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Violations of the Right Edge Constraint in Right Node Raising

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Background. A well-known descriptive trait of Right Node Raising (RNR) is the Right Edge Constraint (REC): material targeted by RNR must occur rightmost in all coordinates (cf. Wilder 1999, Sabbagh 2007, Bachrach and Katzir 2009 a.o.). (1) illustrates the REC for German: in (1a), but not in ungrammatical (1b), the material targeted by RNR is rightmost in all coordinates.

(1) a. Hans heiratete seine Freundin vor ___ und Maria trennte sich von ihrem Freund nach ___ den olympischen Spielen.
   Hans married his girlfriend before and Maria separated from her boyfriend after the Olympic games
   ‘Hans married his girlfriend before and Maria separated from her boyfriend after the olympics.’

   b. * Hans heiratete seine Freundin vor ___ und Maria trennte sich nach ___
   Hans married his girlfriend before and Maria separated after the Olympic games from her boyfriend

The problem. While some have pointed at spurious exceptions to the REC (cf. Wilder 1999), German exhibits a hitherto unnoticed class of regular exceptions: (2) is a possible configuration with \( D \) being the RNR-ed material, if \( E \) is a negation or a focus sensitive particle.

(2) A B and / or / but C \( D \) \( E \).

   (3) involves RNR of the reflexive pronoun. Since negation follows it in the second conjunct, it too should have undergone RNR. However, negation is interpreted exclusively in the second conjunct. It therefore has not been targeted by RNR, yielding a violation of the REC.

(3) Die Schauspieler verbeugten ___ aber bedankten ___ sich nicht.
   The actors bowed but thanked themselves not.
   ‘The actors bowed, but didn’t thank the audience.’

The phenomenon is not tied to the conjunction \( aber \) (which might be argued to be a positive polarity item), (4b), (4c), nor to the RNR-ed material in (3) being a “phonologically light” reflexive pronoun, (4a), (4c). Further, it is found not only with negation, but with focus-sensitive particles, (4b), (4c), or, more generally, material sensitive to contrast, (5).

(4) a. Die Jugendlich schlugen ___ aber töteten ___ Hans nicht.
   The teenagers beat but killed Hans not.
   ‘The teenagers beat Hans, but they did not kill him.’

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b. Die Schauspieler verbeugten ___ und bedankten ___ sich sogar.
The actors bowed and thanked even.
  ‘The actors bowed and even thanked the audience.’

c. Die Jugendlich töteten ___ oder verletzten ___ Hans nur.
The teenagers killed or hurt Hans only.
  ‘The teenagers killed Hans or they only hurt him.’

(5) Die Jugendlichen mögen ___ aber verprügeln ___ Hans trotzdem.
The teenagers like but beat-up Hans still
  ‘The teenagers like Hans, but they still beat him up.’

In sum, the REC is a descriptive property of RNR in most cases, but can be blocked by elements that contrast the second coordinate with the first one.

Overt movement theories of RNR (cf. Sabbagh 2007) cannot account for the data in (4), (5), since the target position of movement of the shared element is above the coordinate structure, therefore it should occur in the rightmost position. Prosodic deletion accounts (as in Hartmann 2000) could in principle assume that the overt counterpart of the elided material does not have to be peripheral in the second coordinate, but this would lead to massive overgeneralization. Sharing analyses (cf. for instance Wilder 1999, Bachrach and Katzir 2009) essentially face the same problem: they could assume that material is shared and linearized non-peripherally within the second coordinate, but again the resulting system would be too unconstrained.

References