

## Copies vs. Repetitions and the A / A-bar distinction

### An argument from Reconstruction effects

**1. MAIN IDEA:** This paper argues that the distinction between **copies** and **repetitions** (Chomsky 2008) cannot be captured by an “all-you-need-is-MERGE” approach (Chomsky et al. 2017), a point that has been made on independent grounds (Collins & Groat 2018). We put forward a new analysis whereby, given a configuration like  $\{X, \{Y, X\}\}$ , **X and X are repetitions if each of them has a Case value** (be it the same or not), and copies if only one does (although both have a Case attribute). This suffices for A-chains, but it does not for A-bar chains. For the latter, our proposal forces us to assume that we always have repetitions, since Case is never involved to begin with. This raises at least one technical problem (how to relate distinct repetitions to form a “super-chain” of sorts), but it has welcome empirical consequences from reconstruction effects. **We provide novel data showing that, unlike A chains, A-bar chains allow the interpretation of multiple links (multiple repetitions, for us) simultaneously.**

**2. ONLY MERGE IS NOT ENOUGH:** Minimalism has no agreed-upon approach to chains. The key problem, as noted by Collins & Groat (2018), is that an all-there-is-is-MERGE logic (Chomsky 2008, Chomsky et al. 2017) is not enough to distinguish repetitions (selected from the Lexicon) from copies (selected from the workspace itself).

(1)  $\{\mathbf{X}, \{Y, \{\mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{X}\}\}\}$

In the set-theoretic object in (1), we have two instances of X (in bold), so the question is if they are independent or a single discontinuous object. Once traces and indices are dispensed with, minimalism has explored different formulations of such dependencies. Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001) resorts to Numerations, but this requires subscripts, violating Inclusiveness. Alternatives make use of multi-dominance or an independent operation (COPY) to implement the desired distinction (cf. Chomsky 2005, Epstein et al. 1998, Gärtner 2002, among others).

Chomsky (2008) pursues a different approach whereby MERGE, plus phase-level memory, captures the distinction. Conceptually sound as this may seem, this MERGE+PHASES approach should be able to clarify how lexical selection is available at the phase level. But it doesn't. Notice that the challenge here is not so much in clarifying chain properties as have accumulated for years, but rather in finding a sound hypothesis about how these objects are formed in a framework that dispenses with indices, numerations, traces, etc.

**3. A CASE-BASED APPROACH:** Martin & Uriagereka (2014) suggest an approach to chains with ingredients we want to use. Their intuition is to reinterpret sameness / distinctness conditions in terms related to Case. In particular, we find repetitions (and distinctness) of X and X if we have different Cases on each, as in (2); and copies (and sameness) if the same Case, as in (3):

(2) Mary accused Mary

(3) Mary was accused <Mary>

We slightly depart from Martin & Uriagereka (2014) and suggest (4):

(4) X and X are *repetitions* if they have Case within a domain D,  
X and X are *copies* (occurrences) if one has no Case within a domain D.

In Martin & Uriagereka (2014), two instances of the same element are regarded as copies if they are “too close”, within a relevant domain (D). The tricky matter is how to define: (i) closeness and (ii) D. These authors assume phase theory, and suggest that if X and X appear in the complement domain of a phase head (thus, too close), they are copies. This has two problems. One is that it has nothing obvious to say about A' chains. Second, an issue arises for cases like (5) or (6), where the different *John* instances seem reasonably close:

(5) I saw John's (picture of) John

(6) I sent John to John

We could attempt an approach based, instead, on mere Case: two elements with different Case are distinct, not otherwise. The issue of course is then what to do with an example like (7), where *John* exhibits a regular accusative in the lower instance and an exceptional accusative in the higher repetition. A similar problem arises with other situations with multiple accusatives, datives, nominatives or genitives, which, quite simply... exist (see 8):

(7) I believe John to like John.

(8) a. I sent him (John) him (Peter).

b. Mary (Smith)'s Mary (Jones)'s child loves his grandmother.

