

Moving away from antilocality: A defense of very local movement

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Most syntactic research standardly assumes that syntactic dependencies are subject to locality constraints: agreement and movement cannot cross certain elements (bounding nodes, phase boundaries, elements which bear the same features, etc.). A growing body of work also argues that there are antilocality constraints which impose a lower bound on syntactic dependencies—movement, and perhaps Agree, must cross a certain type of boundary. Focusing primarily on Spec-to-Spec Antilocality (Erlewine 2016 et seq.), which states that movement from Spec,XP “must cross a maximal projection other than XP”, we argue that such constraints are unlikely to be part of Universal Grammar. The argument is three-fold. First, we briefly discuss the trajectory of antilocality theories and argue that they were originally proposed as responses to theoretical idiosyncrasies which don’t extend beyond the frameworks they are couched in. Second, we focus on one of the most discussed empirical motivations for antilocality theories – constraints on subject extraction – and suggest that these data can be analyzed in other ways, while antilocality approaches fall short in explaining the patterns. And finally, we present a case study of possessor relativization in West Circassian which demonstrates that Spec-to-Spec Antilocality makes the wrong empirical prediction: very local movement exists.