On Non-configurational Languages and the Syntactic Representation in Universal Grammar

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Given general assumption on the modular character of the grammar,\(^1\) Chomsky proposes a number of important rule systems and systems of principles, assuming the REST (Revised Extended Standard Theory). Much attention is recently paid to the study of systems of principles in

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1) Vide Chomsky (1980) for further details.
Chomsky’s work, which will determine the character and variety of possible languages. Chomsky assumes that fixing open parameters by experience, UG (Universal Grammar) determines a grammar that is a very intricate and highly structured system.

Our central concern is with a parameter that determines the base structure. This parameter, among others, leads us to the selection of which rule the grammar of a specific language may take, i.e., “Move α” or “Assume a GF.”

Adopting Hale’s (1981) suggestion on the typology of the language Chomsky posits a base structure parameter: configurational vs. non-configurational. If the former is selected the structure is rigidly fixed, assuming the rule “Move α” while if the latter is chosen the structure is not determined firmly, lacking the full range of syntactic configurations, and the word-order is fairly free. Hence the rule “Assume a GF” plays an important role instead of “Move α”. Hale pointed out that there exist no empty categories in non-configurational languages based on Warlpiri, one of the Australian aboriginal languages, hence no transformational module is realized.

Despite Hale’s assumption, there may be a number of what he calls non-configurational languages whose grammars have transformational rules, assuming trace theory. In such languages the empty categories may be also assumed. Take Japanese for instance, one suggests that even if there are no vivid transformational rules, the rule “Move α” operates at LF, assuming trace theory. Huang (1980) demonstrates the evidence of “Move α” effect in Chinese, assuming transformational module at LF in that language. Farmer (1981), (forthcoming) predict the evidence of empty categories in Japanese. Consequently I assume “Move α” at LF in Japanese and there must be empty categories.

It is not sufficient enough to assume the parameter as Chomsky
speculates for the base structure in non-configurational languages to describe the variety from the “perfect” non-configurational languages as Warlpiri to semi-configurational languages as Japanese, Korean, Hindi, etc. Hence I will suggest the base structure parameter as in (1).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\alpha \text{ configurational} \\
\beta \text{ strong}
\end{array}
\]

Here we can get four possible combinations as in (2).

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{a.} & \left[ + \text{ configurational} \right] \\
\text{b.} & \left[ + \text{ configurational} \right] \\
\text{c.} & \left[ - \text{ configurational} \right] \\
\text{d.} & \left[ - \text{ configurational} \right]
\end{array}
\]

One can assume (2a) as an instance of strong configurational languages like English, while (2b) is considered a weak configurational language. (2c) is called a strong non-configurational language like Warlpiri; on the other hand (2d) is a weak non-configurational language. The following figure indicates whether the syntactic component takes “Move \( \alpha \)” or “Assume a GF” in four possible structures of core grammar.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Syntactic Component} & 2a & 2b & 2c & 2d \\
\hline
\text{Move } \alpha & + & + & - & -(+)^* \\
\text{Assume a GF} & - & + & + & +
\end{array}
\]

*Note: (+) shows that it is a possible alternative present at LF.

Among (2a) type languages, non-configurationality factors may or may not increase in the marked surface structure level. One may assume that
(2b) type grammar has both rules: Move $\alpha$ and Assume a GF, however the role of Move $\alpha$ is dominant. In (2d) type languages, on the other hand, the rule of Assume a GF outweighs the rule “Move $\alpha$.”

References


アラビア語における関係節

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久野（1973）及び村木（1974）は日本語の関係代名詞化の条件が主題化の条件と極めて類似していることを指摘し、関係代名詞化される名詞句が普通の名詞句ではなく、関係節中の主題、即ち「名詞句+$は$」であるという分析をした。本論