I. Is the X-bar schema really appropriate for all languages?

(1) We have been assuming the following claims about syntactic structure:
   (a) There is a fundamental distinction between a subject and a predicate
   (b) This fundamental distinction is represented structurally
       \[ \text{Specifier of IP vs. complement of I, in X-bar theory} \]
       • BUT: Is this approach appropriate for every human language? Or are these aspects of syntax subject to cross-linguistic variation?

(2) Japanese word-order variation (see data set handout)
   • Side note: Why are Japanese sentences interpretable without fixed word order?

(3) There are two leading explanations for flexible/variable word order in Japanese:
   (a) Hypothesis 1:
       Japanese has a basic constituent order, determined by the X-bar schema in a way very similar to what we motivate for English (but Japanese phrases are head-final)
       Deviations from this order are the result of movement
       • Similar analyses have been motivated for questions/passive in English, etc.
   (b) Hypothesis 2:
       No movement involved in Japanese constituent order; all orders are base-generated
       Consequences:
       • Japanese sentence trees can have no VP node (or I' node!) — see below for why
       • The rules for building Japanese syntactic structure have to be radically different from the X-bar schema motivated for “configurational” languages like English; they have to allow for many different word orders but less hierarchical structure

(4) Terminology: A language is configurational if it
   (a) distinguishes different constituents, for example subjects and objects...
   (b) …on the basis of a structural (=configurational) difference

II. What kind of evidence do we need to test for configurationality?

(5) Base-generated free constituent order with no VP-type node — this would work
   (a) 
   (b)
(6) Base-generated free constituent order with a VP-type node — this would not work
(a) not a possible structure (“crossed lines”)

(7) Movement analysis of Japanese free word order is compatible with the presence of a VP node in the structure

Notes:
• t stands for trace
• A trace shows where a moved element has moved from
• The relationship between the trace and the moved element (its antecedent) is shown by a subscript index

(8) Crucial question:
Does Japanese have at least one node (i.e., VP, I’) that excludes the subject?
—-> If Japanese is nonconfigurational, and the phrases that precede the verb can be base-generated in any order, then there cannot be a node that excludes the subject, distinguishing it hierarchically from other phrases in the sentence

(9) For determining which approach to Japanese word order is best, we would like to know:
(a) whether or not there is evidence for a node that excludes the subject
(b) whether or not there is evidence that constituents can move/have moved

III. Evidence from c-command and NP/pronoun coreference

(10) Diagnostic we can use to investigate structural relationships

**c-command**: A c-commands B if neither A nor B dominates the other, and the first branching node that dominates A also dominates B
• Put differently: A c-commands B if B is A’s sister or B is a descendant of A’s sister

(11) C-command is relevant for co-reference relationships
• Nouns (as distinguished from pronouns (him), reflexives (herself)) may not be c-commanded by an antecedent (antecedent=co-referent NP)
• The following sentences are from Tsujimura (2007, ch 5, §3.3.2) unless otherwise noted

(12) Examples to establish the relevance of c-command in NP/pronoun coference

- Background: A relative clause is an IP that is a modifier inside an NP; the relative clause has an empty element (call it pro), coferent with the N head being modified

(a) Co-reference between an NP and a “pronoun” is grammatical here: (note that kare may not actually have the syntactic properties of a pronoun, but this argument still makes the point)


‘Taroo; read the letter that Hanako sent him.’

(b) Co-reference between an NP and a pronoun is not grammatical here:

* [Kare]-ga [NP [IP Hanako-ga Taroo-ni pro okutta] tegami-o] yonda.

(intended meaning: ‘He; read the letter that Hanako sent Taroo;’)

(c) This structure involves c-command (whether sentences are configurational or not)

(13) Now, applying this diagnostic to the question of whether there is a VP node

(a) This sentence is grammatical:

[NP Ken-no sensei-ga] kare-o sikat-ta. (Miyagawa 1989: 13)

‘Ken’s teacher scolded him.’

(b) Which structure predicts that the sentence is grammatical?

- Note: A genitive/possessive construction (Ken-no, ‘Ken’s’) is a specifier of NP

configuration structure: 

configuration structure: 

nonconfiguration structure:
We can also use c-command and NP/pronoun coreference facts to argue in favor of the movement approach to object–subject word order.

(a) A reordered version of the ungrammatical sentence in (12)(b) is grammatical

\[
\text{[NP [IP Hanako-ga Taroo-ni pro okutta] tegami-o] kare-i ga t\textsubscript{j} yon-da.}
\]

‘The letter that Hanako sent to Taroo, he\textsubscript{i} read.’

(b) Which structure predicts that the sentence is grammatical?

\begin{enumerate}
\item[configurational:]
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[nonconfigurational:]
\end{enumerate}

(15) Conclusions:

(a) There is evidence in Japanese for a node that excludes the subject but includes other constituents

(b) There is evidence that “scrambled” sentences in Japanese involve movement

(c) The X’ model (or its newer versions) is in fact appropriate for Japanese syntax

For further reading


• This book is on reserve for the course, and also available as an e-book through the library web site.


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