Readings for next time, and a suggested reading order.


Comments on Marantz (1995)

This article is designed to be a slightly more accessible rendition of the ideas proposed by Chomsky in A minimalistic program for linguistic theory, although it doesn’t cover all of the technical details. Even so, there may be things here you haven’t seen before; just bear with it.

p. 358: Don’t work too hard to wrap your mind around Greed. Marantz points out some problems with it here, and it is dispensed with in later developments within the minimalist program.

I had you stop at page 368, in the middle of a section, because the rest of that section discusses a particular technical trick that was required in Chomsky’s formalization of the minimalist system in 1993 which involved “equidistance” as a way of evading requirements of “Shortest Move”. Next week, we will talk about a more updated version of this, but there is no need to learn the technicalities of the 1993 version, given that we only have two weeks to do this.

Comments on Chomsky (1998)

Although Chomsky (1998) is a couple of steps ahead of Chomsky (1993) on the path of the development of the minimalist program, the first few pages lay out the sort of conceptual idea behind the minimalist program pretty well. For the most part, what Chomsky says in the early part of Chomsky (1998) is still compatible with what he was assuming in 1993, but is spelled out a little bit more clearly.

This introductory section is basically about the philosophy and idea of the minimalist program, and not about technical details per se.

There are no obvious suggestions I can make with respect to reading this, except to read it one sentence at a time. Chomsky almost invariably chooses his words very carefully, and sometimes there is meaning in what he didn’t opt to say as well as in what he did.

Comments on Chomsky (1993)

This paper is the actual “minimalist program” paper that started the enterprise. You will recognize some parts of the discussion, often more compressed, from having just read Chomsky (1998). Incidentally, what you are reading was actually published as chapter 3 of a 1995 book called The minimalist program, and was very lightly revised (mainly to refer to other chapters in the book, rather than to the previously published versions of the papers). The pages you were assigned (167–176, 186–195) correspond to this 1995 version. The 1993 page numbers would be 1–10, 19–28, if you happen to already have a copy of that.

p. 187: Two conditions that were held to hold of D-structure were the θ-criterion and the Projection Principle. We didn’t really talk about the Projection Principle in Syntax I, and in Syntax I we also already were taking the θ-criterion to hold at LF.

p. 189: The operation GT is basically the same operation as the one which was later re-named Merge; it takes two syntactic objects (he calls them K and K’) and puts them together to form a bigger, single syntactic object (which he calls K*); an example would be putting the verb and object together to form a V′.
The view of the derivation which Chomsky is outlining here is one where the syntactic tree is built “from the bottom up.” The first step is to take the verb and object and put them together, forming V′. Then, we take the subject and combine it with V′ to form VP. And so on. If the object moves overtly (like in the cases of object shift we considered before), the idea is that the object is singled out, a copy is made of it, and then that copy is merged with the existing structure. So, if we’d built up….

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AgrO} \\
\text{AgrO} \\
\text{subject} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{object}
\end{array}
\]

and we were going to move the object into SpecAgrOP, then, we would make a copy of the object and merge it with AgrO′, forming:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AgrOP} \\
\text{object} \\
\text{AgrO} \\
\text{subject} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{object}
\end{array}
\]

Notice that there are now two copies of the object in the tree. The top one is where the object will be pronounced, the bottom one is the “trace” and is not pronounced. It is, however, a full copy of the thing that moved—this is the essence of the “copy theory of movement”: traces are still full copies of the things that move.

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**Stuff for you to do:**

- Do the readings.
- No summary due.

**Next time:**
No student presentations, just discussion of the Minimalist Program.