Focus Duplication of Wh-elements in Brazilian Sign Language

Like American Sign Language, ASL (Petronio 1993, Petronio e Lillo-Martin 1997), Brazilian Sign Language, LSB, allows a focused element to appear duplicated at the right edge of the sentence (Quadros 1999), as illustrated in (1). One property of such constructions is that the duplicated material cannot be morphologically complex, as shown in (2). Following Nunes (1999, 2004) and Nunes and Quadros (2004), we assume that such constructions are derived as sketched in (3). A focalized head adjoins to a Focus head (cf. (3b)), followed by remnant movement of the whole TP to [Spec, FocP] (cf. (3c)); the moved head and the Focus head then undergo fusion in the morphological component (cf. (3d)), preventing the adjoined copy from being deleted. The fact that morphologically complex elements cannot be duplicated now follows from restrictions on morphological fusion.

In this paper, we analyze duplication of wh-elements in LSB, as illustrated in (4). As shown in (5), wh-duplication is also restricted to morphologically simple material, which suggests that the derivation of wh-duplication constructions should proceed along the lines of (3) and involve morphological fusion between the wh-element and the Focus head. However, other wh-constructions involving duplication of the wh-element show that this cannot be the whole story. In (6), for instance, there is an additional movement of the wh-element to the left periphery and if such movement were launched from within [Spec,FocP] in (3c), we should have a CED violation (Huang 1982). However, the sentences in (7) show that, once we put the issue of morphological complexity aside, not only arguments, but also adjuncts can be duplicated and move to the left periphery. This indicates that the wh-element must not be crossing a strong (CED) island.

We argue that these data can be accounted for if we assume multiple functional projections in the left periphery and exploit the additional theoretical possibilities made available by the copy theory. More specifically, we propose that in LSB a wh-element may optionally move to Spec of ForceP, which dominates FocP (Rizzi 1997), as shown in (8). This, by itself, would not prevent a CED violation if the wh-element were to move to [Spec,ForceP] from within [Spec,FocP] in (8a). However, the copy of the wh-element adjoined to Foc is not within an island and may perfectly move to Spec of ForceP, as illustrated in (8b); crucially, as a minimal maximal projection, it may in principle undergo either head adjunction or movement to Spec (see Chomsky 1995) and in the derivations under consideration, it undergoes both. In other words, head movement in cases such as (6) and (7) functions as a escape hatch for the wh-element to reach [Spec,ForceP].

Contrary to what may seem at first glance, this proposal is not incompatible with Baker’s (1988) account of the general ban on excorporation. According to Baker, given the head adjunction structure [\(Y0 X0 Y0\)], if \(X0\) moves, the morphological component will receive a head with an adjoined trace and this is arguably an illicit morphological object. Under the copy theory, Baker’s proposal can be interpreted as saying that deletion of copies cannot take place under an \(X0\) element. Notice it is a crucial feature of our analysis that the wh-copy adjoined to Foc does not delete. After these two heads undergo fusion in (8c), the adjoined copy is no longer visible for purposes of deletion; hence, only the lower copy of TP is deleted (cf. (8d)).

This analysis predicts that in the presence of a duplicated focused element, wh-movement to ForceP should yield a CED violation, for the escape hatch for the wh-element would be blocked. The unacceptability of the sentences in (9) with wh-arguments and wh-adjuncts confirms this prediction. The problem with (9) is not the co-occurrence of wh-elements and contrastively focused material. The two elements may indeed co-occur, as illustrated in (10), provided that we have wh-in situ. Under our analysis, the acceptability of (10) receives a straightforward account: once the wh-element remains in situ and does not move to [Spec,ForceP], no CED violation arises.

The paper concludes by showing how this analysis can be successfully extended to analogous wh-duplication constructions in ASL, without requiring special provisos such as Neidle, Kegl, Bahan, Aarons, and MacLaughlin’s (1994, 1998) claim that [Spec, CP] may be on the right or Petronio and Lillo-Martin (1997) tacit assumption that a special mechanism copies the phonetic content of a wh-element onto \(C0\).

DATA:
(1) a. YESTERDAY JOHN BUY CAR YESTERDAY  (‘John bought a car YESTERDAY’)
b. JOHN BUY CAR YESTERDAY CAR  (‘John bought a CAR yesterday’)
c. JOHN BUY BIG CAR BIG  (‘John bought a BIG car’)

(2) a. *NEXT MONTH I WILL-GO ESTRELA NEXT MONTH  
   (‘I will go to Estrela NEXT MONTH.’)
b. *JOHN BUY CAR YESTERDAY BUY CAR  (‘Yesterday, John BOUGHT A CAR’)
c. *JOHN BUY BIG CAR YESTERDAY BIG CAR  (‘Yesterday, John bought a BIG CAR’)

(3) a. [FocP Foc [TP ..... H ..... ] ]
b. [FocP H¹+Foc [TP ..... H¹ ..... ] ]
c. [FocP [TP ..... H¹ ..... ]¹ [Foc² H¹+Foc³ [TP ..... H¹ ..... ] ] ]
d. [FocP [TP ..... H¹ ..... ]¹ [Foc² H¹+Foc²# [TP ..... H¹ ..... ] ] ]  (morphological fusion)
e. [FocP [TP ..... H¹ ..... ]¹ [Foc² #H¹+Foc²# [TP ..... H¹ ..... ] ] ]  (deletion of copies)

(4) a. JOHN BUY WHAT YESTERDAY WHAT  (‘What did John buy yeaterday?’)
b. JOHN BUY WHICH COMPUTER WHICH  (‘Which computer did John buy?’)
c. WHO LIKES MARY WHO  (‘Who likes Mary?’)

(5) a. *JOHN BUY WHICH BOOK YESTERDAY WHICH BOOK  (‘Which book did John buy yesterday?’)
c. *WHAT MAN OF-THEM LIKE MARY WHAT MAN OF-THEM  (‘Which of those men likes Mary?’)

(6) a. WHAT NANCY BUY WHAT  (‘What did Nancy buy?’)
b. WHICH COMPUTER JOHN BUY WHICH  (‘Which computer did John buy?’)

(7) a. HOW JOHN SOLVE THE PROBLEM HOW  (‘How did John solve the problem?’)
b. WHY JOHN LEAVE WHY  (‘Why did John leave?’)


(9) a. *WHAT JOHN NO 1BUYa WHAT NO  ‘What did John in fact not buy?’
b. *WHERE JOHN 1BUYa BOOK YESTERDAY BOOK  ‘Where did John buy the book yesterday (as opposed to the notebook)?’

(10) a. JOHN NO 1BUYa WHAT NO  ‘What did John in fact not buy?’
b. JOHN 1BUYa BOOK WHERE BOOK  ‘Where did John buy the book yesterday (as opposed to the notebook)’