

## WHY ONE HEAD IS BETTER THAN TWO

X-bar theory classically asserts: (i) each XP has a unique head of the same category type, (ii) there are distinct maximal and non-maximal phrasal levels, and (iii) phrases have a uniform organization in which heads, specifiers, complements and adjuncts are structurally defined. Chomsky (1993) attempts to make do without claims (ii) and (iii). Phrases are composed from a binary relation in which one member serves as both the head and the label for the syntactic constituent. In this way he preserves the essence of claim (i) that a phrase has a unique head, which is the constituent that is dominant for c-selection and/or s-selection. Derivational theories generally have maintained that there exists a single head that is dominant for c-selection, s-selection, and checking throughout a derivation. The contention that heads determine, or “are”, the category label of a syntactic constituent represents the intuition that a derivation remembers what member of a constituent has served as its dominant member. However, derivational theories could in principle violate this claim. Given a pair  $(H_1, H_2)$ ,  $H_1$  could be the head at one step and  $H_2$  could be the head at the next step in a derivation. Collins (2002) develops this line of thought, as do Hornstein & Uriagereka (2002). This paper presents a series of arguments from English in favor of the claim that a constituent has a unique head that is ‘remembered’ throughout a derivation. Three of those arguments are sketched below.

**Argument 1.** Expressions like *Close to the window* act ambiguously as either an AP headed by *close* or as a PP headed by *to*. In (1) it functions as a PP selected by *put*. In (2) it serves as an AP selected by *seem*. This ambiguity only appears in comparing distinct derivations such as (1) and (2). There is no single derivation in which it behaves ambiguously. It is well known that American English readily clefts PPs but resist clefting of APs. Given this assumption it is significant that clefting of *close to the window* is disallowed when the embedded clause contains a verb selecting an adjectival complement. This shows that the decision to treat *close* as the head remains dominant through the derivation; otherwise we would expect both (3) and (4) to be acceptable.

**Argument 2.** In the locative subject construction studied by Levine (1989) and Bresnan (1994), a [P NP] constituent, such as *under the bed*, can serve as a subject of a clause in sentences such as (5). Apparently the nominal patterns as the head here and is able to satisfy the EPP requirements of T. In other constructions such as (6) the P is dominant for c-selection. While *under the bed* acts ambiguously as either a PP or as a NP, this ambiguity only appears in comparing distinct derivations. There is no single derivation in which it behaves ambiguously. Thus, while it is possible for *under the bed* to raise to satisfy the EPP in easy to please constructions like (7), this is only possible when the embedded verb selects either an NP or PP. When the embedded verb unambiguously selects a PP, as in (8), the result is unacceptable. It is ungrammatical for *under the bed* to serve both as a constituent headed by P in an embedded clause and as a NP after raising, showing again that a decision about headedness at one step in a derivation is preserved throughout a derivation.

**Argument 3.** In comparative ellipsis constructions like (9), *close to the window* must pattern identically as a PP or an AP in both the main and subordinate clauses. Where it has a mixed function, as in (10) and (11), the result is ungrammatical.

1. She put the plant (too) close to the window.
2. The plant seems (too) close to the window.
3. It was (too) close to the window that they put the plant
4. \*It was (too) close to the window that the plant seems
5. Under the bed is a pretty hard place to clean
6. She put the money under the bed
7. Under the bed is pretty hard to clean
8. \*Under the bed is pretty easy to put your money
9. they put the rose closer to the window than they put the peony
10. \*they put the rose closer to the window than the peony seems
11. \*the peony seems closer to the window than they put the rose

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