Section 4   Linguistics

Chapter 1   Linguistics

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Academic and Research Staff

Professor Morris Halle, Professor Noam A. Chomsky

1.1   Introduction

The work of the Linguistics group is directed toward a better understanding of the mental capacities of human beings through the study of the nature, acquisition, and use of language. Language is a uniquely human faculty: only humans appear to be capable of learning and using a language, and every normal human acquires knowledge of one or more languages.

We are trying to understand how this linguistic knowledge is represented in the speaker's mind. The central issues of linguistics research are:

What is the nature of linguistic knowledge? What do speakers of a particular language such as Latvian, Spanish or Walpiri know, and how does knowledge of one language resemble or differ from that of another language? How do speakers acquire this knowledge? How do speakers put this knowledge to use in producing and understanding utterances? What are the physiological mechanisms that provide the material basis for storage, acquisition and utilization of linguistic knowledge?

Our ability to answer these questions differs considerably, and our research reflects these differences. At present, we have progressed further with regard to answering the questions posed by item one and have made less progress with item four. Currently, our research is heavily concentrated on issues concerned with the nature of the knowledge that characterizes fluent speakers of various languages. However, we are making a significant effort to solve the other questions also.

We are studying these topics along a number of parallel lines. Linguists have investigated the principles by which words are concatenated to form meaningful sentences. These principles have been the primary domain of inquiry into the disciplines of syntax and semantics. Phonology studies the sound structure of words while morphology examines the manner in which different languages combine different meaning-bearing units (specifically, stems, prefixes, suffixes and infixes) to form words. The latter topic has

attracted increasing interest in recent years and will probably become more prominent in our research efforts in the future.

1.2   Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations

The following are abstracts of dissertations submitted in 1997 to the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics.

1.2.1   Verb Raising and A/A-Bar Distinction: Evidence from Exeptional Case Marking

Judy Yoo-Kyung Baek

Abstract

This thesis investigates the nature of A-movement on the basis of the facts regarding ECM constructions across languages. More specifically, this thesis deals with two types of illicit A-'chains found in ECM constructions in Korean: A-movement out of CP/finite clauses.

To account for the impossibility of A-movement out of CP in the theory of grammer, a locality condition on chain (=LCC) is proposed. The intuition behind the LCC is that A-chain is truly local in its nature in the sense that it needs to go through every intervening specifier whether actual feature checking takes place or not. In contrast, A-chain only goes through the position that is required for feature checking.

A reconsideration and a new formulation of the notion of A/A'-distinction has also been made in this thesis,which depends on the property of the category that occupies the head of the specifier. A specifier of a head that contains a lexial category (=N, V, A, P) or a trace of lexial category counts as an A-position, while specifiers of a functional head counts as an A-position. A significant consequence of this reformulation of A/A'-distinction is that verb raising crucially hinges on that A-status of a specifier of the functional category to which the verb raises and adjoins.

A crosslinguistic study of A-movement in this thesis also shows that a generalization can be established that a language that allows A-movement out of a finite clause lacks overt infinitival constructions. I propose that in laguages that do not have overt infinitivals a finite T serves a dual function of both finite and infinitival T in the sense that finite T has strong nominative case feature that can be checked against DP with undeleted case feature regardless of its case property. The strong nominative case feature of T will attract the closest DP into its Specifier position in the overt syntax. A crucial consequence of this claim follows that a case feature can also enter into a multiple checking relation due to feature mismatch. ECM is exeptional in these languages in the sense that it involves multiple feature checking of the accusative case.

1.2.2 Metrical Theory and English Verse

David McKay

Abstract

I propose a generative linguistic theory of rhythmic structure in English verse based on principles of metrical phonology, in which metrical grids are built up by natural metrical rules on the basis of a phonological representation and are then subject to various constraints, including important constraints on phonological phrasing. I use this theory to analyze poems by Yeats, Hopkins, Longfellow, Swinburne, and Shakespeare. I show that theory can account for a great variety of verse rhythm in a natural way, including some which have not been previously analyzed, and I show that it allows an analysis of Hopkins' verse in Sprung Rhythm which is more accurate than, and theoretically preferable to, earlier analyses in the tradition of generative metrics. Finally, I discuss some hypotheses about the parameters of variation in English verse rhythm.

