
In this book, Andrew Simpson argues against the Checking Uniformity Hypothesis, according to which feature checking is achieved via a strict Spec-Head or Head adjoined configuration. The author provides detailed and powerful arguments for the idea that ‘checking at a distance’ is not only possible, but quite likely the only alternative for licensing WH phrases in situ across languages.

In chapter one, Simpson puts forward his basic hypothesis that WH phrases occurring in situ at PF/Spell-Out do not undergo any covert raising (whether phrasal or featural) to C at LF. On this view, WH phrases in situ are interpreted and licensed in their base position. This hypothesis implies a radical departure from the Government and Binding framework of the 1980’s and its associated view of overt and covert movement process, C.-T.J. Huang, *Logical relations in Chinese and the theory of grammar* (Cambridge, MA, 1982). One of the main problems for the covert movement view of WH phrases in situ is that, contrary to their moved counterpart, WH phrases in situ do not always exhibit island effects (for example, if a WH phrase is external to the island, as in multiple WH questions, then no island effect ensues).

Since the advent of minimalism, N. Chomsky, *The minimalist program* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), it has been commonly assumed that overt and covert movement should behave identically with regard to locality. In the minimalist program, the derivation from the Numeration to LF is uniform, so one does not expect a lack of parallelism between overt and covert movement. The stipulation that LF is less constrained than overt movement, C.-T.J. Huang, *Logical relations in Chinese and the theory of grammar* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), is thus no longer tenable. Besides, it is simply not true that LF processes are unconstrained. There is, for example, empirical evidence that subjacency does hold at LF: comparatives and other elliptic constructions yield subjacency effects, the associate - the nominal expression - moving up to the conjunction, T. Reinhart, *Interface strategies* (Utrecht, 1995). As shown by
Simpson, ACDs are also subject to well-formedness conditions at LF. Since WH phrases in situ are not subject to island constraints, the conclusion must be that they do not move at LF.

Chapter two examines why it is that overt raising of WH phrases is nevertheless found to take place in various languages, despite the expectation that the interpretation and licensing of such elements should also be possible in situ in non-C positions without the need for any movement. To answer this question, Simpson proposes that WH movement takes place for two reasons: (a) in some circumstances to identify or activate an underspecified licensing head, and (b) elsewhere in order that the WH element occurs in the licensing/checking domain of a [+WH]/[+Q] C.

Chapter three deals with partial WH movement. First, Simpson reviews the direct dependency view of partial WH movement according to which the non-substantive (i.e. the scope marker) is directly linked to the substantive WH phrase in the intermediate Spec-CP position. On this view, the scope marker is the A’-equivalent of the A expletive there as in there arrived three men. Many problems for the direct approach are discussed, one of which being that in Hungarian the case and agreement that appear on the scope marker are different (and even incompatible) with the case and agreement features of the substantive WH phrase in the intermediate Spec-CP position. This suggests that the scope marker is independently generated from the substantive WH phrase, J. Horvath, ‘The status of ‘WH expletives’ and the partial WH-movement construction of Hungarian’, Natural language and linguistic theory, 15, 1997, pp. 509-572. Next, Simpson discusses the indirect dependency approach according to which, as its name suggests, the scope marker is not directly linked to the substantive WH phrase, but indirectly via linking to the embedded clause. The scope marker is thus more the equivalent of the A expletive it as in it is thought that it will rain than the A expletive there. One main problem with the indirect approach is the extra assumption that the whole clause moves at LF as a kind of expletive replacement so that the WH feature of matrix C is checked. Simpson shows that postulating clausal pied-piping is problematic on
minimalist grounds, since one assumes that the strict minimum amount of structure should move for convergence. In the third part of chapter three, Simpson argues that partial WH movement takes place so that a substantive WH phrase becomes ‘visible’ to a higher [+WH]/[Q] C checking head at the edge of a lower tensed CP. This idea goes against the view that the substantive phrase moves to the intermediate Spec-CP position to check a focus feature, M. Brody, *Lexico-logical form: a radically minimalist theory* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), or a D feature, G. Faselow and A. Mahajan, ‘Partial movement and successive cyclicity’, *Papers on wh-scope marking, Arbeitspapiere des Sonderforschungsbereichs, 340*, edited by U. Lutz and G. Müller, 1996, pp.131-161, University of Stuttgart and University of Tübingen). A main feature of Simpson’s analysis is the distinction between WH features and WH operators. According to him, both the substantive and the non-substantive WH elements bear a WH feature, but only the substantive WH phrase bears a Q feature. This feature is checked against the Q feature of matrix C.

Simpson’s ideas are reminiscent of those proposed by N. Chomsky in his most recent work, N. Chomsky, ‘Minimalist inquiries: the framework’, *MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics, 15*, 1998, N. Chomsky, ‘Derivation by phase’, *MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics, 18*, 1999. For example, checking at a distance resembles Agree, the latter operation having replaced feature movement of earlier versions of the minimalist program. Simpson’s insights date back to his 1995 doctoral dissertation, on which the book is based. Although the presentation has changed and some parts have been re-worked, the core idea of checking at a distance can also be found there. ‘Wh-movement and the theory of feature-checking’ is a very valuable contribution to our current understanding of the principles behind WH movement and WH in situ. The book is well-written and the argumentation sharp and well-paced. It covers a wealth of data from many different languages including Bahasa Indonesia, Basque, Chinese, English, German, Hindi, Hungarian, and Iraqi Arabic. I recommend it highly.