Structure-Building via Merging Economy: The Scope of Indefinites  
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This paper aims to propose a narrow-syntactic (NS) reanalysis of the two interpretation phenomena concerning indefinite NPs: (i) wide scope (WS) interpretation (violating an island constraint; (1a)); & (ii) scope diminishment (SD) reading in negative NPs (negative-split, A-reconstruction; Iatridou & Sichel 2011; (2a)). I derive these interpretational nuances from some NS structure-building operations (phase-based; Chomsky 2000, etc.; ‘amount of TRANSFER’ subject to economy) across all the three prolific domains of Grohmann 2003, including the notion of invasive interface (López 2003) along with that of bi-directional ‘on-line’ passage between NS and interfaces (Suzuki 2007), and the principle of Merging Economy (ME) that states that “An n/N cannot have a larger amount of its uninterpretable features checked/deleted than is needed for the purposes of the current operation of Merge” (Suzuki 2012: 328; Georgi & Müller 2010), along with the concept of economy (Fox 2000). My architectural case is based on Hinzen’s (2012: 311) observation that “… grammar constrains the organization of meaning in language.”

The WS (de re) interpretation of an indefinite NP (a philosopher), as in (1a), has attracted much attention:

(1) a. If Bert invites a philosopher, Lud will be angry. (López 2012)
   b. Choice-function: \( \exists f \) (CH(f) \& (Bert invites f(philosopher)) → Lud will be angry) (based on Reinhart 2006; a philosopher = one of the philosophers)
   c. Existential-closure: If …\( \exists y [NC/vP Bert \text{ invites a philosopher } (y)] \) …

(based on Diesing 1992; domain of EC being nuclear scope (NC), taken here to be vP; a philosopher = any philosopher)

A philosopher takes scope outside the conditional (a strong island for extraction), on the interpretation where there is a certain philosopher such that if Bert invites him, Lud will be angry (1b; de re interpretation in terms of a choice function (CH(f))). The existential-closure (EC) interpretation of the indefinite is given in (1c). Let us see then an SD example (Iatridou & Sichel 2011: 605-606), as in (2a):

(2) a. No student may leave. (a Neg>Mod modal)
   b. Split interpretation: Neg > Modal > \( \exists \)
      It is not allowed that a student leaves.
   c. De re interpretation: Neg > \( \exists \) > Modal
      There is no specific student x such that x is allowed to leave.

We focus on the split interpretation in (2b; negative-split), where the “negative” and “indefinite” components of the negative NP (no student) are interpretationally separated from each other by the intervening modal. It looks as though the indefinite component of the
negative NP A-reconstructs and scopes under the modal.

Let us see the NS-derivation of (1a) with the interpretation (1b). I follow the nP/NP approach to nominal phrases (Georgi & Müller 2010, Chomsky 2007). ME (Suzuki 2012) constrains each step of NS-derivation. Restricting ourselves to the if-conditional, the VP invites a philosopher is TRANSFERRed at vP to the pragmatics-interface (P-interface; López 2003) to be assigned a [+specific]-feature, assumed to be licensed in the C-/discourse-domain. The indefinite with the [+specific]-feature (a philosopher) ends up covertly raising to C as a result of Internal Merge via the P-interface (via a bi-directional ‘on-line’ passage; Suzuki 2007). The final WS/de re interpretation of a philosopher may depend on some CH(f) application. As for the derivation of (1a) with the EC interpretation (1c), the P-interface ‘invades’ NS to assign a [−specific]-feature to the indefinite in the VP (invites a philosopher) at vP.

As for the NS-derivations of (2a), let us see its split interpretation (2b). Details about the modal aside, I take the first merger to be between leave and the nP a student (given ‘[no [a [student]]]’ as the complex structure of no student, based on Zeijlstra 2007). At vP, the P-interface invades NS to assign a [−specific]-feature to the indefinite in the vP (a student leave). The indefinite then raises to [Spec, T], projecting up to the nP-structure ‘[no [a student]]’ (pronounced as ‘no student’). As for the interpretation of the negative no, I assume that it depends on discourse factors/the speaker/hearer’s ‘conversational’ circumstances. The no portion of the subject negative covertly raises up to the C-domain and a negative operator of some sort (Zeijlstra 2007) identifies no by ‘binding’ it. Overall, we obtain the [−specific] interpretation for the a student portion of no student under the modal may, while above may we get the negative interpretation of its no portion in the C-domain (split interpretation: Neg > Modal > Θ). Let us see the de re interpretation (2c) of (2a). The first merger applies between leave and the n student. Then, the n student raises to [Spec, T], projecting up to ‘[no [a [student]]].’ Both the negative no and the indefinite a covertly raise to the C-domain to be licensed, no ending up as ‘bound’ by a negative operator, and the indefinite receiving a [+specific]-feature from the P-interface (de re interpretation: Neg > Θ > Modal).

**Selected References**