1.2.3 Jingulu Grammar, Dictionary, and Texts

Robert J. Pensalfini

Abstract

This dissertation is primarily intended as a through description of the Jingulu language of North-Central Australia. The first part describes Jingulu's phonological, morphological and syntactic structure, illustrating this with numerous examples collected by the author in the field in 1995 and 1996. There is a sec-

ondary focus on what Jingulu can contribute to an understanding of language from a theoretical perspective. Chapter 1 focuses on the socio-historical context in which the language is spoken, with a lengthy excursus on the state of endangerment of the majority of the world's languages. Chapter 2 is devoted to Jingulu phonolgy, with in-depth theoretical discussions of Australian stress systems and Jingulu regressive vowel harmony. Chapter 3 outlines the architecture of the language faculty and the theory of morphology that underlie the description and analyses of the following chapters. Chapter 4 discusses Jingulu syntax, focusing on the question of nonconfigurationality, and includes a syntatic typology of the various types of nonconfigurationality found among the world's languages. Chapters 5 and 6 are expositions of the morphology of Jingulu nominal and verbal words, respectively. The theory outlined in chapter three is applied in detail to the complex and apparently bizarre morphological systems of Jingulu, and this complexity is seen to follow from a small number of principles governing how formal features can be spelled out an the surface. Chapter 7 contains 34 glossed and translated texts collected by the author. Throughout the dissertation, I have preferred to provide more text and sentence examples rather than fewer, so that future researchers can test my generalizations, examine the data to find their own, and refute or affirm my analyses.

Part II of the dissertation is a Jingulu to English dictionary with an English to Jingulu word finder. Each Jingulu entry in the dictionary is accompanied by grammatical, morphological, and cultural information in addition to an English translation. Most Jingulu entries also include examples of the word used in a sentence. The dictionary is the latest stage in a collaboration that has involved many people over several decades.

1.2.4 Aspects of A

Orin J. Percus

Abstract

This thesis is about interpretation of indefinites. It argues that English singular indefinites are individual-denoting expressions that encode a dependency on situations and carry a uniqueness presupposition. In particular, it argues that once we accept that the indefinite determiner imposes a uniqueness presupposition we gain an understanding of the phenomenom of *quantificational variability*. At the heart of the

explanation is the idea that uniqueness presupposition provides a clue on the basis of which we identify the domain of an adverbial quantifier.

1.2.5 What Moves Where When in Which Language?

Norvin W. Richards III

Abstract

Much work in syntax has used the properties of wh-movement as a probe into the nature of the derivation. One perennial issue is the nature of wh-in-situ. Is wh-in-situ related to its scopal position by an operation like movement or by an entirely different process? If wh-in-situ does undergo invisible movement, why is this movement invisible? If we assume a derivational model, what is the relation between overt and covert movement in the derivation?

In this thesis I will investigate the properties of multiple-wh questions in a number of languages (particularly Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Chinese, and Japanese), in an attempt to find evidence for a particular answer to these questions. I will argue that the classic model assumed by the Extended Standard Theory is essentially correct: there is covert movement, and all covert movement follows all overt movement in the derivation (and is therefore invisible because it takes place after the point in the derivation at which the representation is interpreted by the phonological component).

One crucial aspect of the argument will involve investigation of the nature of additional-wh effects. I will claim that additional-wh effects only appear when certain structural and derivational conditions on the relation between the wh-movements involved are met, and additional-wh effects can therefore be used to determine which wh-movement operations precede which others.

Chapter 1 is an overview of some competing claims about the architecture of the grammar and a discussion of the nature of the evidence that might help us to choose among these claims. In chapter 2, I discuss the distribution of the wh-island effects in a number of languages, arguing that the overt/covert distinction is in fact irrevelant to the distribuition to the wh-islands. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the nature of Superiority effects in several languages. In chapter 4, I investigate the nature of feature strength and develop a version of Procrastinate which is empirically distinct in several desirable ways from that developed by Chomsky (1993). Finally, Chapter 5 discusses additional-wh effects in some detail.

