Reassessing the argument for tucking-in

Tim Hunter and Shiti Malhotra
University of Maryland

INTRODUCTION

Rudin (1998) observes that in Bulgarian multiple questions, the order of the moved wh-phrases preserves the “base c-command order”, as shown in (1). These facts appear to be difficult to reconcile with the superiority effect in English, shown in (2).

(1) a. Ko kako koga?
who whom sees
b. *Ko koga koko.
who whom sees

To get the correct word order in (1), one cannot keep both assumptions in (5).

(3) ExtCond: Movement is always to the root of the tree.
Sup: The highest XP is attracted to a certain head moves first (and the lowest such XP moves last).

Richards (1999) argues, largely on the basis of the Principal of Minimal Compliance (PMC), that Sup is true in (1), and that therefore ExtCond is the assumption that must be dropped.

We propose an alternative account of (1) and (2) via a re-interpretation of “superiority” phenomena, maintaining ExtCond.

OVERVIEW OF RICHARDS (1999)

According to the PMC (Richards, 1998), a wh-movement can disobey subjacency if a subjacency-obeying movement to the same projection has already occurred.

(4) a. *[Which car did John persuade the man who bought it] to sell the hubcaps?

b. *Who t1 persuaded the man who bought which car, to sell the hubcaps?

The illicit movement (index j) in (4a) is improved in (4b) when a licit wh-movement (index i) to the same projection precedes the problematic movement (now covert) movement. But not in (4c) when the licit movement follows the problematic movement.

The violation in (5a) is also improved by the presence of a licit wh-movement to the same projection in (5b). This suggests that the licit wh-movement of ‘koj senatorat’ precedes the problematic movement — as per Sup.

(5) a. *[Kojava kojaja, otrece senatorat [malvate ce pravoslavstvo iska da zabrani t1 [?]
which book denied the senator the rumour that the government wanted to ban
which which book did the senator deny the rumour that the government wanted to ban

b. ?[koj senatorat] , kojaja senatora, otrece t1 [malvate ce pravoslavstvo iska da zabrani t1 [?
which senator which book made the rumour that the government wanted to ban
which senator denied the rumour that the government wanted to ban which book which.

This means that the first movement step was to the higher specifier position in (5b) — contra ExtCond.

The best way to resolve the tension created by (1) and (2) therefore seems to be to maintain Sup and abandon ExtCond.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO TUCKING IN — OVERVIEW

We explore the other of the two logical possibilities (shown in (6)) that can account for (1) and (2) (i.e. StartLow). (The data in (5) can plausibly be explained without reference to the PMC, see final section.)

(6) TuckIn: Maintain Sup.

Abandon ExtCond. When a head overtly attracts multiple XPs, subsequent movement steps “tuck in” under the first.

StartLow: Maintain ExtCond.

Abandon Sup. When a head overtly attracts multiple XPs, the lowest attracted XP moves first (and the highest last).

The big idea to get StartLow to work can be summarised as follows:

• By default, the most remote attractor moves first; this produces Bulgarian (1).

• English “overrides” this default in (2) because by doing so it reduces the total cost (length) of the overt movements.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO TUCKING IN — IN MORE DETAIL

Richards (1999, p.135) notes the alternative we explore here: “If we wish to maintain the idea that movement always expands the tree [ExtCond], creating a specifier higher than all the existing structure, we must apparently conclude . . . that the lower of the two wh-words . . . must move first.”

When the C head becomes active, the choice arises of which wh-word to move first. Bulgarian and English choose differently.

• In Bulgarian (1), both wh-words must move overtly. No matter which moves first, the other will also move overtly, and so the total cost/length of overt movements will be the same. The default occurs.

• In English (2), only one wh-word must move overtly. The total cost/length of overt movements will be precisely the cost/length of the one wh-word that moves. The default is overridden.

This requires that derivational costs are compared at the end of each maximal projection, rather than after every move/merge step.

Both of the options in (6) entail departing from the assumptions in (3) in the case where one head overtly attracts multiple specifiers. Why should this case stand out?

• StartLow provides some insight into why the oneSpecifier case should differ from the multipleSpecifier case in the way that it does.

TuckIn leaves this question largely unanswered, we think, attempts to derive it rely on (i) non-equidistant specifiers, and (ii) a problematic reformulation of Shortest Move/Attract (Richards, 1999).

REANALYSING THE CRUCIAL CASE IN (5)

If we reject TuckIn, the PMC account of the contrast in (5) is no longer valid; this fact needs some other explanation. We sketch some possibilities here.

Bošković (1999, 2002) argues for a distinction in Bulgarian between (i) the wh-phrase that is pronounced first, and (ii) all other wh-phrases, specifically, that only the former undergoes wh-movement, and the others undergo focus movement. If only wh-movement is subject to island effects, the facts would fall as predicted by the PMC.

Bošković’s proposal seems to extend to Serbo-Croatian (SC) better than Richards’s. In SC, ordering of wh-phrases is generally free except under sluicing, where it behaves like Bulgarian (Stjepanović, 2003). This can be explained if we follow the account of Bošković (2002) that SC questions involve only focus movement normally, but wh-movement in cases of sluicing (IP deletion).

Some other points also both on the argument for TuckIn from (5):

• Repair by the PMC sometimes produces partial acceptability (as in Bulgarian (5)), and sometimes complete acceptability (as in English (4)).

• Repair by the PMC sometimes does not occur at all (data from Hindi, Japanese):

(7) a. Neko je nekog nekako prevario somebody is someone somehow cheated

b. *Ko kako koga?
who whom how

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Overview of Richards (1999)

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c. *[Which car did John persuade the man who bought which car] to sell [which hubcaps]?

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References


