

## A vs. A-bar movement and the discourse interface: cross-linguistic behavioral evidence

This presentation discusses the relevance of the distinction between A-movement (scrambling) and A-bar movement for the discourse interface and presents cross-linguistic behavioral evidence that proves that the linearizations that result from these phenomena have different distributions in discourse. Following standard assumptions, A-movement (scrambling) targets an argument position that may bind postcedent bindees and take scope over them; A-bar movement targets an operator position and does not affect binding relations (see Déprez 1989, Haider & Rosengren 2003, Mahajan 1990, Müller & Sternefeld 1994 among others). Cross-linguistically, the possibility of A-scrambling appears to correlate well with the directionality of V-projections: it has been observed that only V-final projections allow for A-scrambling, an asymmetry that is traced back to the leftwards directionality of merging operations (see Haider & Rosengren 2003, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998).

The point of our presentation is that OS orders have a different distribution in discourse depending on the type of movement (A vs. A-bar) generating them:

- *A-bar movement* has quantificational properties, which may be compositionally derived from the fact that the moved constituent binds a trace in situ (see Neeleman et al. 2007). Fronting the object constituent through A-bar movement invokes a reading of exclusion of alternatives and typically occurs in contexts involving contrastive topicalization.
- *A-movement* is a semantically vacuous operation. OS in scrambling languages may be selected in discourse in order to satisfy interface constraints, such as shift to or out of a stressed position. These properties have an effect on the output such as the preference for fronted objects to be discourse-anaphoric, which explains their distribution in discourse, but may be compositionally derived without the assumption on an information structural operator.

We support these generalizations by presenting evidence from semi-spontaneously elicited data (obtained through the description of a set of visual stimuli by at least 8 native speakers per object language). We observe that simple asymmetries of the discourse status, such that the object is discourse-anaphoric and the subject discourse-new:

- (a) trigger OS orders in languages that display *A-movement* of objects over subjects. This observation is based on data from Georgian, Konkani (Indo-European), Prinmi (Tibeto-Burman), and Teribe (Chibchan), as well as Czech (see example 1).
- (b) do not trigger OS orders in languages that display *A-bar movement* of objects over subjects, as we show with data from American English, Canadian French, Dutch, and Yucatec Maya, and Greek (see example 2).<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, we observe that a further type of A-movement, namely passivization (see example 3), occurs in those languages of the latter type in which this operation is productive (all (b)-languages in the sample apart from Greek). This finding shows that an operation that serves structural requirements (to satisfy the EPP feature of the tense projection) does not have a random distribution in discourse. This gives additional support to the view that the occurrence of semantically vacuous operations may indeed correlate with particular discourse concepts due to properties of their linearization.

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<sup>1</sup> Puzzling evidence from Hungarian and German will be analyzed in the presentation.

## Examples

- (1) Georgian  
[context] 'There is a box on the table...'  
[target] ... qut-s k'ac-i a-gd-eb-s  
          box-DAT man-NOM NV-(IO.3)throw-THM-PRS.S.3.SG  
          '...a man is throwing the box.'
- (2) American English  
[context] A snake is on the ground hissing.  
[target] A dog is biting the snake.
- (3) Yucatec Maya  
[context] {The pan is on the little table.}  
[target] le sáarten-o' tuún lík's-a'l yo'l le meèsa-o'.  
          DEF pan-D.2 PROG:A.3 lift-PASS.INCMPL on DEF table-D2  
          'The pan is being lifted from the table.'

## References

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