1.2.6 INFL in Child and Adult Languages: Agreement, Case, and Licensing

Carson Theodore Robert Scütze

Abstract

I propose an analysis of the inflectional system of clauses that captures both cross-linguistic variation and differences between adult speakers and young children learning a given language. The phenomena of interest fall into two classes: (1) case marking and subject-predicate agreement; and (2) tense marking and the licensing of overt and null subjects. The major goals are:

- to motivate the complete separation of licensing;
- to argue that agreement is exclusively responible for case, and tense exclusively for (subject) licensing;
- to propose a theory of case and agreement, motivated by child as well as adult laguage data;
- to argue that children's "root infinitive" utterances violate no principles of syntax in either domain—rather, children differ from adults in their choices among convergent structures.

I argue that structural case marking is a reflex of the same syntactic feature-checking relation as agreement; I label this conglomeration *Accord*. The presence in a clause of features involved in an Accord is not an absolute convergence requirement. Rather, it is due to a preference among convergent derivations, expressed as the *accord maximization principle* (AMP), which compares structures that differ only on uninterpretable features (in the sense of Chomsky 1995). Among those that meet all convergence requirements, only those with the most *Accord* relations are admissible. Children do not always successfully enforce this preference, sometimes reverting to representation where structural case features have not been introduced. When this happens, arguments appear in the default case of the languge, supplied in the spelled out component. Evidence from child corpus studies (both normal and Specifically Language Impaired) shows that children know both that case and agreement must be checked together and that default case must be supplied when case is absent.

With regard to subject licensing, I show that the absence of Tense features is often compatible with both PRO and overt subjects. Children's overt subjects of nonfinite clauses are thus consistent with adult grammar. The relationship between the distribution of syntactic Tense features and the meaning of clauses is governed by interface conditions on which adults and children apparently differ.

1.2.7 Specificity and Agreement in Standard Western Armenian

Michele Sigler

Abstract

This thesis is a study of specificity and agreement in Standard Western Armenian (SWA) within the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chompsky 1993). Because it is a language that has rich nominal and verbal morphology, SWA provides us with overt signs, in both the nominal and verbal domains, of the underlying sturctural relations that constitute agreement as it is understood in this theoretical model.

The thesis has two parts. In the first part, I examine the distribution and interpretation of nominal suffixes, paying particular attention to bear singular count noun phrases, *mass indefinites*, bear plurals, and specific noun phrases, which bear the definite article suffix. I show that the definite article is, in fact, a marker of specificity and attribute this to its being associated with the ϕ-feature person. I argue that bare (singular count and mass) NPs lack ϕ-feature altogether. Assuming the split DP structure proposed by Ritter (1992), I argue that ϕ-feature are checked within DP and propose a feature-based characterization of the types of noun phrases distinguished by nominal suffixes.

In the second part I discuss the *nonagreement construction*, a construction in which nonspecific plural noun phrases do not trigger plural agreement on nontransitive verbs. I show that this can be accounted for using the feature checking mechanism of the Minimalist Program, by assuming that the subject is specified for number only and not the person and that number features are checked in the specifier position of TP. In this derivation, AgrP is absent, because neither the subject nor the verb has person features to check there. Positioning an Agr-less derivation allows us to account for the fact that transitives are unacceptable in non-agreement constructions: In a derivation whose sole functional projection is TP, there is no place for a DP object to check its Case features, hence transitive non-agreeing derivations do not converge. Nonagreeing unergatives are ruled out on the assumption that their subjects are licensed in a position external to the predicate (following Hale and Keyser 1993). By assuming that the predicate is represented by the TP rather than VP, I conclude that the subject of an unergative or transitive is licensed in an external position only, where this means specifier of AgrP. We see that the proposed Agr-less analysis of nonagreeing sentences permits an account of their interpretation based on Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis, a general account of the mapping of syntactic representation onto semantic representation.