

Syntactic Theory 2

Homework 4: Subjacency

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November 5, 2017

A. (25 points). The following ungrammatical sentences are island violations. However, not all of these violate subjacency. For each sentence, I ask you to do two things (1) name the bounding nodes that each chain crosses, and (2) say whether there is a subjacency violation. Recall that the subjacency condition says that no A' -movement may cross two bounding nodes, which are DP and TP.

Example answer:

*[_{CP} Why_i did [_{TP} you [_{VP} know [_{CP} t'_i that [_{TP} Mary [_{VP} arrived] t_i]]]]]]?

'The first movement from t_i to the intermediate trace in the embedded CP crosses one bounding node, TP. The second movement, from the intermediate trace position to the matrix Spec,CP, crosses one bounding node, the matrix TP. For that reason, no link in the movement chain crosses two bounding nodes in one bound, so there is no subjacency violation.'

1. *[_{CP} Which person_i did [_{TP} Mary [_{VP} doubt [_{CP} who_j [_{TP} t_j [_{VP} saw t_i]]]]]]]?
2. *[_{CP} Why_i did [_{TP} you [_{VP} remember [_{CP} t'_i that [_{TP} nobody [_{VP} left t_i]]]]]?
3. *[_{CP} Why_i did [_{TP} you [_{VP} wonder [_{CP} when [_{TP} Mary [_{VP} ate a sandwich t_i]]]]]]]?
4. *[_{CP} Who_i did [_{TP} you [_{VP} leave] [_{CP} t'_i because [_{TP} John [_{VP} liked t_i]]]]]?
5. *[_{CP} Who_i did [_{TP} you [_{VP} say [_{CP} t'_i that [_{TP} t_i [_{VP} likes Mary]]]]]]]?

B. (10 points). Subjacency correctly rules out the sentence in (1-a), because it crosses two bounding nodes – the subject DP, and the matrix TP. Does subjacency predict that (1-b) should be grammatical or ungrammatical? Is this prediction correct?

- (1) a. *[_{CP} Who_i did [_{TP} [_{DP} a book about t_i] [_{VP} impress John]]]?
b. [_{CP} Who_i did [_{TP} John [_{VP} read [_{DP} a book about t_i]]]]?

To explain why extraction out of an object DP is acceptable, suppose that *who* can “Chomsky-adjoin” to the object DP, i.e., stop at the edge of DP. This is a position above the specifier that is

an “escape hatch” for movement. Movement out of the Chomsky adjoined position in DP doesn’t “count” as crossing the DP for calculating subjacency.

(2) [CP Who_i did [TP John [VP read [DP t_i [DP a book about t_i]]]]]

C. (10 points). Does this sentence now violate subjacency? Explain which bounding nodes each part of the movement chain ($\langle t, t' \rangle$, $\langle t', who \rangle$) crosses. Does either part cross two bounding nodes?

D. (10 points). With this new “trick” of Chomsky-adjunction, we find ourselves in a pickle. We predict that (1-a) is now grammatical, contrary to fact. Explain why.

To remedy this situation, we will adopt a simple version of Chomsky’s *Barriers* framework. This framework gives a new definition of the subjacency condition, paraphrased below:

- (3) a. **subjacency condition:** do not move over a barrier.
b. all phrases are **barriers**, except complements of lexical heads (V, N, A, P)

E. (10 points) There’s a slight hitch in this theory. The following sentence is predicted to be ungrammatical. Explain why it is predicted to be ungrammatical in this new Barriers definition of subjacency:

(4) [CP Who_i [TP t_i [VP left]]]

To fix this, we amend our definition of subjacency and barriers as so:

- (5) a. **subjacency condition:** do not move over a barrier.
b. all phrases are **barriers**, except complements of lexical heads (V, N, A, P)
c. TP is not a barrier.

Lastly, we will still need to use Chomsky-adjunction for movement across a VP. VP is always a complement of T, meaning that it should be a “barrier” on this theory. However, we will allow Chomsky-adjunction to not “count” as crossing a barrier, by stipulation. Similarly, moving from a Chomsky-adjoined position doesn’t “count”. For example:

(6) [CP What_i did [TP you [VP t_i^{'''} [VP say [CP t_i^{''} that [TP Mary [VP t_i['] [VP likes t_i]]]]]]]]?]

(7) This sentence is acceptable. The first link of the chain, $\langle t_i, t_i' \rangle$, Chomsky-adjoints to a VP, which doesn’t count as crossing a barrier. Next, $\langle t_i', t_i'' \rangle$, moves from its Chomsky-adjoined VP position, which doesn’t count as crossing a barrier, and then crosses a TP node, which is not a barrier (by stipulation). Next, $\langle t_i'', t_i''' \rangle$ crosses a CP node, which is the complement of the lexical head *say*, and thus is not a barrier. It then Chomsky-adjoints to the matrix VP, which again does not count as crossing a barrier. Lastly, $\langle t_i''', what_i \rangle$ exits a VP from a Chomsky-adjoined position (not “crossing”), and then crosses a TP (not a “barrier”). Thus, no link in the movement chain crosses a barrier.

F. (20 points). Despite its eccentricities, this new Barriers framework is more powerful than the earlier subjacency theory, because it actually captures more island phenomena. The Barriers framework, as described here, accurately predicts the following judgment patterns, provided the intermediate traces that I've given below. For each sentence, explain why the sentence is good or bad. For this exercise, ignore the internal details of DP structure – i.e., you only need to make reference to VP, TP, and CP. Your explanation should look something like (7).

- (8) a. [CP Who_i did [TP John [VP t'_i [VP read [DP a book about t_i]]]]]?
 b. *[CP Who_i did [TP [DP a book about t_i] [VP surprise John]]]?
 c. *[CP Who_i did [TP you [VP t''_i [VP leave]] [CP because [TP John [VP t'_i [VP liked t_i]]]]]]?
 (**Hint:** note that the CP here is not a complement to the verb)

G. (10 points). Even though Barriers is a bit more powerful than subjacency, and dispenses with the notion of bounding node, it still has one problem. The following sentence is actually predicted to be **grammatical** in this version of Barriers that I've presented. Explain why.

- (9) *[CP Who_i did [TP you [VP t''_i [VP wonder [CP who_j [TP t_j [VP t'_i [VP saw t_i]]]]]]]]]?

H. (10 points). Does this sentence violate the classic theory of subjacency? (Remember, there was no Chomsky-adjunction in the earlier subjacency theory, so ignore the t'_i and t''_i traces in your answer to this part of the question)

Chomsky (1986) and Lasnik & Saito (2002) actually do provide solutions to this, but we won't pursue the issue any further. The point here is that, although subjacency is an elegant and intuitive theory, it quickly runs into empirical difficulty. In GB, the strategy was to enrich subjacency theory. But, perhaps a more Minimalist approach to these problems might be more efficient! To be continued...

I. (10 points). Ask me any question about A'-movement, subjacency, islands, or the ECP.

Bibliography

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