慶應言語学コロキアム

慶應義塾大学言語文化研究所
The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies

【Theoretical Linguistics at Keio(TaLK) 特別企画】

"How Free is 'Free' Merge?"

［講師］ Prof. T. Daniel Seely (Eastern Michigan University)
［日時］ 2018 年 1 月 27 日（土）・28 日（日） 14:00—18:00
［会場］ 慶應義塾大学三田キャンパス北館 3 階大会議室

*参加費無料・事前申込不要（会場にて参加者カードへの記入が必要となります）

The primary goal of this discussion is to consider the status of Merge in Chomsky's most recent work (in a series of lectures in Arizona, and particularly Reading, UK from 2017). The question we'll focus on is this: What 'should' Merge do, and what 'should' Merge not do; and, most importantly, why?

By way of background, we'll first give a history of the fundamental structure building devices, from PS rules (graph-theoretic and linear-order-encoding) to successive stages in the development of Merge--from its introduction in Bare Phrase Structure (Chomsky 1994/95) to its formulation in Problems of Projection (Chomsky 2013, 2015).

Next, we trace the "maximize minimal merge" program of Epstein, Kitahara, and Seely (among others): The idea is to maximize the effects of Merge, while minimizing its form--posit internal to the Narrow Syntax (NS) as little as possible beyond simplest Merge, striving ultimately for the thesis "Interfaces + Recursion = Language," as initially articulated in Chomsky 2007. Merge is the fundamental operation of the NS.

With this background in place, the primary goal of the seminar is to explore Chomsky's recent thinking on Merge. Since Chomsky (2004, Bare Phrase Structure), Merge is argued to apply 'freely;' it is not applying for any 'purpose'—for feature checking and the like. Nor does it stop applying for any reason, such as the mover's needs being fulfilled (Epstein 1992, Rizzi 2010). Rather, it applies, or fails to, for no other reason than its application is always entirely optional. But, does this mean that any two syntactic objects can be merged, regardless of whether they are contained in the same larger object? Recent research suggests that the answer is: yes. We find not only classic External and Internal Merge, but also Parallel, Sidewards, and 'double peak'-creating Merge.

In recent lectures, however, Chomsky subjects Merge to further minimalist scrutiny, seeking to "… formulate general principles that any operation of language ought to meet." The goal is to "… construct a general framework that accommodates a wide range of alternatives, including extensions of Merge in the literature, and in fact others that might be possibilities, and then ask what survives close analysis in terms of reasonable conditions that are desiderata for generative procedures."

What survives is classic Merge. The rest--Parallel, Sidewards, Double-peak-creating--are all fatally problematic. Crucially, this is not stipulated, rather it follows as a consequence of natural (optimally, 3rd factor) conditions.

We explore in detail Chomsky's answer to the general question: "What are the basic conditions that fundamental operations should satisfy and what are the consequences of those conditions with respect to the form and function of Merge?"