Strict vs. Permissive Merge (SM vs. PM) in North Germanic PPs

Joseph Emonds,
Palacky University, Olomouc

Current generative syntax says little about how to *precisely formalize* language-particular grammars, though it often endorses 'Borer's Conjecture,' that they consist of 'functional category lexicons'. However, little research has focused on isolating or formalizing these lexical properties, which must be plausibly learnable from data the child hears.

Instructive in this regard are two language particular constructions which have been extensively studied in generative work, and whose descriptive properties are well known. But how to formalize them is not. Curiously, the two constructions appear at first to be totally unrelated, and never seem treated as alike.

(1) Relatively free proposition stranding, with at least certain classes of Ps in North Germanic, including Middle and Modern English. Essentially no other languages have this property (van Riemsdijk 1978).
(2) "Restructuring" of infinitival complements of Romance aspectual, causative and perception verbs (Rizzi 1978; Burzio 1986). English lacks this completely. French Restructuring is more limited than in Italian or Spanish.
(3) English P-stranding:
Which house did they glance <u>into</u>? *How big a raise should I speak <u>about</u> to the boss?*
(4) French causatives with e.g. "clitic climbing" and lower subjects realized as post-verbal adjuncts:
José les <u>laisse</u> boire par son fils. 'Jose them <u>lets</u> drink by his son.'

In (4), the pronoun object *les* of the embedded V appears to 'climb' to the governing causative V *laisse* 'lets'.

P-stranding and Restructuring have in common, as the presentation will show:

(i) <u>language-particular</u> status,
(ii) limitation to heads (X=N, V, P, A) that appear to be <u>closed class</u> rather than open class items,
(iii) <u>optional</u> status (non-stranded Ps and clitics that don't climb remain options),
(iv) applying to <u>small natural classes</u>, not individual lexical items, and
(v) applying only to <u>complements</u> rather than adjuncts.

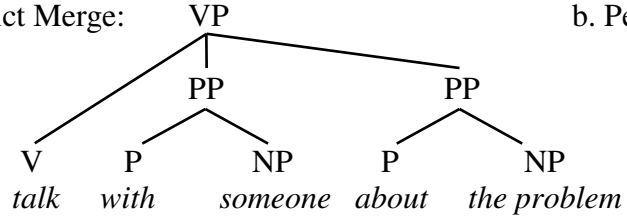
Syntactic theory should not only recognize, but also *formally express* the related properties (i)-(v). It has not.

Nonetheless, extensive (non-intersecting) work on (1)- (2) points in a single direction, With respect to Restructuring, both Rizzi (1978) and Abeillé, Godard and Miller (1997) argue that the descriptive generalisations involving Romance restructured V-V sequences require single surface VPs. This conclusion clashes with a minimalist tenet, now taken as irrefutable: *a sole structure building operation Merge creates <u>only binary branching</u> head complement structures.*

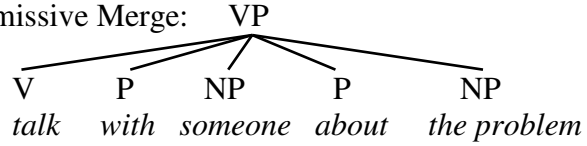
As a remedy, Emonds (2013) proposes that particular languages can allow certain *closed class heads* X^0, such as the French transitive verbs (*faire* 'make', *laisser* 'let', *voir* 'see', *entendre* 'hear'), to select (merge with) another XP *without projecting a new (binary branching) phrase*. All "mono-clausal" paradigms of Rizzi, Burzio, and Abeillé et al. then follow. N. B. We can call this **Permissive (non-binary) Merge,** and observe that, in accord with Minimalism (and traditional grammar) that it is *never* allowed for open class items.

Along these lines, research on P stranding has not considered that a *Permissive structure (**Error! Reference source not found.**b)* might also be a marked (North Germanic) optional alternative to a universal structure (**Error! Reference source not found.**a) that results from **Strict (binary) Merge**.

a. Strict Merge:



b. Permissive Merge:



The presentation will show that (b) is more than plausible for English, and there are independent paradigms that favor it. But first note that *both structures satisfy two universal conditions on Merge:*

(5) a. All selecting heads (here the V *talk* and the Ps *with, about*) must be *sisters of* items that they select.
b. In head-initial languages (e.g. all of North Germanic), selecting heads must be to the *left* of the items selected.

In fact, the only theoretical condition on complement selection that (**Error! Reference source not found.**b) does not satisfy is binary branching. The following are the language-particular conditions that express this:

(6) Permissive Merge. Closed class heads that select without projecting:
a. **North Germanic.** P = Permissive
b. Romance: V = Permissive / ___V
(French restricts this to transitive grammatical V.)

We can note that these formalized language-particular conditions are more general (and elegant) than item-particular statements in the Grammatical Lexicon, as would be required by the usual understanding of Borer's Conjecture.

We can also note that the limitations on NG stranding are imposed by UG—there is no version of stranding that is "more general." The presentation will show that in fact UG strongly restricts the application of Permissive Merge:

(i) PM can *never apply to adjunct* X^0.
(ii) PM *never applies to open class* X^0 (P = *along, concerning, despite, outside, via without,…*).
(iii) PM can't apply to pre-modified X^0.

With a PM structure for complement PPs, proposals for conditions under which movement can "strand" head P are unnecessary. It is not 'most languages' that ban P-stranding, *all* languages do. Rephrasing:

(7) **P-stranding Summary.** A P in the *Grammatical Lexicon*, *selected* by a frame +___P, can be stranded if it is "bare," i.e. a bare P in North Germanic acts *as if it is not inside a P-phrase*.

A strong independent justification for the Permissive Merge structure (b) is that it predicts *English post-verbal "particle movemen*t". In *talk the problem over,* there is no relation between *over* and *the problem*. Hence (5b) doesn't apply, and either order is allowed: *talk over the problem*. And (6a) also renders Binary Branching unnecessary; P and NP can be sisters, even if unrelated, because both are selected as *right sisters* to V.

References

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