EPP and Object Shift in the Scandinavian Languages


   (1) EPP is a requirement for a specifier of T, independent of Agree.
   (2) Move is a ‘reflex’ of Agree. (i.e. Move is preconditioned by Agree.)

   This paper proposes (1) and (2) and shows that both are correct and a single parametrization of (1) proposed in (3) nicely accounts for important parametric differences between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish; MSc); the lack of full DP Object Shift (OS) as well as the absence of Stylistic Fronting (SF) and Quirky Subject Construction (QSC) in MSc.

   (3) EPP can be satisfied by any closest element in Icelandic, whereas only by nominative DPs in MSc.

Furthermore it will be demonstrated that the proposed analysis explains the above phenomena with full local determinability, rejecting Chomsky’s (1999) ‘phase-based evaluation of locality’ as epiphenomenal.

2. Parametric Differences between Icelandic and MSc: As it is well known, Icelandic is the only Scandinavian language that allows (optional) full DP OS. (Holmberg1986, Holmberg and Platzack1995, Thráinsson 2001) (cf. (ex.1)). Interestingly, there are other parametric differences; the presence of SF and QSC (and the absence of Raising-over-EX(periencer)) in Icelandic but not in MSc (cf. (ex.2-4)).

   (4) full DP OS  pronominal OS  SF  QSC  Raising-over-EX  cf. TEC

   Icelandic √  √  √  √  *  √  cf. TEC

   MSc    *  *  *  √  *  *

3. The Derivation: A Strictly Cyclic Derivation of OS: Consider the derivation of OS in (ex.5a) in Icelandic, where OBJ is shifted into the outer specifier of vP as a result of Agree with v’s φ-feature (cf. (2)). At this step of derivation, with the equidistance principle eliminated (cf. Chomsky 1999), T cannot Agree with SUBJ due to the defective intervention constraint triggered by the closer inactive goal. This leads Chomsky (1999:24) to resort to a countercyclic ‘phase-based evaluation of locality’ with a quite dubious operation DISL.

   The proposed theory (1) and (3) provides a natural account with full local determinability; by (1) T allows an attraction of the closest element, the shifted OBJ, to satisfy its EPP; thus under (3) T naturally attracts the shifted OBJ into Spec-TP (ex.5b). Now at the next stage of derivation, T can Agree with the nominative SUBJ since the trace of OBJ is now invisible to the probe. Thus T Agrees with SUBJ and dislocates it into an outer specifier of TP by (2), giving the structure (ex.5c). Crucial here is that SUBJ never tucks in under the OBJ in Spec-TP, because each movement in (ex.5b) and (ex.5d) is driven by distinct ‘features’: EPP and T’s φ-feature, respectively (cf. McGinnis 1998). Note also that Icelandic allows Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC) (hence TP multiple specifiers), whereas MSc do not, another well-known parametric difference. Thus under (3), a strictly cyclic explanation of OS is available.

   In MSc, whose EPP property disallows to attract other than the active SUBJ by (3), a shifted full DP OBJ always triggers a defective intervention effect; therefore, there is no way for T to enter into an Agree relation with SUBJ in the presence of the shifted OBJ and hence the lack of full DP OS in MSc (ex.6). It will be also argued that weak pronominal OS in Icelandic and MSc. is a kind of ‘cliticization’ (Holmberg 1986; cf. Lasnik 1999 for ECM in English) and hence no defective intervention effect is triggered just as pronominal dative clitics (in contrast with full DP) in Italian/French do not block SUBJ-raising. cf. (ex.7).

4. The Parametric Differences Explained: Note also that now under the single parameter (3) the other ostensibly unrelated parametric differences in (4) also straightforwardly follow; EPP in Icelandic, which has ‘Attract Closest’ property (cf. also Pesetsky 2000), must attract any closest element, allowing SF. Furthermore in a raising construction the matrix dative EX is always raised, manifesting QSC and blocking raising-over-EX of an embedded nominative SUBJ (see (ex.9) below), whereas EPP in MSc. always raises the nominative SUBJ over the EX, resulting in the lack of QSC as well as SF.

