The binding of German anaphors in a Minimalist Framework

An application of Hicks 2009

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The Binding Conditions

The classic Conditions of Binding Theory:

- ► Condition A: An anaphor must be bound in its local domain. (Hicks 2009:4)
- ► Condition B: A pronoun must be free in its local domain. (Hicks 2009:5)

Today we will be focusing on Condition A.

The Binding Conditions

(1) a. John$_i$ loves himself$_i$/*him$_i$.

b. John$_i$ knows [Mary$_m$ loves *himself$_i$/him$_i$].

The exact definition of the local domain is controversial.

Dutch I

Many Germanic languages, like Dutch, have a split anaphoric inventory, that consists of SE anaphors (Dutch *zich*) and SELF anaphors (Dutch *zichzelf*).

SELF anaphors adhere to Condition A, like English *himself*. SE anaphors are ungrammatical when they are bound too closely, like a pronoun:

(2) Max$_i$ haat zichzelf$_i$ /*zich$_i$ /*hem$_i$.
     Max$_i$ hates SELF$_i$ /*SE$_i$ /*him$_i$.
     'Max hates himself.'   Dutch, Hicks (2009:227)

Dutch II

However, like a SELF anaphor, they are also ungrammatical when they are too far away from their antecedent:

(3)   Maria$_i$ gelooft dat Jan$_j$ zich$_{*i/*j}$ haat.
       Maria$_i$ believes that Jan$_j$ SE$_{*i/*j}$ hates
       'Maria thinks that Jan hates her.' (personal conversation)

Dutch III

SE anaphors are grammatical in contexts like (4):

(4)　　Hans$_i$ sag [$_{DP}$ de   hond   [$_{PP}$ naast zich$_i$]].
　　　　Hans$_i$ saw the dog next.to SE$_i$
　　　　'Hans saw the dog next to him.'

German

German too has a SE anaphor *sich* as well as a SELF anaphor *sich selbst*. Unlike in Dutch, the German SE can be bound as closely as a SELF element:

(5) German

    a.   Max$_i$ hasst sich$_i$ /sich selbst$_i$ /*ihn$_i$.
          Max$_i$ hates SE$_i$ /SELF$_i$ /him$_i$
          'Max hates himself.'

    b.   Maria$_i$ lobt   sich$_i$ /sich selbst$_i$ /*sie$_i$.
          Mary$_i$ praises SE$_i$ /SELF$_i$ /her$_{*i}$
          'Mary praises herself.'

Hicks 2009: The derivation of anaphoric relations I

In Minimalism, we only want to make use of very basic, general principles that are relevant to a variety of phenomena and analyses. The Binding conditions are thus unfavourable.

Solution

Binding is Agree.

- ► [VAR:_] feature, valued on pronouns and R-expressions, unvalued on anaphors
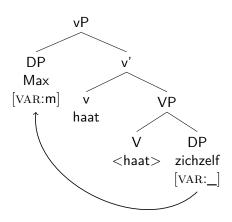- ► local domain: phase (vP, CP)

  (6) *Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC)* as cited by Hicks (2009:124):
       In a phase α with a head H, the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α, only H and its edge [its specifier(s)] are accessible to such operations.

Hicks 2009: The derivation of anaphoric relations II

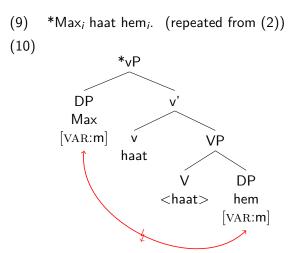[VAR] is unvalued on (SELF) anaphors:

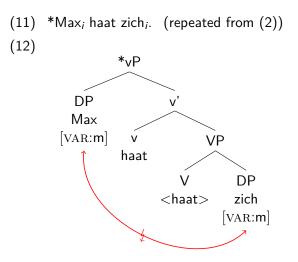(7)   Max$_i$ haat zichzelf$_i$/*zich$_i$. (repeated from (2))

(8)

Hicks 2009: The derivation of anaphoric relations III

Pronouns are merged with a valued [VAR:x], which in (10) leads to ungrammaticality due to an economy condition.

(9)   *Max$_i$ haat hem$_i$. (repeated from (2))

(10)

Hicks 2009: The derivation of anaphoric relations IV

To rule out Dutch (11), Hicks assumes a valued [VAR:x] on SE as well.

(11) *Max$_i$ haat zich$_i$. (repeated from (2))

(12)

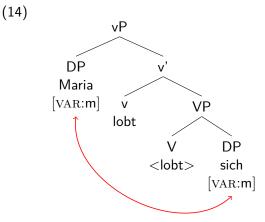# Hicks 2009: The derivation of anaphoric relations V

Hicks shows that this analysis is also applicable to the binding behaviour of Norwegian and Icelandic. It does not, however, fit the German data.

Hicks x German

The fact that German *sich* cannot be bound too closely leads to the conclusion that it cannot bear a valued [VAR:x].

(13)   Maria$_i$ lobt sich$_i$/sich selbst$_i$/*sie$_i$. (repeated from (5))

(14)

Proposition

Consequently, German SE must bear [VAR:_].

That means

German SE and SELF anaphors are syntactically equivalent.

This prediction bears out in most of the syntactic environments I have examined in my thesis. I therefore maintain the distinction between SE and SELF in German is a semantic one.

This distinction as well as the more general implications of the above assumptions will have to be explored further.

References

Hicks, Glyn. 2009. *The Derivation of Anaphoric Relations*, vol. 139. John Benjamins Publishing.