which has semantic effects on interpretation (following Diesing, 1992 and similar work).

Overview:

Section 1: Overview of phenomena.

Section 2: A model for the syntactic representation of DB.

Section 3: Analysis: three types of DB.

Section 4: Conclusion

1. Examples of DOB

(See separate sheet.)

2. Syntactic Representation

2.1 Basis for representation

2.1.1 Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis

(Mainly work on German Scrambling)

- Non-specific and specifics have their different semantic (quantificational) representation.
- Semantic Representations are mapped from syntactic representations.
- Non-specific DPs can receive an interpretation from inside the VP whereas specific DPs need to raise out of VP to be appropriately interpreted.
- Movement operation is Quantifier Raising (QR)

Subsequent work in Diesing and Jelinek (1995) and Diesing (1997) define QR as different types of directly semantically driven movement (as opposed to syntactic, e.g. feature checking).

There seem to be some problems with their characterization of QR (for example, see Thrainsson, 2001:188-195), but their main ideas seem to be well supported (at least in Germanic scrambling/ OS).

2.1.2. Hornstein's (1999) QR

- No independent QR as such.
- What is thought of as QR are effects the interpretation of movement motivated otherwise (e.g. case movement)
- Movement leaves copies which may give rise to things like scope ambiguities (see 5).
- Though his focus is mainly on case (A-movement), he also opens the possibility of 'riding' on A-bar chains (Hornstein, 1999: 59).
- Copies associated with specific interpretational requirements are not deleted
- Mapping hypothesis as a condition (if you have a definite argument, pick the VP external copy).

- (5) a. Everybody likes somebody.
b. Everybody [somebody [everybody [likes somebody]]

2.1.3. Feature Driven Movement

(Some of Chomsky (1995) and some of Chomsky (2000))

- Features driven movement
- -Interpretable features need to be checked in a spec-head/ head-head configuration or by AGREE
- - Interpretable features such as case activate the goal
- Strong EPP features drive movement to an extra-spec
- +/- strong (overt and covert movement)¹
- vP is a Phase, thus only head and specs are accessible to items outside vP

Chomsky (1995, 2000) on OS:

Assignment of an EPP feature of vP may be limited to cases where ‘it permits intermediate feature checking or specific interpretations with peripheral [A-bar] positions (e.g. specificity and informational conditions on OS). (2000: 109). Similar to *wh*-movement.

[Danon (2002) on case marking (potentially applied to OS): Indefinites are caseless.]

Different proposals have associated definites/ specifics with a Peripheral position. One such proposal is Sportiche (1995) (briefly discussed later).

2.2 Proposed Model

- Movement driven by grammatical features derives syntactic representations which lead to semantic effects (similar to Hornstein).
- Differential Behaviour of definite DOs is due to the manifestation of feature checking, including:
 - A *syntactic* DEF(initeness) feature which is associated with different groups of lexical items in different languages (as suggested by Danon, 2002 for Hebrew). DEF is checked at a peripheral position (higher than the case checking position).
 - Case (Differently from Danon (2002) I am not proposing that –DEF items are necessarily caseless.)

¹ Chomsky 2000 and 2001 suggest the elimination of the +/- strong distinction (it seems some types of apparently covert movement could potentially be reduced to AGREE). However, note that Chomsky (2000) states that it is not clear how certain covert movements (especially of the A'-bar type) would fit into this system. Chomsky (2001) suggests approaches which use covert movement (though he does not mention the terms ‘strong/ weak’). It seems as if the desire to eliminate strength is there, but more work would need to be done before this approach could be taken to a fuller range of movement types than those that are the focus of Chomsky’s (2000, 2001) work. An example of other work which proposes the use of AGREE and covert movement can be found in Bobaljik & Wurmbrand (2002).

- Case movement drives nominals to the edge of the vP Phase, thus they can legally proceed to DEFP.
- Items without a +Def feature should be ambiguous in terms of Mapping Hypothesis (everything else being equal).

3. Applying the model to Differential Behaviour

3.1. Movement

(Examples 31-39)

Language	+Def items	DEF	Case (EPP)
Yiddish Scrambling	Full Specific DPs	Strong	Strong
Danish OS	Pronouns	Weak(?)	Strong
Icelandic OS	Full Definite DPs	Weak (?)	Strong
English (none)	(Definites?)	Strong	Weak

- + Def Items interpreted at the Def position (interpretability requirements)
- Holmberg’s generalization :

‘Note that we have lost Holmberg’s generalization (...) such generalizations, if valid, would now have to be stated in terms of a property of Vb [v in our tree]: it can have a second outer spec only if it is a trace’ Chomsky (1995: 358)

(Tentative (speculative) suggestion: Q is to Wh as +D verb is to DefP).

- Some other differences between Scrambling and Object shift (see Thrainsson, 2001) seem to follow.

3.2. Case Marking

Turkish:

(Examples 6-11, see last two)

Enc (1991, 7fn) notes that non-specific NPs are required to be adjacent to the verb, thus the different order between (9) and (10). Tossun assumes that indefinites are caseless (and somehow incorporated to the verb).

Tossun also argues that that –I marked elements raise higher than its case marking position/ covert position (due to interactions with subject).

Analysis:

- I: Case: (Strong EPP)/ Weak DEF
- Ø: Not marked for case (unambiguous).

Alternatively

- I: DEF: (Strong EPP)/ Weak DEF
- Ø: cased, but no EPP feature in vP. Check by AGREE (unambiguous).

