Interface Colloquium Series

Labels and Minimality

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UQAM
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ABSTRACT

It is generally assumed that movement is constrained by Minimality. Let's assume that this is indeed the case. Thus, movement is constrained as in (1):

(1) No movement operation can involve A and B in the following configuration, (where A,B,C are featurally identical in relevant ways) and C "intervenes" between A and B.
…A…C…B….

What does intervene mean?

(2) C intervenes between A and B in (1) above just in case A c-commands C and C c-commands B.

The first topic of this talk is to try and understand why only c-commanding elements count as interveners. The answer I give is that Minimality is more accurately stated as (3) and that when we understand how grammars measure "distance" (roughly, in terms of paths) we will understand why when computing minimality only c-commanding interveners count.

(3) Minimize the distance between launch site and target of movement (i.e. Minimize dependency length).

I hope to show that so construing "distance" has additional benefits in that it allows various stipulations concerning minimality (e.g. the equidistance caveat in Ch 4 of the Black Book) and other conditions on movement (e.g. the A-over-A principle) to be deduced. I go on to show how this idea when combined with the caveats of Bare Phrase Structure explains why paths are computed in terms of maximal projections and that this too has some nice consequences: among others, it allows us to deduce structure preservation and the ban on excorporation. Time permitting, I also show how this allows us to deduce the basic 11-dimensional structure of the first several nano-seconds of the universe.