

## 8 Topics in Language acquisition

Plethora of new research. Chomsky himself: only gnomic utterances on the importance of the lexicon.

Do children have F-categories?

Early on child seems not to have F phrases. Here book. Slug coming. Try to determine how many parameters are missing. TP? – Daddy sleep. CP? – Help jelly. DP? Look plane. No IP: Want have drink. Gm: Ich Schaufel haben (only SOV, no V2).

Lack of question inversion — no CP

Lack of Nominative — no Case, or no specifier in AGRP

This relies too heavily on the absence of the data. Evidence of absence is ambiguous as almost anything can be absent: “the number of things that are not true vastly exceeds the number of things that are” — Sartre.

A discontinuity model or a continuity model? Or intermediaries. Gm children with V2 but no CP: (278) da faehrt die Caroline. Kaput is der.

stages of development: IP, then CP.

Neg + nucleus: No the sun shining. No a boy bed. Later they learn the necessity for subject movement across Neg. Cf. French: Pas la poupee dormir.

and Elle a pas la bouche. Note the movement in the latter, finite V (280).

Key, according to Deprez and Pierce: they allow subj NP to remain in VP. There must be some Functional Categories, as at the earliest level the movement is felt to be different.

Cf. when V is finite, it moves: Est pas morte. Vs. Pas manger la poupee.

Evidence also from German: children do not move Verbs when it is nonfinite. The T node = gaining inflections, vs. not gaining them.

This is ambiguous in English as the V form itself is the same:

Pig go in (218), Here’s Teddy. Maybe the first is nonfinite. Want have drink (to is missed out).

**Functional Parameterization Hypothesis.** Each FP requires the setting of the appropriate parameters: is AGRP opaque or not

German L2 learners: Korean and Turkish: early on, they retain their L1 order, namely OV:

Oya Zigarette trinken. [why is anyone saying this and what does it mean??]

Late: Ich sehen Schleier.

'stagnation' : VP > IP > AGRP.

Lexical parameters belong to the functional cat's. Eg. whether AGRP is opaque or not, whether CP is +/- wh-. The word *give* is always s-selected for agent, theme, recipient in the universal lexicon.

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More on the null-subj sentence.

children begin with pro-drop. Licensed by a lexical AGR which can govern it, as in Italian. non-lexical AGR cannot govern pro, so yields a non-pro-drop language. See diagram p. 285.

Yet early speakers have a number of real pro subjects. Also have null objects: me have (!). cf. mommy, you wiping.

Chinese has no inflections, yet is a pro-drop lang. See table 287. Spanish has a full conj; Engl on 3<sup>rd</sup> sg; Irish labh-rann for all (pres tense), Chinese shuo. Pro-drop lang's must be uniform (all or none of the forms are morphologically complex), but not mixed, as Eng, with only 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. "Null subjects are permitted in all and only lang's with morphologically uniform paradigms." [but cf. Russian and Czech, Polish!! – past tense is decisive here]

Discourse must disambiguate in Irish, Chinese (!!)

German is uniformly complex but no pro-drop

This problem is far from decided. Cf. Moroccan Arabic, which is pro-drop although not all forms are complex (290).

Perhaps it's a question of where the affixes are generated, lexicon or syntax. If AGR is already attached to the V, no pro-drop possibility.

291) Access to UG in L2 learners.

Three possibilities: direct access to UG; indirect; none at all. See 292. The poverty-of-the-stimulus argument. Learners reject \*Is Sam is the cat that brown?

Indirect: tied to L1. But there are striking differences betw languages with same setting: Spanish L2's dropped it a lot, vs. Japanese. Yet 39% of J. teachers accepted the sentence *Is French*. (ha)

No access. SVO order assumed for German, and masses of ad hoc rules to generate the exceptions. Also poor subjacency: \*What did Sam believe the claim that Mary bought? evidence cited: L2 never complete, or fossilized, or vary.

Can parameters be reset? Tsimpli and Roussou: principles can be reset, but parameters are harder, eg. null pro drop reanalyze subj and AGR heads, but, say, that-trace, a parameter, is much harder. [What is hardest in an L2? aspect, topicalization (word order), Determination,- indef, morphologization.... Valences of N,V – inherent lexical... But also parameters]

Teaching L2:

translation model: implies indirect access, refers constantly to L1

communicative: implies direct access, rely on target

grammatical explanation: no access, exploit other faculties (296) [seems to me that the translation model refers also to no-access stuff]

Perhaps it is the wrong metaphor. Perhaps transferable principles and non-resettable parameters. Reifies three objects: learning, UG, and competence, none of which has any independent existence (good). The question remains unanswered.

Maturation and UG – process that stretches over years? Gradual acquisition of lang.

