

The Optionality of Movement and EPP in Dholuo

Based upon original field research, this talk presents evidence that the functional heads of Dholuo (Nilo-Saharan; Kenya) can systematically appear either with or without EPP-features. This optionality of EPP extends even to T, providing remarkably concrete evidence that some languages do allow SpecTP to be empty at PF and LF (Woolford 1991, Doron 2000, Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2005; cf. Chomsky 1981, Lasnik 2001, Carstens 2005). Furthermore, the need for subjects to raise in certain constructions provides evidence for the Bobaljik & Wurmbrand (2005) theory of Agreement locality.

In the first part of the talk, I present evidence that Dholuo fails to exhibit the EPP as found in English. The principal evidence is the possibility for passive and clausal subjects to remain post-verbal in this otherwise rigidly SVO language. I present evidence that the preverbal subject positions are indeed A-positions (and not left-peripheral A-bar positions). I then present evidence that these preverbal A-positions remain empty at both PF and LF in those sentences where subjects remain post-verbal. On the basis of these facts, I demonstrate that several alternative ways of stating the EPP are not consistent with the facts in Dholuo, and so one may conclude that the EPP as found in English does not hold for Dholuo.

Following this, I present evidence that wh-movement in Dholuo is wholly optional. While the free alternation between 'fronted wh' and 'wh-in-situ' is well-documented for Dholuo and neighboring Bantu languages, I take care to show that in Dholuo the optional fronting undergone by wh-words is **not** an independent A-bar movement process (such as focus-movement or clefting). Rather, it is a movement construction specific to wh-words, and so it is proper to conclude that Dholuo exhibits optional wh-movement.

Given the general optionality of both A-movement and A-bar movement in the language, I propose a model of Dholuo grammar where all functional heads have the option of either bearing or not bearing an EPP feature. Optional subject raising, then, is the result of (i) phi-Agreement between T and the subject, and (ii) an optional EPP feature on T. I then present evidence that phi-Agreement between T and the subject holds even when the subject is in-situ. This evidence provides independent support for Bobaljik & Wurmbrand's (2005) theory of Agree locality.

Finally, I offer a few thoughts regarding why the EPP should fail to hold for Dholuo, a language that in many other respects is parametrically similar to English. I observe that recent work on the EPP by Richards (2010) would predict that the EPP should fail to hold in Dholuo, given that the tense morphemes in the language are all free-standing particles.