LING 325 – Spring 05  
Jonathan Bobaljik  
Handout 1: Holmberg’s Generalization

1. HOLMBERG’S GENERALIZATION (AFTER HOLMBERG 1986)

1.1 The puzzle, schematically

Object Shift: short movement of certain objects: out of VP, not past IP/subject

crosses the same set of elements used to diagnose verb movement to I
(neg. FQ, some adv. cf. Pollock 1989)

(1) ... Obj NEG [VP ... t.wav]

OS: Obligatory (when possible) (NB: %)

Shiftable objects must shift when they can.

(2) a. ... V ... Obj NEG [VP ... t.wav]
  b. *... V ... NEG [VP ... Obj]

Holmberg’s Generalization (common version):

OS is dependent on verb movement out of VP:
when the verb doesn’t move, the object also can’t move

(3) a. *... Obj ... NEG [VP ... V ]
  b. ... NEG [VP ... V ... Obj]

Alternatively: although verb and object may both move, V > O order must be preserved.

Puzzle: The Obj > Neg order is taken as movement of the object (Object Shift)

Object shift is obligatory, but only up to H.G.

When OS is possible, failure to shift = *

When OS is not possible, failure to shift = OK.

Feature-driven movement: if oblig. then *= when not moved (even in HG)

etc. if optional, then should be optional even when OS OK

1.2 Background – a crash course in Scandinavian syntax

Scandinavian languages are SVO, V2 (main clauses), no scrambling.

(4) a. *jeg skulde have [vp stråkarnir tvæjlåta husdi red rau in t.tex] ice.

Yesterday the boys painted the house red.

b. *jeg skulde have [vp tvæjlåta husdi red rau in t.tex]

Yesterday the boys painted the house red.

VP-edge diagnostics: negation, FQ, (some) adverbs

V-to-C: (V2) main clauses, certain embedded clauses – all langs

most embedded clause types, with CP recursion, Icelandic

V-to-I: Icelandic, non-V2 embedded clauses, control infinitives

Dialectally, in some other Scandinavian varieties (and in older langs)

V in VP: All langs: complement of modal/aux, infinitives (except ICE. control)

All except Icelandic: embedded, non-bridge contexts

(5) Jeg spurte ...

I asked

a. ... [vp af hjerke tvæjlåta tvæjlåta husdi red rau in t.tex]

Why H. had often read this book

b. *... [vp af hjerke tvæjlåta tvæjlåta husdi red rau in t.tex]

Why H. had often read this book

t. asked why Helgi had often read this book.’


(6) a. Jeg veit ekki hvor kyrrin hefur staðið í gar.

Ice.

I know not where cow-the has stood yesterday.

b. *Jeg veit ekki hvor kyrrin hefur staðið.

I know not where the cow has stood yesterday.

(7) a. Jeg tvilja pá [t.tvæjlåta tvæjlåta lyste boken]]

Sw.

I doubt on that he really read the book.

b. *Jeg tvilja pá [t.tvæjlåta tvæjlåta lyste boken]]

I doubt on that he read really book-the
Minimal contrast: control infinitives in Icelandic vs. Swedish:

(8) a. María lofabi að lesa ekki bókina.
    Mary promised to read not book-the
    ‘Mary promised not to read the book.’

b. *María lofabi að ekki lesa bókina.
    Mary promised to read not book-the
    ‘Mary promised not to read the book.’

Sentences like (8) contrast with parallel examples in, e.g., Swedish, as in (9):

(9) a. *Maria lovade att läsa inte boken.
    M. promised to read not book-the
    ‘Many students probably never put these books on the table in the library.’

b. Maria lovade att inte läsa boken.
    M. promised to not read book-the
    ‘Many students probably never put these books on the table in the library.’

1.3 Object Shift – preliminaries:

All languages: weak (unstressed, non-conjoined) pronouns

(10) a. Iglur læste de den, [VP inte t1]
    yesterday read they it not
    ‘They didn’t read it yesterday.’ (Swedish)

b. Hann las (pär) [VP ekki *pär]
    he read them not
    ‘He didn’t read them.’ (Icelandic, Diesing 1996:67)

Icelandic only: specific (old info) DPs

(11) a. Á barnum drakk stúdentinn björinn, [VP stundum t1]
    in the bar the drank student.the bear.the
    sometimes
    ‘In the bar, the student sometimes drank the beer.’ (Icelandic)

b. I fyrir málaðu stúdentarnir (hins-lökkís), [VP ekki t1]
    last year painted the.students house-the?house(s) not
    ‘Last year, the students didn’t paint the house.’ (Icelandic)

NOTE: OS is not cliticization to the verb. In V2 environments, the landing site of object shift is separated from the verb by the subject, and in certain cases, by adverbials (as) well.