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A proposal where X and X count as repetitions if they both have Case is simpler, if only because it dispenses with Case sameness considerations. This option amounts to a view where lower copies lack a Case value (even when endowed with a Case attribute). This kind of problem is addressed by Nunes (2004:p.70 and ff.), who proposes that Case is checked in the highest copy only, and an additional mechanism, *Case Uniformization*, deletes Case features of lower copies. We can also ignore the need for lower copies to have a Case value for the same reason lower copies are invisible for purposes of IM, AGREE or labeling (Chomsky 2001, 2008, 2013).

**4. CHAIN TYPES AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFECTS:** We have just assumed that X and X count as repetitions if they have both Case—be it the same or not. This is enough for A chains, but is at right angles with A' chains. For these we assume that the derivation of a sentence like (9) involves three repetitions (in bold), not copies.

(9) [CP **Who** C [TP T [VP **Who** [VP John v\* [VP like [DP **Who** ] ] ] ] ])?

The possibility that A' chains involve repetitions (not copies, as standardly assumed) should have a direct impact for interpretation. Let us concentrate on “reconstruction” effects, and in particular, the interesting set of questions arising in terms of what Lebeaux (1991, 2009) calls the “single tree” condition (Hornstein’s 1995 *Chain Uniqueness* – CU). At issue is whether a given chain, understood as a set of copies (occurrences), has a unique point of interpretation. This cannot be the case for A' chains, given our proposal. An example like (10) immediately challenges Lebeaux’s (1991, 2009) view, even for A chains. But we must push the matter further.

(10) [TP [ *No criticisms of each other’s theory* ] seem [ *to any two linguists<sub>1</sub>* ] to appear [ *to their advisors<sub>2</sub>* ]  
[ [ <*No criticisms of each other’s theory*> to be without merit ] ]

Consider next the contrasts in (11), which are intended to show that CU holds for A chains.

- (11) a. *Nobody is home (for any of them)*. [idiomatically: “They are insane.”]  
b. *(To me) nobody seems [ to be home (for any of them) ]*.  
c. *Nobody seems to me [ to be home (for any of them) ]*.  
d. *Nobody seems to anyone [ to be home (for any of them) ]*. [Idiom lost.]

The reading of interest for (11a) is the idiomatic one. With Chomsky (1995), we assume that strong idioms in raising conditions, as in (11b) or (11c), require “reconstruction”. Note that the idiomatic reading, as such, does not prevent *nobody* from licensing c-commanded polarity *any* in (11a-c). Then the key is (11d), where we have “pinned” *nobody* to the upper clause to license polarity *anyone* there under c-command. Crucially, then, the idiomatic interpretation is lost. If each of the copies could be interpreted separately, contrary to CU, that reading should be possible. Let’s next run a similar test for A' chains. Consider an example involving Negative Inversion, with a polarity interpretation for *anyone*, to which we have added another polarity item, *a bloody soul*, which requires a clause-mate licenser.

(12) *Nobody does anyone believe a bloody soul can arrest!*

If (12) is grammatical, the displaced *nobody* must sanction both *anyone* and *a bloody soul* in the two subject sites that the sentence involves. As far as we can tell, this requires *nobody* to license *a bloody soul* from the intermediate CP position, and finally *anyone* from the peripheral landing site. In our terms, this correlates with there being two repetitions of *nobody* in (12), as opposed to just two copies, as in (11).

**6. CONCLUSIONS:** This paper departs from the view that all-you-need-is-MERGE, arguing for an analysis whereby A and A' chains are significantly different kinds of creatures: A chains are combinations of copies, whereas A' chains are combinations of repetitions instead. To be sure, this must have a deep impact on various long-range correlations, but we have limited ourselves to “reconstruction” effects here.

**REFERENCES (SELECTED):** Chomsky, N. 2008. “On phases”. In C. Otero et al. (eds.), *Foundational issues in linguistic theory. Essays in honor of Jean-Roger Vergnaud*, 134-166. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Collins, C. and E. Grost. 2018. “Distinguishing Copies and Repetitions.” Ms. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/003809>. Hornstein, N. 1995. *Logical Form: From GB to minimalism*. Oxford: Blackwell. Lebeaux, D. 2009. *Where does the binding theory apply?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.