Exploring Merge: A New Form of Sideward Movement

Yuji Takano
Kinjo Gakuin University

In the current Minimalist approach to syntax, Merge is considered to be the most fundamental operation in the core computation in syntax. There are two subcases of Merge: External Merge (EM) and Internal Merge (IM). EM merges two independent Syntactic Objects (SOs), whereas IM merges two SOs one of which comes from inside the other. In this theory IM accounts for movement in the traditional sense. It has also been proposed that a suitable extension of EM can produce “sideward movement,” movement out of one structure to another. In this talk I will explore a further extension of EM and propose a new form of sideward movement, which I call “double sideward movement.”

Double sideward movement is illustrated in (1).

(1) a. \([z \ldots X \ldots Y \ldots]\)  
   \(\rightarrow\) Merge of X and Y
b. \([z \ldots X \ldots Y \ldots]\)  
   \(\{X, Y\}\)

Suppose that Merge applies to X and Y in (1a), forming the new SO \(\{X, Y\}\). I will propose that the new SO \(\{X, Y\}\) is formed outside \(Z\), as shown in (1b). As a result of this application of EM, there are two SOs in the workspace, namely, \(Z\) (which contains copies of X and Y) and the newly created SO \(\{X, Y\}\). Since X and Y have moved out of \(Z\) to a different structure (i.e., \(\{X, Y\}\)), this is an instance of sideward movement (movement from one structure to another), but it is a new form of sideward movement not explored before—both X and Y undergo sideward movement at the same time; hence “double sideward movement.”

I will claim that double sideward movement is responsible for certain surprising properties of multiple clefts (cleft sentences with multiple phrases in the focus position) in Japanese. One such property has to do with island effects. Whereas single clefts (cleft sentences with a single phrase in the focus position) show island effects, multiple clefts do not. I will show that an analysis of multiple clefts in terms of double sideward movement accounts straightforwardly for the lack of island effects.

I will also consider clausemate effects exhibited by Japanese multiple clefts (the phrases in the focus position must come from the same clause). It has been a long-standing issue how to derive this property. I will claim that the analysis based on double sideward movement makes it possible to provide a novel account of the clausemate effects. Moreover, this analysis makes new predictions about the presence and absence of clausemate effects in multiple clefts involving more than two focus phrases as well as those having adjuncts as focus phrases. I will show that these predictions are indeed borne out.