Shigeru Miyagawa has argued in a series of influential papers (2001, 2003, for example) that A-scrambling satisfies the EPP requirement of T. I will examine the distributions and interpretations of Japanese reflexive pronouns, and present two sets of arguments against this proposal.

Miyagawa’s most convincing argument, as far as I can tell, is based on the interpretive properties of examples such as (1).

(1) a. Zen’in-ga sono tesuto-o uke-na -katta (yo /to omo -u)
   all -NOM that test -ACC take-Neg-Past Part that think-Pres
   ‘Everyone did not take that exam’ (All > Not, *Not > All)

   b. Sono tesuto-o, zen’in-ga t, uke -na -katta (yo /to omo -u)
      that test -ACC all -NOM take-Neg-Past Part that think-Pres
      ‘That exam, everyone did not take’ (All > Not, Not > All)

In (1a) all takes wide scope over the negation whereas (1b) is exhibits scope ambiguity. Although it may be questioned whether (1a) is indeed unambiguous, the contrast between the two examples seems clear. Miyagawa assumes that Neg is placed below T but above v in the sentential structure. In (1a), all is raised from vP Spec to TP Spec in order to satisfy the EPP requirement of T. It thus has scope over Neg. (1b) can be derived from (1a) by preposing the object to a position higher than TP Spec by A'-scrambling. In this case, all has Neg within its scope. But Miyagawa argues that this example has another derivation. That is, the object can move to TP Spec instead of the subject and check the EPP-feature of T. This, according to Miyagawa, is A-scrambling. Since the subject remains in vP Spec, the narrow scope reading of all obtains.

Although this is certainly an elegant account, the contrast in (1) seems to be observed even more generally than expected. Thus, it obtains in (2) as well, where the preposed object is the reflexive zibun-zisin.

(2) a. Zen’in-ga zibun-zisin-ni toohyoosi-na -katta (to omo -u)
   all -NOM self -self -DAT vote -Neg-Past that think-Pres
   ‘Everyone did not vote for herself/himself’ (All > Not, *Not > All)

   b. Zibun-zisin-ni, zen’in-ga t, toohyoosi-na -katta (to omo -u)
      self -self -DAT all -NOM vote -Neg-Past that think-Pres
      ‘For herself/himself, everyone did not vote’ (All > Not, Not > All)
Miyagawa’s account does not extend to (2). According to the analysis, the narrow scope reading of all obtains when the preposed object moves to TP Spec and checks the EPP-feature. But the preposed object in (2b) cannot be in TP Spec because then it would A-bind its antecedent and the example would be in violation of Condition (C) of the Binding theory. Then, the scope phenomenon in (1) and (2) must be explained in some other way.

The second argument is based on the interpretive properties of Japanese reflexives. It is well-known that zibun(-zisin) is subject-oriented. The EPP analysis of scrambling is inconsistent with the simple definition of ‘subject’ as TP Spec since a preposed object does not qualify as the antecedent of zibun.

(3) Taroo-o, [Hanako-ga ₃ zibun-no ie -de sikat -ta]  
    -ACC -NOM self -GEN house-at scold-Past  
    ‘Hanako scolded Taroo at her house’

Hanako is the only possible antecedent for zibun in (3). Another candidate for ‘subject position’ is vP Spec. However, examples like (4) indicate that this definition is also inconsistent with the EPP analysis of scrambling.

(4) Hanako-o, [Ziroo-ga [ₚ Taroo-ni zibun-no ie -de ₃ nagur]-ase -ta] (koto)  
    -ACC -NOM -DAT self -GEN house-at hit -make-Past fact
    (Ziroo made Taroo hit Hanako at his house.)

Ziroo and Taroo are the possible antecedents for zibun in this example. This is in accord with the hypothesis that zibun is bound from vP Spec. But since a transitive vP constitutes a derivational phase, the scrambled object must be preposed through the embedded (as well as the matrix) vP Spec. Hence, the hypothesis incorrectly predicts that Hanako qualifies as the antecedent for zibun. In this paper, I will examine the interpretation of zibun in detail, and argue that ‘subjects’ should be defined as those phrases that satisfy the EPP requirement of a functional head, that is, either of T or of v. This implies that A-scrambling, whether it is to the edge of vP or to the sentence-initial position, has nothing to do with the EPP.

After presenting the arguments against the EPP analysis of A-scrambling, I will suggest an alternative analysis for the relevant data. In particular, I will entertain the possibility that the contrast in (1) stems from the “theme-rheme” interpretation of a sentence. The basic idea is that the sentence-initial element is interpreted as the theme and necessarily takes scope over Neg, which is part of the rheme. I will also suggest a formal implementation of the idea, relating it to the interpretation of the topic marker wa in Japanese.

References