

snippets

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Parasitic gaps diagnose A-movement in quotative and locative inversion

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It is well-known that English has two inversion constructions in which a finite lexical verb can exceptionally precede the subject: quotative inversion (1a) and locative inversion (1b).

- (1) a. ‘It’s cold’₁, [TP *Op*₁ [T’ [T said] [vP Max —_V —_I]]]
b. [TP [PP Into the room] [T’ [T came] [vP Julia —_V —_{PP}]]]

As (1) indicates, a frequent line of analysis in the literature treats the two inversion constructions as involving phrasal A-movement to subject position, i.e. Spec-TP (Collins 1997; Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 2001; Culicover and Levine 2001; Doggett 2004; Den Dikken 2006). In quotative inversion, Collins (1997) proposes that a null operator coindexed with the quote moves to Spec-TP (also see Bruening 2014:387 for A-movement of a null operator), whereas it is the PP that moves to the subject position (and then possibly further) in locative inversion (e.g. Culicover and Levine 2001). An important argument for A-movement in (locative) inversion involves the absence of weak crossover effects in inversion (2) (Culicover and Levine 2001:289-291).

- (2) a. Intro every_i dog’s cage peered its_i owner —_{PP}
b. *Intro every_i dog’s cage, its_i owner peered —_{PP}

There is another diagnostic that can be used to distinguish A- from \bar{A} -movement, namely parasitic gaps (Engdahl 1983:11-14; also see Van Urk 2017). \bar{A} -movement of a phrase is able to license a parasitic gap (PG) (3a), whereas A-movement is not (3b).

- (3) a. Which articles₁ did you file —₁ [without reading *pg*₁]?
b. *These articles₁ were clearly filed —₁ by you [without reading *pg*₁]

This diagnostic has not yet been applied to the two inversion constructions, but doing so provides further support for the A-movement analysis of each.

For quotative inversion, this is rather straightforward. Assuming that the quotative operator is nominal, it should be possible to license a corresponding PG in an adjunct. We find exactly this without inversion in (4a), where *Op* is presumably \bar{A} -moved to Spec-CP. In an inversion structure where *Op* presumably A-moves to Spec-TP, however, licensing of a PG is not possible (4b). Both inversion and non-inversion are compatible with an overt co-referent pronoun in the adjunct clause (4c), as we would expect.

- (4) a. ‘We should leave,’ *Op*₁ Max thought —₁ [without actually saying *pg*₁]
b. ?*‘We should leave,’ *Op*₁ thought Max —₁ [without actually saying *pg*₁]
c. ‘We should leave,’ *Op*₁ (thought) Max (thought) —₁ [without actually saying it₁]

For locative inversion, things are a little more complicated, as the moved phrase is necessarily non-nominal. Contrary to what has been claimed in much of the literature on PGs (e.g. Cinque 1990), parasitic gaps can be licensed by PP movement in English (albeit somewhat marginally). The following example from Levine et al. 2001:185 illustrates this, where the moved PP is construed as the obligatory PP argument of the verb *put* in the adjunct clause (i.e. a parasitic gap):

- (5) (?)This is the kind of table [pp on which] it would be wrong to put silverware —pp
[without also putting a fancy centerpiece pgpp]

With this as our baseline, we can test for non-nominal PG-licensing in locative inversion. The ungrammatical example without movement is given in (6a). With \bar{A} -movement, either wh-movement (6b) or clefting (6c), the moved PP can be construed as the goal argument of *slide NP PP* with a similar degree of acceptability as (5). The author and two other consultants find a sharp contrast between these examples and the locative inversion example in (6d), where a PG interpretation for the PP is absent, similar to (6a) (Erik Zyman, Matthew Hewett p.c.). It should be mentioned, however, that I have encountered some variation in judgments with some speakers not finding the contrast quite as clear or not accepting PP parasitic gaps to begin with. Further empirical work on the range of variation with these data would be useful. For speakers with the judgments in (6), this provides a novel argument for A-movement in locative inversion.

- (6) a. *Julia peered under the door [before sliding a mysterious sealed envelope pgpp]
b. (?) [pp Under whose door] did Julia peer —pp
[before sliding a mysterious sealed envelope pgpp]?
c. (?) It was [pp under the door] that Julia peered —pp
[before sliding a mysterious sealed envelope pgpp]
d. ?*And then, [pp under the door] peered Julia —pp
[before sliding a mysterious sealed envelope pgpp]

The absence of parasitic gap licensing in inversion constructions, unlike \bar{A} -movement configurations, provides further support for an analysis in which both quotative and locative inversion involve phrasal A-movement to Spec-TP. Assuming that these types of clausal adjuncts containing PGs can only be licensed by an intermediate stopover of \bar{A} -movement at Spec-vP (Nissenbaum 2000; Van Urk 2017), obligatory A-movement to subject position in quotative/locative inversion rules out this possibility.

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