5. Strict Localization of Locality: It will be further demonstrated that Icelandic data (ex.8) provides a crucial evidence against Chomsky’s (1999) phase-based locality theory in favor of our strictly cyclic/derivational view of locality. Note in (ex.8) that raising of the embedded nominative SUBJ is illicit even if the closer EX is ‘evacuated’ later by wh-movement into Spec-CP; the phase-based theory of locality wrongly predicts that (ex.8) should be legitimate since at the point of locality evaluation (i.e. CP-phase), the dative EX no longer intervenes between the probe T and the goal SUBJ. Our proposed analysis correctly explains the ungrammaticality as a violation of locality condition on the operation Agree/Move (ex.9): T Agrees with the embedded nominative SUBJ as well as the quirky dative EX (cf. Boeckx 2000 especially, Hiraiwa 2000 for Multiple Agree in Icelandic). Thus both EPP (1) and Move-by-Agree (2) require the attraction of EX into Spec-TP, ‘freezing’ the embedded SUBJ in situ at this and later points of the derivation, which correctly and locally determines the ungrammaticality of (ex.8). (cf. (ex.9b*)).
(ex.1) Full DP OS

a. Nemandinn las ekki bókina  
   student-the read not book-the  
   (Ice.)

b. Nemandinn las bókina ekki t_bókina  
   student-the read not book-the
   (Swe.)

c. Studenten läste inte boken  
   student-the read not book-the
   (Swe.)

d.*Studenten läste boken inte t_boken  
   (Thráinsson 2001)

(ex.2) Stylistic Fronting

a. Sá sem fyrstur er t_fyrstur  
   he that first is to score goal  
   gets special prize
   (Ice.)

b.*den som först är t_först  
   he that first is to score goal
   (Swe.)
   (Holmberg 2000)

(ex.3) Quirky Subject Construction

a. Hana vantar peninga  
   her-ACC lacks money-ACC
   (Ice.)

b.*Henni saknar pengar  
   her lacks money-ACC
   (Swe.)
   (Holmberg and Platzack 1985)

(ex.4) Raising-over-EX.

a. *Ólafur haf Di virst peim tÓlafur vera gáfaður  
   Olafur has seemed DAT-them be intelligent
   (Thráinsson 1979)

b. Jon forekommer oss/Maria a tJon ha drukket vin  
   Jon seems us/Maria to have drunk wine
   (Christensen 1986)

   OS by Agree (2)  
   (Ice.)

   EPP-movement (OBJ) (1)

(c. 72x726)
   Agree (T, SUBJ)

   Move (SUBJ) (2)

   OS by Agree (2)  
   (Swe.)

   *EPP (OBJ) and *Agree (T, SUBJ)

(ex.7) a. Gianni gil sembra essere stanco.  
   Gianni DAT-CL seems to-be ill
   (Italian)

b.*Gianni sembra a Maria essere stanco  
   Gianni seems DAT-Maria to-be ill
   (Boeckx 2000)

(ex.8) *[CP Hverjum hefur [TP Ólafur alltaf virst t_hverjun [TP tÓlafur vera gáfaður]]]  
   Who-DAT has Olafur-NOM always seemed be intelligent
   (Holmberg1997:210 fn8)

(ex.9) a. T hefur alltaf [VP virst hverjum [TP Ólafur vera gáfaður]]  
   Agree (T, EX/SUBJ)

b. [ TP hverjum T hefur alltaf [VP virst t_hverjun [TP Ólafur vera gáfaður]] ]  
   Move (EX) (1) and (2)

b.*[TP Ólafur T hefur alltaf [VP virst hverjum [TP tÓlafur vera gáfaður]]]  
   *Move (SUBJ) by locality
   (irrelevant head-movements omitted)

References: