



VERB PLACEMENT IN CANADIAN ENGLISH AND THE CARTOGRAPHY OF SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES

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Abstract

The present study consists of an analysis of the verb placement in Canadian English within the cartographic approach of the Principles and Parameters theory. The goal is to determine if the lexical verb does in fact move in Canadian English, as little as it may. The hierarchy developed in Cinque (1999) favors the idea that functional projections within the middlefield find themselves in a fixed order and, within these projections, adverbs occupy the specifiers of their respective heads. Given the fact that adverbs, therefore, are found in fixed positions, they serve as an effective diagnostic for verb movement. A series of grammaticality judgment tests were carried out with each of the functional projections of the hierarchy. Based on the results of the tests, it was possible to scrutinize verb movement and shed light on which position the verb may raise to.

Key words:

Cartographic Approach, Verb Movement, Canadian English

Introduction

The goal of this study is to determine if there is verb movement, to some extent, in Canadian English (with the lexical verb). In order to be able to detect even short movement, the cartographic approach of the Principle and Parameters framework proved to be effective. According to Cinque (1999), there is a hierarchy of functional projections within the middlefield (shown in Image 1), with each projection containing its own head. Adverbs are found in the specifiers of their respective functional projection and consequently follow the fixed hierarchy. Due to the fixed and rigid nature of Cinque's hierarchy, it is an effective tool to detect verb movement. Grammaticality judgment tests were carried out, by inserting adverbs – from the Cinque hierarchy – in 4 different positions: the very end of the sentence (in the order V(erb)-O(bject)-A(dverb), between the verb and its object (VAO), before the verb (AVO) and the very beginning of the sentence (ASV). The sentences were judged by the author of this study, who is a native Canadian English speaker. After having judged the sentences, a table was organized in order to better visualize the data, as shown in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

The data from the grammaticality judgment tests provided insight to the verb movement in question. In these test, two verb tenses were observed: Simple Present and Simple Past. These verb tenses were chosen due to the fact that both have synthetic morphology, so as to simplify movement detection. The hierarchy was divided into three portions: lower projections, middle projections and higher projections. Considering the lower projections and their respective adverbs, the VOA order is the well accepted order, as shown in (1):

- (1) Joan Jett played her guitar out of the blue.
*Joan Jett played out of the blue her guitar.
*Joan Jett out of the blue played her guitar.
??Out of the blue Joan Jett played her guitar.

I consider low adverbs to be the ones related to the Frequentative II projection until the Frustrative projection.

On behalf of the middle projections and higher projections, the majority of the results suggest that the adverb cannot occur after the verb, but before it in the AVO or ASV positions. The VAO order is ungrammatical in the majority of the data, with no regard to the functional projection or verb tense.

Image 1. Universal Hierarchy of adverbs (Cinque, 1999; Source: Tescari Neto, 2015)

(1) The Universal Hierarchy of Functional Projections of the IP (Cinque (1999, p.106), modified in Cinque (2006))

[frankly Mood_{SpeechAct} > [surprisingly Mood_{Mirative}, [luckily Mood_{Evaluative} > [allegedly Mood_{Evidential} > [probably Mod_{Epistemic} > [once T_{Past} > [then T_{Future} > [perhaps Mood_{Irrealis} > [necessarily Mod_{Necessity} > [possibly Mod_{Possibility} > [usually Asp_{Habitual} > [finally Asp_{Delayed} > [tententially Asp_{Predispositional} > [again Asp_{Repetitive(I)} > [often Asp_{Frequentative(I)} > [willingly Mod_{Volition} > [quickly Asp_{Celerative(I)} > [already T_{Anterior} > [no longer Asp_{Terminative} > [still Asp_{Continuative} > [always Asp_{Continuous} > [just Asp_{Retrospective} > [soon Asp_{Proximate} > [briefly Asp_{Durative} > [(?) Asp_{Generic/Progressive} > [almost Asp_{Prospective} > [suddenly Asp_{Inceptive} > [obligatorily Mod_{Obligation} > [in vain Asp_{Frustrative} > [(?) Asp_{Conative} > [completely Asp_{Sg/Completive(II)} > [tutto Asp_{Pg/Completive} > [well Voice > [early Asp_{Celerative(II)} > [I? Asp_{Inceptive(II)} > [again Asp_{Repetitive(II)} > [often Asp_{Frequentative(II)} > ...

Table 1. Table 1: Verb Raising in Canadian English

| AdvP | VOA | | VAO | | AVO | | ASV | |
|------------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|
| | Past | Present | Past | Present | Past | Present | Past | Present |
| Speech Act | * | * | * | * | * | * | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mirative | * | * | * | * | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Prospective | ?? | ?? | * | * | ✓ | ✓ | ?? | ?? |
| Inceptive I | ?? | * | * | * | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Repetitive II | ✓ | ✓ | * | * | * | ? | ? | ✓ |
| Frequentative II | ✓ | ✓ | * | * | * | ✓ | ?? | ✓ |

Conclusions

The data shown here advocates towards the conclusion that the lexical verb does in fact move, albeit not much, and leaves the lexical domain. It then raises to the lower zone of the hierarchy, which is in the middlefield of the phrase. Moreover, it seems that the verb must pied-pipe the object over this lower zone but can only move as high as the Frustrative projection in most cases.

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