

Toward Explaining the Head-Final Filter

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Illustrating with German, a PP-argument can follow or precede its adjectival predicate in the clause, (1a-b). In contrast, a PP-argument can only precede the adjective in the noun phrase, (2a-b). Williams (1982) labels this restriction the Head-Final Filter (INFL = inflection):

- (1) a. *der Vater ist [stolz auf seinen Sohn]*
the father is proud of his son
- b. *der Vater ist [auf seinen Sohn stolz]*
- (2) a. * *der [stolz-e auf seinen Sohn] Vater*
the proud-INFL of his son father
- b. *der [auf seinen Sohn stolz-e] Vater*

This restriction follows if adjectives and their inflections are base-generated separately, if adjectives do not undergo (a series of) head movement(s), and if inflections are sensitive to the lexical category of their “host”.

Leu (2008) proposes that adjectival inflections are generated in a different position from the adjectives themselves. Assuming with others that adjectives have their own extended projection, the simplified structure is given in (3), where the inflection is in Infl and the adjective and the PP-argument are in XP:

- (3) [InflP Infl [XP (PP) Adj (PP)]]

We will see that the account goes through independent of different base-generations of the PP inside XP. Specifically, disallowing Adj-to-Infl raising and requiring Infl to have an overt host, PP or XP moves to Spec,InflP. The difference between (2a) and (2b) follows if we assume that the noun of the PP is not an appropriate stem for the category-sensitive inflection, (4a-b), but that the adjective is, (4c):

- (4) a. * [InflP [PP *auf seinen Sohn*]_i Infl-e [XP t_i *stolz* t_i]]
- b. * [InflP [XP *stolz* [PP *auf seinen Sohn*]]_k Infl-e t_k]
- c. [InflP [XP [PP *auf seinen Sohn*] *stolz*]_k Infl-e t_k]

Let us mention three immediate advantages of this proposal. First, the grammaticality of (1a-b) follows from the absence of InflP and/or from different kinds of movements in the clause (this might actually vary for different languages). Second, illustrating again with German, van

Riemsdijk (1998: 673) discusses certain cases where the inflection is not on the adjectival head itself but on a different element. Compare (5a-b):

- (5) a. *Das Flugzeug ist so schnell (wie möglich).*
 the airplane is as fast as possible
- b. *das [so schnell wie möglich-e] Flugzeug*
 the as quick as possible-INFL airplane

Again, these types of cases follow if XP undergoes movement to Spec,InflP:

- (6) [InflP [XP *so schnell wie möglich*]_k Infl-*e* t_k]

To explain these facts, van Riemsdijk (1998: 675) stipulates an adjacency requirement (the Head Adjacency Principle), proposing that adjectives bearing the agreement features have to adjoin to the head noun under adjacency. As he himself discusses in footnote 56, this leads to a complication when adjectives are stacked: strictly speaking, only one adjective can be linearly adjacent to the head noun. As a third advantage, then, the current proposal avoids this issue as the restriction is captured by the one-to-one relation between adjectives and their inflections in (3).

References:

- Leu, Thomas. 2008. The Internal Syntax of Determiners. Doctoral Dissertation, New York University.
- Riemsdijk, Henk van. 1998. Head Movement and Adjacency. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 16: 633-678.
- Williams, Edwin. 1982. Another Argument that Passive is Transformational. *Linguistic Inquiry* 13: 160-3.