Hebrew:

Danon (2002) argues that indefinites (including specifics) do not receive case. Potential problems:

- NP/DP arguments (see Longobardi (2001: 581-594 for review).
- Ambiguity of indefinites.
- *Et* as a case assigner: no reason for definites to raise (Mapping hypothesis)
- Change to marking of indefinites: Danon has to propose that *et* has a dual function (being a semantic lifting operator sometimes and a case marker other times).

Analysis:

- Et*: +DEF marker (Weak)
- Ø: (Weak) case marked though movement (ambiguous reading).

3.3 Agreement

Examples (15- 27) (See 19-20 and 26-27)

Swahili

Agreement with definite objects.
Indefinites seem to be able trigger agreement if focused. (Russell: 88)

Analysis:

Agreement is obtained when there is a [Spec-head] configuration between the verb and certain P-features.

- Agreement: triggered at case position (overt manifestation of P- feature(s) of the object)
- Non-agreement: case/ EPP movement makes reading of indefinite ambiguous

3.3 Clitic Doubling

Sportiche (1995): Clitics are the morphological manifestation of the head of DefP. Mixed Phi/ Periphery checking properties (A/A-bar distinction) follow, as per scrambling.

3.4. Note on Transitivity and Overtness

Transitivity: Investigating role of higher transitivity projections. (verb movement correlated with object movement as per Holmberg's Generalization?)

Overtness: Not necessarily direct evidence either way: properties of available lexical items (e.g. cf example below with 30)... BUT: investigating cases in which the opposite to Brazilian Portuguese is said to occur. Also sign language in which covertness of the object is tied with definiteness agreement on the verb and possibly topicalization (Neidle and Lee, 2003).

4. Summary and Conclusion

A feature checking approach seems to be able to account for differential behaviour of different types. Phi-feature checking (at the case position) and Peripheral feature checking (at DefP) seem to be involved. The Mapping Hypothesis aids in the interpretation of chains created in the syntax, rather than driving movement.

Possible topics for further study:

- Animacy
- Nature and Position of DefP (Relationship with topicality and focus).
- Similarities between clausal and DP complement differential behaviour.

References

- Aissen, Judith. 2003. Differential object marking: iconicity vs. economy. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 21: 235-483.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan and Susi Wurmbrand. 2002. Long Distance Object Agreement, Restructuring, and anti-reconstruction. Paper presented in NELS 33 (www.arts.mcgill.ca/programs/linguistics/faculty/bobaljik/papers/NELS2002.pdf)
- Chomsky, Noam. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, 2000. Minimalist inquires: The framework. In Roger Marin and Juan Uriagereka, eds., *Step by Step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*. Cambridge, Mass MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In *Ken Hale: A life in language*, ed. Michael Kenstowicz, 1-52. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

- Croft, William. 1988. Agreement vs. case: marking and direct objects. In Michael Barlow and Charles Ferguson, eds, *Agreement in Natural Language*. Stanford: CSLI.
- Danon, Gabi. 2002. *Case and Formal Definiteness: the Licensing of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases in Hebrew*. PhD dissertation, University of Tel Aviv.
- Diesing, (1992). *Indefinites*. Linguistic Inquiry Monographs. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Diesing, Molly. 1997. Yiddish VP order and the typology of object movement in Germanic. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 15: 369-427.
- Diesing, Molly and Jelinek, Eloise. 1995. Distributing Arguments. *Natural Language Semantics* 3: 123- 176.
- Enc, M. 1991. The Semantics of Specificity. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 22: 1-25.
- Finer, Daniel. 1997. Contrasting A'-dependencies in Selayarese. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15: 677-728.
- Gasser, M. 1983. Topic continuity in written Amharic narrative. In: Givon, Talmy (ed.), *Relational typology*, 89-107. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gunlogson, Christine. 1998. *Third Person Object Prefixes in Babine Witswuit'en*. Ms. University of California, Santa Cruz.
- Hornstein, 1999. Minimalism and Quantifier Raising. In David Epstein and Nobert Hornstein, eds., *Working Minimalism*. Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 32. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Jaeggli, Osvaldo. 1982. *Topics in Romance Syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe. 2001. The Structure of DPs: Some Principles, Parameters, and Problems. In Mark Baltin and Chris Collins, eds., *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Berlin: Blackwell
- Moravcsik, Edith. 1988. Agreement and markedness. In Michael Barlow and Charles Ferguson, eds, *Agreement in Natural Language*. Stanford: CSLI.
- Neidle, Carol and Lee, Robert. Syntactic agreement across language modalities: American Sign Language. Talk Presented at the *Lisbon Workshop in Agreement*, Universidade Nova the Lisboa.
- Russell, Joan. 1996. *Teach Yourself Swahili: A complete course for beginners*. London: Teach yourself Books.
- Schewenter & Silva (2003) *Anaphoric Direct Objects in Spoken Brazilian Portuguese*. Ms. The Ohio State University. (<http://sppo.ohio-state.edu/faculty/schewenter.1/RILIBP.doc>)
- Thrainsson, H. 2001. Object shift and scrambling. In Mark Baltin and Chris Collins, eds., *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Berlin: Blackwell
- Van den Berg, Rene. 1995. Verb classes, transitivity and the definiteness shift in Muna: a counter example to the transitivity hypothesis. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 34.1: 161-188.