

Abstract

## Symmetry and Antisymmetry in Germanic Syntax

A remarkable aspect of the word order of Dutch is that, in V-final non-root clauses, the verb serves as a "mirror center" for series of PPs, i.e., the unmarked order of PPs to the left of the final verb is mirrored on the right (Barbiers 1995, Koster 1974):

- (1) a. Hij heeft tijdens de pauze *aan zijn vader* gedacht  
 he has during the break of his father thought  
 "He thought of his father during the break"  
 b. \*Hij heeft *aan zijn vader* tijdens de pauze gedacht
- (2) a. Hij heeft gedacht *aan zijn vader* tijdens de pauze  
 b. \*Hij heeft gedacht tijdens de pauze *aan zijn vader*

Mirror symmetry is caused by parallel construal (my alternative for extraposition; see Koster 1999b) and is "broken" in root clauses, which was one of the main arguments for the verb movement rule known as Verb Second (see Koster 1975).

In English, we find only one possible order, namely the Dutch order (2a):

- (3) a. He thought *of his father* during the break  
 b. \*He thought during the break *of his father*

As in Dutch root clauses, there is no mirror symmetry in English here, since the PPs cannot appear to the left of the verb (apart from topicalization):

- (4) \*He during the break of his father thought

Under the antisymmetry theory of Kayne (1994), which is adopted here, these facts are puzzling because the surface word orders of Dutch and English must be derived from the same underlying SVO order. Supposing that the mirror image orders observed in (1) are common to both English and Dutch at some level, the problem to be solved is: how is the underlying mirror symmetry broken in English?

In this paper, I will propose a solution for the absence of mirror symmetry in English. According to this solution, mirror symmetry is in principle found in the underlying structure of all languages, thanks to the parallel construal mentioned above (Koster 1999, forthcoming). Parallel construal, of which coordination is only one example, creates specifications and additions to the right of standard grammatical structures, which involve the usual lexical structures embedded in a shell of functional projections.

The resulting model of grammar involves asymmetric base structures in the sense of Kayne (1984) and parallel specification structures, which are not functionally licensed themselves and which are responsible for the apparent symmetry of structure which shows up in many natural languages.