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Ed Zoerner - California State University – Dominguez Hills

Brian Agbayani - California State University - Fresno

A pseudogapping asymmetry

ezoerner@csudh.edu – bagbayan@csufresno.edu

Pseudogapping (PG) involves apparent verb deletion under identity, leaving a tensed auxiliary as a left remnant and usually a complement NP as a right remnant.

- (1) a. Robin can speak French, but she can't ~~speak~~ Italian
b. I admire Terry more than I do ~~admire~~ Dana

Levin (1979) analyzes PG as verb deletion under identity. Lasnik (1995, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c) offers an analysis of PG as overt raising of an NP complement to [Spec, Agr-oP] and subsequent Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE). Under this view, the PG structure of (1a) is derived as in (2):

- (2) [TP she can't [AGR-OP Italian [VP ~~speak~~-t]]]

With this account, Lasnik argues that non-NP remnants such as APs are sub-optimal.

- (3) *You probably just feel relieved, but I do ~~feel~~ jubilant. (Lasnik 1999b: 142)

However, according to Levin, PG improves if the subjects of the two clauses corefer and there is a polarity contrast, or the gap appears in a comparative. Contrast (4) (our example) with (3):

- (4) I don't feel jubilant, but I do ~~feel~~ relieved

We find that any selected complement can appear as a right remnant under these conditions.

- (5) a. I can depend on Merle, but I can't ~~depend~~ [PP on Sandy]
b. Kim wouldn't behave nobly, but she would ~~behave~~ [ADV_{VP} wisely]
c. I would say that Dana is misguided more than I would ~~say~~ [CP that she's wrong]

Moreover, this suggests (as Lasnik claims, but for other reasons) that the raising to [Spec, Agr-oP] is motivated to satisfy the EPP, independent of Case.

However, PG fails with copular *be*, a fact which appears problematic for this analysis.

- (6) a. *Robin won't be a doctor, but she will ~~be~~ [NP a lawyer]
b. *Kim shouldn't be at the park, but she should ~~be~~ [PP at the library]
c. *Dana has been angry more than she has ~~been~~ [AP sad]
d. *The reason for her success won't be that she's lucky, but it will ~~be~~
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[_{CP} that she works so hard]

This asymmetry does not follow from Lasnik's analysis, since sentences involving *be* arguably contain Agr-o:

(7) The students are phonologists/*a phonologist

Such agreement facts suggest that the complement NP has raised to Agr. However, the raised element cannot serve as a right-remnant in PG:

(8) *The students won't be syntacticians, but they will ~~be~~ phonologists

By a natural extension of Lasnik's hypothesis, the presence of the AgrP in *be* sentences should allow overt raising of the remnant. The nonexistence of *be*-PGs is thus surprising.

Constraints on VPE also do not capture the asymmetry, since *be*-sentences readily undergo VPE:

(9) Robin will be a millionaire by this time tomorrow, and Kim will ~~be a millionaire by this time tomorrow~~ too

Since *be*-sentences do show overt raising to Agr-o and do allow for VPE, Lasnik's analysis of PG, which involves precisely these two phenomena, cannot predict the non-existence of PG with *be*. Without a natural principle or filter to exclude *be*-PGs, we may need to consider an alternative analysis of PG altogether.

References

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