

Workshop: The mirror asymmetry: Long-distance subject/object asymmetries from a theoretical and empirical perspective.

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It is a well-known fact that local, clause-bound (short-distance) A'-dependencies (such as wh-questions, topicalization constructions and relatives) are typically less marked than local object A'-dependencies. This is visible in first and second language acquisition, in language processing, in both comprehension and production, and in typical as well as atypical populations. For relative clauses, this subject/object asymmetry has been formalized in terms of the Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977), which describes the fact that subject positions are easier to relativize than non-subject positions. This hierarchy by and large appears to carry over to wh-questions as well (Hawkins, 2003).

Somewhat surprisingly, a reverse asymmetry seems to hold for long-distance (LD) A'-dependencies (long-distance in this context means: A'-dependencies spanning more than one clause). Crosslinguistically speaking, subjects are harder to extract from embedded clauses than non-subjects (cf. McDaniel et al., 2015). Many languages therefore employ some sort of alternative strategy to form LD subject dependencies, such as complementizer deletion or alternation, clausal pied-piping, resumptive prolepsis and scope marking (cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky, 2007). Whether or not such alternative strategies involve LD movement proper is something which is not always evident. The question is therefore whether these alternative strategies are in any way revealing of the problems with LD subject extraction.

The reverse asymmetry is furthermore visible in L1 (Roeper & De Villiers, 2011) and L2 acquisition (Jordens, 1991; Juffs & Rodríguez, 2014), in diachronic change (Schippers & Hoeksema, 2021) in acceptability judgment data (Featherston, 2005; Kiziak, 2010) and in sentence processing (Schippers et al., 2020). These data generally show that LD subject A'-dependencies are harder to acquire, less preferred and more difficult to process than LD object A'-dependencies.

The problem with LD subject extraction is perhaps best known because of the *that*-trace or COMP-trace effect in English, for which a wide variety of explanations have been given, including syntactic accounts (Rizzi, 1990), informational-structural accounts (Bennis, 1986; Bayer, 2005), a processing-related explanation (Hawkins, 2003), a production-related account (McDaniel et al., 2015) and prosodic accounts (Kandybowicz, 2008). Rizzi & Shlonsky (2007) propose the COMP-trace effect in English is due to a universal ban on LD subject extraction (criterial subject freezing). This is meant to account for the fact that crosslinguistically, LD subject extraction appears to be banned almost without exception. However, notable and stubborn exceptions to this rule are languages like German and Dutch, although subject LD extractions are less preferred than object LD extractions. Current formal syntactic and information-structural explanations run into the trouble of predicting non-convergence for LD subject extraction. However, in many cases the effect seems to be gradual and variable (even for English, cf. Sobin, 1987), suggesting an extragrammatical explanation (e.g. processing/production related) for LD subject/object asymmetries and COMP-trace-related effects. But if the mirror asymmetry is caused by processing and production-related considerations, it must equally well be explained why some languages have more problems with LD subject extraction than others, and why in individual languages, the mirror asymmetry also shows diachronic variability. Old English, for example, did not have a COMP-trace effect, which became active during the Middle English period (Allen, 1980; Bergh & Seppänen, 1994). A more general problem is that many accounts only focus on the mirror asymmetry in (a) specific language(s), which is understandable given the range of

crosslinguistic variability in the effect and the way that languages deal with it, but problematic in light of the explanatory adequacy. This underlines the importance of discussing the matter in a workshop setting.

The difficulties associated with LD subject/object asymmetries have been the topic of extensive research and debate in formal frameworks, with the issue far from being settled (Pesetsky, 2017). Up to now, however, the topic has received relatively little attention from more empirically driven lines of research, such as psycholinguistics, language acquisition and variationist linguistics (both synchronically and diachronically). This workshop therefore has as its goal to bring together researchers that work on LD subject/non-subject asymmetries from different fields of research and frameworks. The overarching research question that this workshop aims to answer (and which all presentations should address) is: Which factor(s) causes the LD subject/object asymmetry? Relevant subquestions related to this central question are (amongst others):

- Is there a general, universal constraint on LD subject movement or are there exemptional languages/contexts?
- Which alternative strategies are employed to form LD subject dependencies, what is their syntactic and semantic structure, and how do they relate to LD movement proper?
- Are there LD subject/object asymmetries in language processing, production and comprehension? What kind of conclusions can be drawn from this? Can LD subject/object asymmetries be reduced to processing and/or production considerations)?
- Are there LD subject/object asymmetries in L1 and L2 acquisition and what can be learned from this?
- What kind of diachronic and synchronic (e.g. dialectal) variation in LD subject/object asymmetries effects can be observed? Which parameters are responsible for this variation?
- How do we deal with variability in LD subject/object asymmetries, both within and between speakers?

In addition to empirically grounded work (research on language production and processing, first and second language acquisition, experimental syntax, corpus linguistics, etc.), we also welcome (novel) formal explanations for LD subject non/subject asymmetries. Furthermore, since a lot of the research on LD subject/object asymmetries is on larger, well-known languages such as English and French, we particularly welcome research on lesser-known languages and varieties and typologically different languages. Also research connecting the short-distance asymmetry to the mirror long-distance asymmetry is welcomed.

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