

A Note on Indefinite Pronouns in English


Yosuke Sato

National University of Singapore

ellys@nus.edu.sg

In his squib that discusses the possibility of postnominal attributive adjectival modification in English, as illustrated in (1a) vs. (1b) (cf. (1c)), Kishimoto (2000) proposes a bimorphemic analysis of *every*-X forms (see also Abney 1987 for a related analysis). According to his analysis, *every* and *thing* in (1a) are two independent heads/lexical items within the syntax; they later undergo PF-Merger (cf. Bobaljik 1995; Halle and Marantz 1993) into a single word in the post-syntactic morphological component. Kishimoto's analysis is shown in (2).

- (1) a. everything interesting
b. *a book interesting
c. an interesting book

- (2) [DP every [NumP thing_i [NP interesting [NP t_i]]] (adopted from Kishimoto 2000: 560)
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In (2), the adjective *interesting* is base-generated to the left of the NP that dominates *thing*. The surface order obtains as the result of the overt N-raising of *thing* across the adjective to the Num head. Kishimoto's core argument for the analysis comes from examples such as (3b). It has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Postal 1969; see also Di Sciullo and Williams 1987) that a lexical word, including compounds, forms an opaque domain for adverbial modification, as illustrated in (3a). Notice, however, that adverbs like *almost/virtually/nearly* can successfully modify part of what appears to be the single lexical word *everyone* in (3b), on a par with (3c), which contains the fully phrasal DP *all (the) students*.

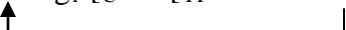
- (3) a.* A very [hot dog]
b. Almost/virtually/nearly everyone
c. Almost/virtually/nearly all (the) students (Kishimoto 2000: 561)

This modificational possibility, thus, indicates that, despite what the English orthographical convention suggests, *everyone* is composed of two independent heads/lexical items, *every* and *one*, within the syntax, as represented in (2).

With this analysis in mind, let us consider another construction in English, illustrated in (4a, b), which heretofore has escaped any analysis in the literature, to the best of my knowledge. I call this construction the ‘*every-X existential*’ for lack of a better word.

- (4) a. I need to find someone that knows ***everything there is*** about websites.
 b. I know almost ***everything there is*** to know about twilight, I’m the ultimate fan.

In this construction, *everything* serves as the relative indefinite pronoun that is restrictively modified by the following existential expression *there is*. Assuming the raising/promotion analysis of Vergnaud (1974)/Kayne (1994) (see Chomsky 1977 for the alternative, matching/null operator movement analysis), one could imagine that the derivation for the pertinent portion of (4a), for example, involves the direct movement of *everything* from the immediately postverbal position to the specifier of CP as the nominal head of the relative clause. This derivation is shown in (5).

- (5) [_{CP} Everything_i [_{C'} C [_{TP} there is t_i about websites]]]
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- The diagram shows a horizontal line with an upward-pointing arrow at the left end, connecting the trace *t_i* in the TP complement to the head *Everything_i* in the CP specifier.

However, this analysis is untenable on the following ground. It has been widely known since the seminal work of Milsark (1974) (see also McNally 1997 and Keenan 2003) that existential constructions in English show the so-called *Definiteness Effect*, which prohibits the occurrence of a strong quantifier, including *every*, in the immediately postverbal position. This constraint is illustrated in (6a, b).

- (6) a. * There is everything about websites.
 b. * There is everything to know about twilight, I’m the ultimate fan.

A more appropriate analysis of examples like (4a, b), then, would be one where what undergoes movement in the syntax is only the restrictor part of *everything* (namely, *thing*). Under this analysis, the relevant part of (4a) would have the structure in (7).

- (7) [_{DP} Every [_{CP} thing_i [_{C'} C [_{TP} there is t_i about websites]]]]
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- The diagram shows a horizontal line with an upward-pointing arrow at the left end, connecting the trace *t_i* in the TP complement to the restrictor *thing_i* within the CP complement of the DP head *Every*.

The Definiteness Effect does not arise in this derivation because the universal quantifier *every* is base-generated in the TP-external position independently from its restrictor; the two syntactic heads are merged together into a single word only in the post-syntactic component. Kishimoto observes that in English, only semantically light nouns like *thing* can undergo overt N-raising, just as only semantically light verbs like *have* and *be* can undergo overt V-raising (Roberts 1998). This observation also holds no less true for the *every*-X existential construction under investigation.

Therefore, to the extent that the present analysis for (4a, b) holds, the data here provide further empirical support for Kishimoto's bimorphemic analysis of indefinite pronouns and for the possibility of overt-N raising in English, more generally.

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