

Translocal Constraints in the Minimalist Program

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The Ban on Superfluous Structure

Ref.: Bošković (1997, 2009)

(1) **Minimal Structure Principle** (MSP):

Provided that lexical requirements of relevant elements are satisfied, if two representations have the same lexical structure, and serve the same function, then the representation that has **fewer projections** is to be chosen as the syntactic representation serving that function (Law 1991, Bošković (1997)).

Minimal Structure of Clausal Embedding

- (2) a. John tried [IP PRO to leave]
- b. the man [IP Op₁ [IP John left t₁]]
- c. We [VP think [IP John left]]

Given the MSP, the ungrammaticality of (2-a) has the same source as the ungrammaticality of (2-b) (whatever that may be – perhaps some Anti-Locality requirement)

- (3) **The ban on local empty operator movement of subjects**
 - a. *the man [IP Op₁ [IP t₁ likes Mary]]
 - b. *I think that [IP John₁, [IP t₁ likes Mary]]

(4) would avoid this effect but is not available (given the MSP).

- (4) *the man [CP Op₁ C [IP t₁ likes Mary]]

A Second Application: Resumptives

Bošković (2009): “The IP analysis also captures the contrast in [(5)], given Saito’s (1985) claim that resumptive pronouns are not allowed under adjunction structures.” (Data from Kayne (1984))

(5) Empty operators and resumptives

- a. *The book [_{IP} Op [_{IP} I was wondering whether I would get it in the mail]]
- b. The book [_{CP} Op [_{C'} that I was wondering whether I would get it in the mail]]

A Third Application: That-Trace Effects

The IP analysis makes a “trivial” account possible: There is no C element in the embedded clause.

(6) That-trace Effects

- a. Who do you believe left?
- b. *Who do you believe that left?

Note:

This of course still presupposes that some explanation can be given for the illegitimacy of *wh*-movement across *that* in the first place.

A Fourth and Final Application: Embedded Topicalization

“The analysis also accounts for the obligatoriness of that with topicalization.”

- (7) **Complementizers and embedded topicalization**
- a. [IP Mary, [IP John likes]]
 - b. Peter believes that [IP Mary, [IP John likes]]
 - c. *Peter believes [IP Mary, [IP John likes]]

Problems

Problem no. 1:

How does this interact with numerations?

Answer:

“All we need to do is define the numeration on lexical elements only. Under this view, only lexical elements are present in numerations.”

Problem no. 2:

Isn't translocality conceptually problematic?

Answer:

Yes, it is. Perhaps “its effects are derivable from the ban on superfluous steps in a derivation, Last Resort. This is desirable, since while the MSP has an element of globality Last Resort applies locally. The representations that the MSP rules out in favor of more economical representations cannot even be built under the derivational approach.”

Bošković, Željko (1997): *The Syntax of Nonfinite Complementation. An Economy Approach*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Bošković, Željko (2009): Last Resort with Move and Agree in Derivations and Representations. Ms., University of Connecticut.

Kayne, Richard (1984): *Connectedness and Unambiguous Paths*. Foris, Dordrecht.