

Beyond word order - and syntax: what we can learn from FOFC

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This talk will focus on the Final-over-Final Condition (FOFC), a proposed syntactic universal (see i.a. Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts 2014, Sheehan, Biberauer, Roberts & Holmberg 2017). Although it has been much-discussed in the last decade, many details are, at present, still unclear. There are, for example, differing views as to how it should be formulated (see Biberauer 2017, 2018 for an overview of the different positions). Partly as a result of this, there are also differing conceptions of its status: is it a directly UG-given constraint? Is it the emergent outcome of the interaction of Chomsky's Three Factors? Or something else entirely?

In this talk, I will address both the formulation question and the status question.

In relation to the former, I will argue for the relativised approach to FOFC advocated in Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts (2014), Biberauer (2017, 2018) in terms of which this constraint crucially references Extended Projections. For this approach, the availability of head-initial nominals and adpositional phrases in OV languages is irrelevant as clausal and nominal/adpositional elements do not belong to the same Extended Projection; sentence-/phrase-final particles in VO languages, circumpositions, and 231 verb clusters of the kind found in some Swiss German varieties, West Flemish and Afrikaans do, by contrast, instantiate potential counter-examples. I demonstrate how closer investigation of these structure-types reveals them to be FOFC-compliant, with novel insights regarding the formal make-up of these structures emerging along the way.

The second part of the talk revisits the nature-of-FOFC question. Until now, FOFC has typically been characterised as a word-order or syntactic universal, one which necessarily references hierarchical relations (see i.a. Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts 2014, Sheehan, Biberauer, Roberts & Holmberg 2017). Here I will show that the fundamental asymmetry in play appears to follow from something significantly more general: FOFC is just one instantiation of a much more widely attested pattern.

References

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