(12) Á bokasafninn settu semnilega margir stúdentar þessar bækur [VP aldrei á bordið]
    in the.library put probably many students these books never on the.table
    ‘Many students probably never put these books on the table in the library.’

For many speakers, OS of pronouns is obligatory (where possible).

(13) a. Hann las ([pär]) [VP ekki *[pär]]
    he read them not
    ‘He didn’t read them.’ (Icelandic, Diesing 1996:67)

b. Hvorfor læste Peter [den] [VP aldrig *[den]]
    why read Peter it never
    ‘Why did Peter never read it?’ (Danish, Vikner to appear:67)

For Icelandic, with definite DPs, OS described as “optional”:

(14) Jón keypti (bókina) ekki (bókina)
    I bought book.the not book.the
    ‘John didn’t buy the book.’ (Icelandic, Diesing 1996:67)

Subsequent work showed interpretive contrasts (Bobuljik, Diesing, Thráinsson):

object shift = old information 
object in situ = new information

(15) context: Does he know “Barriers?” (Bobuljik 1995 < Thráinsson, Truckenbrodt)

a. Hann les Barriers alltaf, b # Hann les alltaf Barriers.
    he reads B. always he reads allways B.
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’

b. #Hann les Barriers alltaf, b Hann les alltaf Barriers.
    he reads B. always he reads allways B.
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’

(16) context: Does he know Chomsky’s work?

a. #Hann les Barriers alltaf, b Hann les alltaf Barriers.
    he reads B. always he reads allways B.
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’
    ‘He is always reading Barriers.’

b. Hann les sjaldan lengstu bókina
    He reads rarely longest book.the
    ‘He rarely reads the longest book.’
    (One book is the longest, among contextually salient books, and he rarely reads it.)

(17) a. Hann les lengstu bókina sjaldan (Diesing)
    He reads longest book.the rarely
    ‘He rarely reads the longest book.’
    ‘He rarely reads the longest book.’

b. Hann les sjaldan lengstu bókina
    He reads rarely longest book.the
    ‘He rarely reads the longest book.’
    (Give a choice of books, he rarely reads whichever is longest)

Note also: indefinite pronouns do not shift, even where pronoun shift is obligatory:

(18) a. Úg á ekki regnlíft, áttu (*eina) ekki (*eina)? [Ice]
    I have not umbrella, have-you one not one
    ‘I don’t have an umbrella, haven’t you (got) one?’

b. Jeg har ikke nogen paraply, har du (*en) ikke (*en)? [Dan]
    I have not any umbrella, have you one not one
    ‘I don’t have an umbrella, haven’t you (got) one?’
Two general approaches (are these distinct?):

Object Shift is (syntactically) optional:

structure determines interpretation (compare scope)
+ interpretive filter, e.g., weak indefinite in “shifted” position yields incompatible requirements.

Interpretively-driven movement

DPs representing old info (“+specific”) move, obligatorily.

Diacritic (on DP or on “probe”) [+Topic], etc.

double duty: interpretation [+Top] = old info; and movement [+Top] moves suspicious: no morphological realization; coding trick… cf. [+wide scope]

Holmberga’s Generalization Environments (Core):

(19) a. Det är troligt [att de [VP läste den]]
   ‘It is probable that they read it.’ (Swedish)

   b. *Det är troligt [att de [VP läste t]]
   ‘It is probable that they read it’

(20) a. Johann har [VP sette den]
   ‘Johann has it set it’ (Swedish)

   b. *Johann har [VP sette t]

(21) a. Hann hefur [VP lesið bókin]
   ‘Hann has read the book.’ (Icelandic)

   b. *Hann hefur [VP lesið t]

   ‘Hann has read the book.’

OS appears to be possible in control infinitives. Thráinnson 1993.

The puzzle:

If structure determines interpretation, why aren’t unshifted objects given unshifted interpretation? (They’re not, in HG environments).

If [+specific] moves obligatorily, why doesn’t HG = crash?

(Alternatively, if the feature can be weak, why is movement oblig, above?)

Solutions:

Some notion of Economy / Optimality

Ranked, violable constraints; (OT approaches, Dieing = ranked Economy conditions)

Economy as part of Spell-Out: provide the best phonological interpretation for the syntactic structure, where best = most faithful, up to other Spell-Out considerations.

Shiftable objects always shift in the syntax;
but in HG environments, we don’t see (hear) the shift. (Bobaljik 1995, 2002)

Key evidence: headedness asymmetry – absence of HG effects in OV languages

Assumption: linear order is not relevant to movement / c-command.
   it is relevant for morphological operations (adjacency)

Coming up:

Reminder of Affix-Hopping account of do-support

Simple case: extension to HG

Additional assumptions needed

Prediction about headedness.

Implementation: “copy theory”, mismatch.

Problems: V-fronting examples


