

Wim Kosmeijer *Barriers and Licensing*. Groningen Dissertations in Linguistics 9 (1993). ISSN 0928-0030 (Grodil: P.O.Box 716, 9700 AS Groningen, The Netherlands)

This dissertation is an attempt to use a particular theory of barriers and licensing to account for topicalization, dislocation, and general sentence structure in four Germanic languages, namely Dutch, English, Swedish and Icelandic. In this review I will first spell out some of the main ideas that are contained in the dissertation, then I will adduce a few critical remarks.

The theory of barriers and licensing defended by the author is presented in chapters 1 and 2. The main idea is that the notion of a barrier should be defined in terms of a local relation between a head (the licenser) and some other constituent (head or non-head), such that XP is a barrier in the configuration α [XP β , α being the sister of XP and XP the immediate projection of β , if there is no licensing relation between α and β .

It turns out that XP is not a barrier in most instances. Among the licensing relations that lift barrierhood are (at least) Case Licensing, Theta Licensing, and Operator Licensing, each of which takes place in the Specifier-Head or the Head-Complement configuration. Also, it is assumed that Agr licenses T and that T licenses V, but there is no licensing relation between C and Agr, so AgrP (or IP in a non-articulated structure) becomes a barrier.

To accommodate the Specifier-Head and the Head-Complement

relations to the relation between α and β in the configuration α [XP β it is assumed (i) that the Head-Complement relation is a relation between a head and the head of the complement of that head, and (ii) that a specifier in a Specifier-Head relation is a licensed constituent adjoined to XP, assuming a one-level X²-theory. There is also a notion of extension of the licensing domain. For instance, in the configuration α [XP γ [XP β , α is licensed by β only if γ is licensed by β (α and γ being maximal projections and β a head). Crucially, topicalized constituents are assumed to be unlicensed elements, so if γ is a topicalized element that element blocks a potential extension of the licensing domain. Thus, possible landing-sites for topicalization are quite few. Otherwise, movement is constrained by the assumption that each link in a movement relation may have at most one barrier intervening (1-subjacency) (the metaphor of a hurdle race is suggested).

As a kind of prolegomenon to the "real thing", the topics general sentence structure, topicalization, and dislocation are discussed in chapters 3 and 4, without explicitly relating the discussion to the particular theory of barriers and licensing developed in the two preceding chapters.

Verb movement is triggered by the requirement that a feature [+F] (finite) must be lexicalized. Thus, in Generalized V to C languages (the term used for V2 languages) like Dutch and Swedish, [+F] is situated in C. On the other hand, English, not being a Generalized V to C language, has the [+F] feature in I (or T in an articulated structure) in declarative clauses. However, it is assumed that all languages has [+F] in C if there is an operator in the specifier of CP position, which helps to explain why English main clause wh-questions have a verb in second position, unlike English declaratives. As for Icelandic, it is assumed that the distribution of [+F] is as in English, with relevant word order differences between the two languages explained by intervening factors.

Now, topicalization is analysed very differently in the languages under discussion. It is construed as adjunction to CP in Dutch and Swedish, as adjunction to IP (AgrP) in English, and as movement to [Spec, IP] ([Spec, AgrP]) (or in certain cases adjunction to CP) in Icelandic. In Dutch and Swedish the topicalized constituent adjoined to CP must be coindexed with an abstract operator in [Spec, CP]. In case this abstract operator materializes as an overt pronoun, we are faced with a contrastive-dislocation structure. This latter type of structure is not found in e.g. English,

because there is no abstract operator that can possibly materialize in that language, topicalization being adjunction to IP (AgrP). As for left-dislocation, it is argued that the left-dislocated constituent is base-generated in a special E-position outside the CP or IP.

In chapter 5 the theory of barriers and licensing is brought into focus again by being explicitly related to the analysis of topicalization suggested in the two preceding chapters. Special attention is paid to the relation between C, Agr, T, and V. For example, since there is no licensing relation between C and Agr, topicalization can take place in embedded clauses in English and Icelandic. The fact that the two other languages under discussion are different in this respect (topicalization in embedded contexts being very restricted), has to do with the way a subject is Case-licensed. In English and Icelandic it is Case-licensed by Agr, but in Dutch and Swedish it is Case-licensed by C. In the latter case the occurrence of a topic between C and the subject is blocked.

In chapter 6 "remaining issues" are discussed, mainly related to Dutch, but there is also some further discussion pertaining to topicalization in embedded contexts in other languages. Chapter 7 concludes the work.

What is my evaluation of this dissertation? To start with the more formal aspects, it must be pointed out that it often shines through that the dissertation is not written by a native speaker of English. Furthermore, the style is not very concise. While this is irrelevant as to the scientific qualities of the dissertation, it often makes reading it a bit less appealing than it should have been. Also, I found that the dissertation had a certain lack of unity. For instance, the theory of barriers and licensing is introduced in chapters 1 and 2, then it is almost forgotten for two chapters (even though it is highly relevant for the topics discussed), only to come into focus again in chapter 5. Or to take another example, the one-level phrase structure hypothesis is adopted quite early on, but in chapters 3 and 4 a standard two-level formalism is used, which makes it somewhat difficult to relate the analyses proposed to the particular theory of barriers and licensing being adopted. Then the one-level formalism is reintroduced in chapter 5.

My main general criticism of the theory and analyses put forth in the dissertation is that they are too unconstrained, in the sense that too "many" theoretical adjustments or possibilities are allowed in order to account for data. For instance, the assumption that [+F] may head different types of projection in e.g. English may explain some word order

facts, but if the projection headed by [+F] is the projection of [+F], which seems natural, that projection should be the same in all instances, by definition.

A similar point can be made regarding the analysis of topicalization. To explain the different phenomena related to topicalization in the languages under investigation, it is assumed that the topicalized constituent is situated in very different positions from language to language. However, although the assumption of disparate structures explains the main facts under investigation, it is not desirable from other points of view. For instance, the proposal that Dutch and Swedish topicalization involves co-indexation with a silent operator, whereas that is not the case in e.g. English, makes sense when it comes to an explanation for the presence vs. absence of the contrastive-dislocation structure, but it does not make very much sense semantically, when it comes to binding of the variable left by movement. Why should there be a difference? It seems to me that a more unitary analysis is called for.

By the way, what excludes multiple topicalization in a theory which assumes that topicalization is adjunction (no restrictions imposed by structure-preserving), and where the topicalized constituent is assumed to be unlicensed?

Among the strengths of the dissertation I will mention the following. The empirical coverage is quite broad, both in the number of languages and number of constructions that are analysed. Moreover, the mastery of the theoretical apparatus is often quite impressive. In particular, it should be pointed out that the author shows a greater amount of theoretical independence than is perhaps common. So, despite my critical remarks, this dissertation has much to offer.

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