Linguistics 610   Fall 2017

Government
(Thanks to Željko Bošković for much help with this HO)

Government/barriers have been argued to be involved in at least the following:

A.   θ-role assignment
B.   Case assignment
C.   Conditions A and B of the Binding Theory
D.   Distribution of PRO (which, in the theory under discussion, follows from Conditions A and B)
E.   Locality restrictions on movement and licensing of traces (ECP)
F.   Distribution of null heads

Core X-bar theoretic configurations seem to suffice for θ-theory: A head can only θ-mark its complement and its specifier.

For Case theory, again, core X-bar theoretic configurations seem to suffice. For example, a transitive verb assigns accusative Case to its complement; finite Infl (i.e., Agr-Tense amalgam) assigns nominative Case to its Spec. The only exception appears to be Exceptional Case-Marking, where a V assigns accusative Case to the Spec of its complement. However, essentially following Postal (1974), Lasnik and Saito (1991) show that Exceptional Case-Marking also takes place in a core X-bar theoretic configuration, namely Spec-Head agreement, following A-movement of the ECM subject into the Spec position of an Agr head in the higher clause. Case assignment to an object might also be instantiated in this configuration. [More recently, though, evidence has emerged that this raising is optional, so we still might need Case assignment 'under government'.]

Binding Theory: Governing Category. The Governing Category for α is the minimal XP containing α, **a governor of α**, and a SUBJECT accessible to α. [[See Appendix.]]
  Condition A effects might, instead, follow from locality restrictions on movement and licensing of traces, under an LF anaphor movement theory (see Lebeaux 1983, Chomsky 1986, Pica 1987). Potential problem: *John thinks that himself likes Mary vs. Who thinks that who likes Mary. Potential solution: unselective binding for wh-in-situ in English.
  Condition B: Do we need the notion of governing category to describe the distribution of pronouns? Would it be enough to just say that pronouns do not tolerate clause-mate antecedents?
(1) *John$_i$ likes him$_i$
(2) *John$_i$ believes him$_i$ to be crazy
(3) John$_i$ believes that he$_i$ is crazy

PRO: Under the null Case approach to the distribution of PRO (see Chomsky and Lasnik 1993, Martin 1996, Bošković 1995, 1997, Ormazabal 1996), there is no need to appeal to government to account for the distribution of PRO (see also Hornstein 1999 for an alternative approach, which also does not need government.)
(4) a. *John believes PRO
     b. *PRO left
     c. John tried [$_{CP}$ [$_{IP}$ PRO to leave]]
     d. *John believed [$_{IP}$ PRO to know French]

[(4d) is good in Romance. See Bošković 1995, 1997 for a null Case account of such constructions in Romance.]
Chomsky and Lasnik (1993): PRO bears null Case, which is checked by nonfinite INFL
(5) *John wanted PRO to seem to t that....
Lasnik (1993), Martin (1996): Only +Tense nonfinite INFL can check null Case.

Distribution of null heads (especially null C):
Stowell (1981): null C must be properly governed
Pesetsky (1992): Null C is an affix which must undergo head-movement to V. The movement is subject to usual locality restrictions.

Movement: The hope is that all ECP and subjacency effects with movement and trace-licensing will follow from Economy. One of the most detailed economy accounts of these phenomena can be found in Takahashi (1994). Takahashi argue that only the Subject Condition and relativized minimality type islands like the wh-island need to be accounted for in the syntax. Takahashi provides an economy account of these based on Move. In a pure 'Attract' system, we can account for some relativized minimality type islands, but Takahashi's account of the Subject Condition is lost (see, however, Ochi 1998, 1999).
Uriagereka (2000) has a very nice account of certain island effects, based on PF considerations (specifically linearization).

(6) Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2000:108)
In a phase α with head H, the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α, only H and its edge are accessible to such operations.
(phases are CPs and vPs)

Other questions arise that merit further consideration." Recall the definition of "governing category" given as (70II):

(70II)   β is a governing category for α if and only if β is the minimal category containing α, a governor of α, and a SUBJECT accessible to α

Suppose that we were to simplify this definition to (100), dropping the reference to government and introducing the obvious change in terminology:

(100)   β is a *binding category for* α if and only if β is the minimal category containing α and a SUBJECT accessible to α

Correspondingly, we recast principles (A) and (B) of the binding theory as (101), and restate (99) as (102):

(101)   (A) An anaphor is bound in its binding category
         (B) A pronominal is free in its binding category
(102)   A root sentence is a binding category for a governed element

These modifications clearly have no effects for elements that are governed, since for such elements the governor will always be contained in the binding category. Hence there is no effect for NP-trace, which is always governed, by virtue of 2.4.1.(2i), a principle concerning trace-government that we have been assuming throughout and to which we return in the next chapter.

In summary, there seem to be no meaningful consequences to the proposed revision in the case of overt elements or NP-trace. This leaves only the case of PRO. The basic property of PRO is that it is ungoverned. This property is a consequence of the former theory, since PRO, as a pronominal anaphor, must lack a governing category by principles (A) and (B) of the binding theory. But this result no longer follows under the revision to (101). The only consequence that follows from (101) is that PRO lacks a binding category, which does not imply that it must be ungoverned. But the conclusion that PRO is ungoverned nevertheless follows under the revised theory, namely, from (101) in conjunction with (102), which, as we saw, was also required in the former theory. If PRO is governed, then by (102) it always has a binding category in which it must be both free and bound by (101); hence PRO is ungoverned.

It seems, then, that the former binding theory can be simplified, with (70II) replaced by (100). There remains, however, one problem, illustrated by (104):

(104)   (i) John expected [him to win]
          (ii) John tried [[PRO to win]]
          (iii) John knows [how [PRO to win]]

In (i), *him* cannot be coindexed with *John* or (101B) will be violated. But exactly the same argument shows that PRO cannot be coindexed with *John* in (ii), (iii), an incorrect result. Replacement of "binding category" by "governing category" gives the correct results, in this case. It therefore appears to be necessary to introduce a crucial reference to government in the binding theory, as in (70II), though its effects are so narrow as to suggest that an error may be lurking somewhere.

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