

A note on deletion in reconstruction phenomena.

Legate (1997) claims, in a response to Carnie (1995), that under a copy/deletion analysis of reconstruction (such as Chomsky 1995), extraction out of a constituent that undergoes obligatory reconstruction will result in ungrammaticality. Under such an analysis, at LF, the higher member of a chain is deleted, and only the lower copy is interpreted. Extraction out of the higher copy is disallowed, Legate claims, because the trace of the extraction will only be contained in the higher deleted copy:

(1) $Wh_i \dots [\overline{t_{XP \dots t_i}}]_j \dots [XP \dots]_j]$

The Wh operator no longer has a variable to quantify over, and the sentence results in vacuous quantification.

On the assumption that topicalization is a phenomenon that involves obligatory reconstruction ([[Pictures of myself] I should save]), we can see that Legate's problem is empirically falsified by sentences like (2):

(2) Which athletes do you think that [autographs of t_j], I should save t_j

(My thanks to Howard Lasnik for pointing this example out to me). The overt copy of the topicalization should be deleted by the reconstruction operation, erasing the trace of the wh-movement with it. The sentence is predicted to be ungrammatical, yet it is not (at least to speakers who freely allow embedded topicalization). This suggests that the LF deletion analysis of Chomsky is incorrect. Instead, it points towards a strictly cyclic and derivational model of grammar like that proposed in Epstein et al. (1998), where the topicalized constituent is interpreted as it is initially merged into the tree, in its lower position. There is no LF deletion (allowing the wh-quantifier to bind its trace). The fact that the topicalized constituent is later moved is irrelevant to its interpretation with respect to binding phenomena (although its pragmatic function as a topic is interpreted in its derived position). In the spirit of works like Kayne (1998), this casts doubt on the reality of a post-spellout LF level.

- Carnie, Andrew (1995) Head Movement and Non-Verbal Predication. Ph.D. Thesis, MIT.
Chomsky, Noam (1995) The Minimalist Program. MIT Press, Cambridge.
Epstein, Samuel D., Erich Groat, Ruriko Kawashima and Hisatsugu Kitahara. 1998. *A derivational approach to syntactic relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Legate, Julie (1997) Irish Predication: A minimalist analysis. MA. Thesis, University of Toronto.
Kayne, Richard (1998) Overt vs. Covert Movement. *Syntax* 1:128-191