Verbal morphology, agreement and head movement: Reexamination of Lasnik 1995

Michiya Kawai (Huron University College and University of Western Ontario)

Lasnik (1995) successfully incorporates Chomsky's (1957) analysis of English verbal morphology within the early minimalist framework (e.g., Chomsky 1993). Unfortunately, Lasnik's proposal cannot be maintained within the current minimalist framework with *agree* (Chomsky 2000). This paper revises Lasnik's (1995) analysis for the current minimalist theory. Through this process, we examines the properties of syntactic head movement, as well.

Lasnik (1995) proposes featural and affixal Infl (I_F and I_A, respectively). I_F is a bundle of features that agree with the corresponding features of a fully inflected verb (lexicalist-verbs). French verbs and English *be*/auxiliary verbs are of this type. A lexicalist verb raises to [Spec, I_F] for agreement, thus skipping the negation, if present (1a). On the other hand, I_A needs to be PF-merged with an adjacent verbal stem (bare-verb); I_A triggers no movement. When a negation is present, I_A and the verb stem are not linearly adjacent, thus PF-merger is blocked; as a last resort operation, *do*-support applies to license the stranded I_A (1b).

(1) a. I_F not [$_{VP}$ be happy] → be-I_F not [$_{VP}$ ~~be~~ happy] → John is not happy.

    b. I_A not [$_{VP}$ walk] → *do*-I_A not [$_{VP}$ walk] → John does not walk.

(2) a. $I_{\alpha F}$ [$_{VP}$ walk$_{\alpha F}$]

    b. I_F not [$_{VP}$ walk] → *do*-I_F not [$_{VP}$ walk] → John does not walk

    c. I_A not [$_{VP}$ be happy] → be-I_A not [$_{VP}$ ~~be~~ happy] → John is not happy.

(3)   John never eats cheese. → John I_A [$_{VP}$ never eat cheese]

In a recent framework (Chomsky 2001, to appear), *agree* (Probe-goal) does not induce movement, rendering Lasnik's (1995) analysis untenable. This paper proposes the following. English *be*/auxiliary verbs are bare verbs occurring with I_A, whereas English main verbs are lexicalist occurring with I_F – a mirror image of Lasnik's proposal. An *agree* relation is established between I_F and a lexicalist verb in-situ (2a). A negation blocks this agreement, leaving I_F unlicensed; *do*-support, a last resort operation, licenses the features of I_F (2b). An English bare verb raises to license the affix feature of I_A. This head movement, which I assume is a substitution operation (Szuranyi 2003), checks I_A's affix feature.

This modification improves Lasnik's original proposal both conceptually and empirically. Empirically, Lasnik's proposal had difficulty explaining why negation blocks the PF-merger of the *I_A* and *V*, while adverbs do not, as shown respectively in (1b) and (3). This is not a problem for the present analysis since I_F can search V across the adverb, but not a negation, as I will argue in the paper. Conceptually, Lasnik's analysis, French verbs are lexicalist – i.e., individually listed in lexicon. This is rather redundant since the French verbal inflection is largely predictable. Under the present analysis, French regular verbs are compositionally inflected, not individually listed in the lexicon. If correct, then head movement must be an integral part of the computational system, as argued in Bobaljik (1995), Harley (2002), Szurány (2003), Matushansky (2006), among others.

Bibliography

Bobaljik, J. D. 1995. In terms of Merge: Copy and Head Movement. *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 27, 41–64.

Chomsky, N. 1957. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. 1993. A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory. In K. Hale and J. Keyser eds. *The view from Building 20*, 1–52. Reprinted in Chomsky, N. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*, 167–217. Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: the framework. R. Martin et al. (eds.), *Step by step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, 89–155. MIT press.

Chomsky, N. (To appear). On phases. In R. Freidin, C. Otero, and M. –L. Zubizaretta (eds.) *Foundational Issues in Linguistic Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Harley, H. 2002. Why one head is better than two: Head-movement and compounding as consequences of merge in Bare Phrase Structure (ms.) University of Arizona, AZ.

Lasnik, H. 1995. Verbal morphology: *Syntactic structures meets the minimalist program.* In H. Campos and P. Kempchinsky (eds.), *Evolution and revolution in linguistic theory*, 251–275. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. Reprinted in H. Lasnik. 1999. *Minimalist Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Matushansky, O. 2006. Head movement and linguistic theory. Lingusitic Inquiry 37: 69–107.

Surányi, B. 2003. Head movement qua substitution. GLOW Newsletter 26. Handout available at http://ludens.elte.hu/~b_suranyi/download/glowheadmvt_handout.pdf