Continuity hypothesis. Certain principles emerge at particular times. v. a discontinuity hypothesis, where it metamorphoses into itself. How does a tadpole become a frog?

Borer and Wexler. Passives: e opened the door by the butler. But many quasi-passives, e.g. he was given this puppy by a farmer; ppp's as adjectives [Russ *open, closed, certain*]

He was very interested in X [cf. ego ochen' interesovalo...] Claim that the adj forms are learned before the passives.

Tree is broken. lamp got kicked. (no agent). Maybe they can't yet form A-chains, moving NP's up the nodes yet.

Eg maybe at 20 months, lexical structures, VP, th-government. lexical-thematic stage

24 months: IP, CP, DP – the functional non-thematic stage (300) GOOD

**Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis.** specialization of brain functions, cognitive devel, etc. Note ASL – the final knowledge of the manual sign lang. is predictable from the age of the learner at first exposure, indep. of the number of years he subsequently

used it (!!)) Hence direct access is not available. Two sub-q's: does L1 prevent it, or is it the aging process itself? Seems to be all aspects of learning, not just UG violations. [eg intonation, lexicon, syntax...]

### Difference in Binding Theory

Variation in size of local domain – can be the whole matrix clause [cf. many good Russian examples. u nego est' svoi problemy... pl reflexivization blocks in svoj; cf. –sja and sebja, sam, svoj] Japanese allows a reflexive to take its antecedent anywhere in the matrix clause, e.g John thinks that Mary criticized Sarah's attitude towards himself. !! \*Bill read Mary's novel about himself. Very small governing category in English. NP possessive acts as 'subj'. Norwegian lets it go out of infin. clause, Japanese ranges widely (304).

Thus child must learn the value of the **governing category parameter**! Child tries most restrictive option first, then, with positive evidence, expands it. The **Subset Problem** for acquisition (see chapter three in Chomsky's words; search my notes for subset).

Child does better early with anaphora than with pronominals. Pragmatic evidence needed. Not just poverty-of-stimulus argument alone, now, as we have a wealth of factual data.

## 9 Minimalism

early GB = principles and parameters.

continues drive to find abstract general principles, for simplification. Full Interpretation [there are no redundant elements] and Economy of Representation and Derivation.

Up to now, the upside down T model (313), with two external interface levels LF and PF, and D level [basic lexical information]. Lexicon > D > S > forking LF and PF. Are all these levels necessary?

Interface of sounds and meaning. The interface levels are the only really necessary ones, D and S may be dispensed with.

I-lang consists of a “computational procedure” and a lexicon.

To resolve problems of late GB. A-positions are th-roles assigned, but the subj seen to originate in VP, goes to spec of AGRP. How is the spec of AGRP different from spec of CP, an A-bar position? This is a sort of internal contradiction built into late GB theory.

trace that is an anaphor, vs. trace that is an r-expression. Very important notion. for binding theory. Explains why wh- traces are bound by the moved wh-, but names are not bound.

Now these positions are no longer seen as basic.

Notion of government. alpha is a governor (NVAP), a and b mutually c-command, if a governs b, it governs the spec of b.

Too many stipulations, several cases can be assigned.

Why does subj have to move into AGRP spec to get case, if AGRP governs TP?

So: abandon government, reduce to more fundamental relationships.

Why do Eng verbs seem to lower? contradiction. Against ECP: trace must be properly governed.

317 – verbs get inflections in lexicon, in VP they only get **checked** against the positions to which they move. French moves overtly in the syntax, Eng, covertly in the lexicon. (!!)

**Procrastinate.** So Eng doesn't move til LF, which French operates earlier. [q: why is meaning so late? Why is syntax [computational procedure] early?] Now a single morpheme with several meanings can be accounted for, eg. IE case endings. Thus S-structure is reduced more and more to nothing.

### Brief Sketch of Minimalismus

Numeration: a set of lexical items from which the SD is to be built. Juliet, loves [sic], Romeo. Builds SD's, say as in X-bar. A single tree is built. Then there is a split at a point called Spell-out (320), divides it up into two representations, LF and PF. Latter has only phonetic, former only semantic, or the derivations *crashes*; it *converges* if this is met.

Checking cancels out the grammatical features so they do not survive into interface reps.

Full interpretation: all and only the needed elements.

Spell-out can't happen too late: procrastination says that movements are delayed as long as possible, i.e. even after spellout (!).

LF: only legitimate chains can have a semantic interp. CH a head, an argument, a modifier, or operator-variable...

in GB, structures were an all-at-once-thing, eg D-structure. Now: formation process. building trees, combining them, convergence. **Merge**: combines lexical items and partial trees. Transformational; movement may occur in building.

