Some notes on phases

Diego Krivochen, UNLP.

Abstract:

The notion of *economy* is central in as much as it rules every cognitive process. Within the Faculty of Language, from a minimalist perspective, economy implies elimination of: (a) superfluous steps in a derivation and (b) superfluous elements in a representation, that is, elimination of every element that may increase computational cost that is not strictly required by interface conditions. Throughout the history of Generative Grammar, the search for "less expensive" mechanisms has led investigators to propose *restricted derivational spaces* (i.e, *local*) for the application of syntactic operations: for example, the Subjacency condition and Barriers within the GB model, and, more recently, *phases* within a minimalist framework. In this work we propose a dynamic conception of phase, which is an alternative to those devised by Chomsky (1998, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007) and others within the minimalist paradigm (such as Grohmann´s *Prolific Domains*, Uriagereka´s hypothesis about *Multiple Spell-Out* and Epstein & Seeley´s 2002 *strong derivational* approach). Our proposal is to define *phases* as relevant not only in the *transfer* of information from FL to the external components (A-P / C-I) but in a wider conception of the mind-brain as *massively modular* (Sperber, 2005, Carruthers, 2005). Although (relatively) independent, modules must present information to others in the form of a totally interpretable element, by means of *transfer* operations analogous to those proposed by Chomsky for FL. Those transfer operations would apply to *phases*, as we consider that operations in every module are subjected to economy conditions, even if each module has its own instantiations of the general principle according to features of its input, its operations and the output that it must present to other modules. By applying a *locality condition* to operations in *every module* (operations that are, all in all, syntactic, because they frequently, if not always, involve structured manipulation of discrete objects), we also seek a more uniform model of the functioning of the mind-brain and the interactions between the modules. We will try to show that the notion of what should be a *phase* must neither be determined *a priori* nor be static (as in a chomskyan framework), but we can dynamically establish minimally interpretable objects in every level / module **exclusively delimited by the legibility conditions of the systems to which the objects are transferred**. That is, we define *phases* according to *economy* and *convergence*. We will also try to analyze *post-transfer operations* for the reconstruction of objects transferred in "derivational cascades" (Uriagereka, 2002).