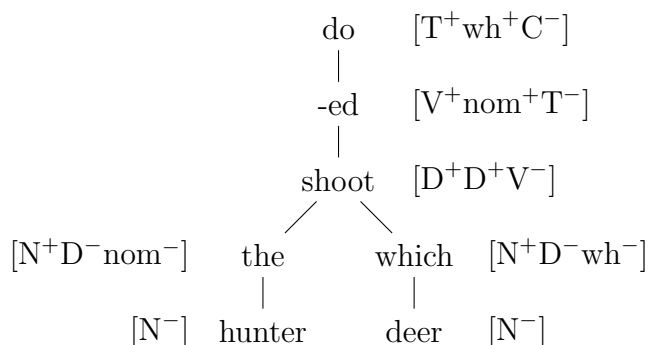


Computational Syntax: Lecture Notes

2019-09-27

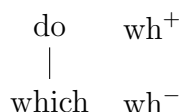
1 TSL Characterization of Movement

Recall the dependency-tree representation of a typical MG sentence:



Which deer did the hunter shoot?

Also recall that movement on such a tree is (M)TSL₂, where each kind of movement feature gets its own tier. For instance, here is the wh- tier for this example:



This is all well and good, but so far we have not discussed island constraints or their exceptions. For instance, consider the following:

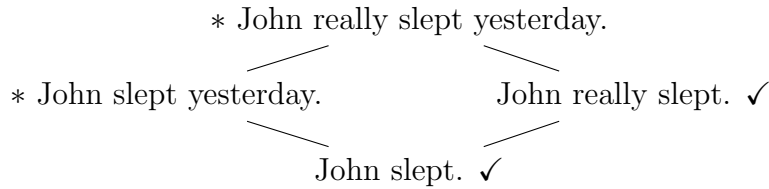
* What did John drive Mary crazy because he was trying to fix?

What did John drive Mary crazy while trying to fix?

The latter, grammatical, sentence is called a Truswell sentence, named from Truswell (2007).

Some formalisms, including MGs, GB, HPSG, and GPSG, cannot inherently predict the existence of island constraints. Others, like that of Stepanov or Graf, predict the island constraints but not the exceptional Truswell sentences.

Thomas's account says that, since adjuncts are optional, they should be removable without compromising grammaticality. Consider a language English' that is exactly like English except that "yesterday" cannot appear after "slept":



Note that in this system, grammaticality is downward-entailing, and ungrammaticality upward-entailing. Going back to the ungrammatical sentence that violates the Adjunct Island Constraint (AIC):

What did John drive Mary crazy (because he was trying to fix _____)?
wh⁺ _____ wh⁻

we can see that, even if it might look completely grammatical, removing the adjunct breaks feature checking. Since the sentence is ungrammatical without the adjunct, it must necessarily be ungrammatical with it too.

The TSL₂ approach can account for this by projecting the heads of adjunct-phrases like “because” in addition to the appropriate things bearing movement features. One problem with this is that one could in theory decide to project these on one feature’s tier but not another’s, making the construction an island only for some specific types of movement, which is unattested. Another is that one could project anything at all, even such nonsense as transitive verbs, and say that those form islands. This is also unattested.

To fix this, we need either some kind of additional constraint, either substantive or formal, on top of this mechanism to try to enforce some kind of reasonable projection scheme.