Adding the spec position: **Move**. Element goes there, position is created. **Move and merge**.

Constraints on move: minimal link (shortest move), procrastinate, and **greed** (325), [move only if some property of the moved element is satisfied, not the element being moved to]

Numeration: Merge, Movement, SD's built up piecemeal. Lexicon and morphology drives the system. After spellout, system keeps building, but all must conform.

How Minimal Can it Get?

326 – key is reduction to more and more basic things.

If no D or S, then how can things 'apply' at that level?

How about th-theory, as in D?

Recall AGRoP and AGRsP. Minimalism explicitly adopts this. See diagram 327. AGRs – TP – AGRo – VP. Subj and obj go to their slots; Obj can't go higher or violate **minimal link condition**. There has to be a subj (Extended Projection Principle) but not an obj.

There will be an AGRo only when there is an obj.

V has to move to AGRo to check its features, if it is transitive. So, you see, a V with its object automatically projects the right structure, the AGRo. Don't need to postulate D.

(Good!) – 328.

Case and Binding were supposed to apply at S. Case theory has implications for both LF and PF (th-theory and overt morph), so it has to apply at both interfaces. How can this work?

If it is reduced to case-checking, like V, then movement to a spec position can occur before or after spellout. S-structure is not needed. DP's get them from the lexicon. Overt movement before spellout, or covertly, after spellout.

Binding. Got to move later. Eg reflexive: the men seem to each other to be.. < e seem to each other the men... [Q: how did 'each other' get in there without binding before !!?] seems at S. Not at LF.

\*John said that Mary liked that picture of himself.

John asked which picture of himself Mary liked.

In the latter, the DP overtly moves out of the clause.

Multiple wh-:

John asked who liked which picture of himself. Not bound to John. Movement at LF.

331 – note this oddity.

Which picture of himself did Mary say John liked t ?

Assumed that we had

which x Mary said that John liked x picture of himself,

and this at LF, if reconstructed, can bind. So it is rescued there. This is LF, and binding takes place there. So where? Covert movement?

In Minimalism, it takes place at LF. non-wh- material which moved is “**reconstructed back**” and only wh- elements undergo covert movement to wh- positions in LF. Solves the problem. (I really do not understand how this all works. Do you?)

John asked [which x, who likes x picture of himself]

Getting Rid of Government

New notion of case checking is already at variance with govt, where NOM assigned to spec of AGR, but ACC by V to obj. Now: in the checking domain (spec or adjunct) of a DP. **Subj goes to spec of AGRP, tensed V to AGR, obj will go to spec of AGRoP (!!)** and V move to AGRo itself.

Hence unified. Some verbal element and AGR licensed case-checking and it is done in the spec of AGRP.

335 – Eng subj goes up before spell-out, but obj movement is later, covert. Something must be forcing the subj to move, vs. VSO langs, where the V raises overtly and the arguments stay.

Chomsky assumes the DP-features of T are strong in Eng, forcing them. But the obj is weak, so it waits. A very uniform case theory; DP's must move by the greed principle, not anything, say inflections, moving to them.

Strong or weak may decide if grammatical features have to be checked earlier. weak can appear at PF and procrastinate can apply.

How to take care of PRO, that must not be governed? Make it take a null case and move to the spec of a nonfinite T. That'll be the only place it can go, as others won't have null case. [Is this sophistry?] (337), So case theory, not govt, takes care of it.

Rizzi's Relativized Minimality. Elements of a kind can't move across c-commanding positions of their own kind.

Getting Rid of X-bar

How to do it. Two elements form a set. The label of the set will be the chosen head of the phrase, thus get [the, [the, dog]]. (see diagram, 339). X-bar begins to dissolve.

Merge: feed the dog. Lexical properties will decide what will be the head of the new set. [feed, [feed, [the, [the, dog]]]]. Clearly bracketing is going to be unwieldy, so we keep using the tree thing.

Heads and maximal projections. *the* is a pure head, it projects; *dog* is both a head and a maximal projection (this means the furthest an element projects; some elements can be words and maximal projections at the same time). So: DP > the dog.

X' are items that are neither heads nor maximal projections. See diagram 341.

Falls out of the movement, eg. when a subj is moved to spec position, AGR' (bar) is derived as it is neither maximal nor lexical. The trees work out *just the same* but do not have to be independent of the computation (cool). Follows directly from the processes. Take one element as the projecting head and go from there. X-bar are neither words nor are they maximal.

Points to French *Jean le lit*. The clitic is like a head, attaching to another head, the V; also acts like a full phrase by being an argument with a th-role. This couldn't be handled before.

(He also has a universal spec-head-comp word order.)