Not \textit{[uD]}: Redefining the EPP Requirement

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The Extended Projection Principle (EPP, Chomsky 1981, 1982) is often stated as a requirement for a D element in the domain of T (e.g., a strong [D] on \(\Gamma^0\) in Chomsky 1995). Likewise, Holmberg (2005) argues that a [D] feature, which also carries reference, checks the EPP in Finnish. I argue that the EPP must be, instead, a requirement for referentiality alone.

Holmberg (2005) shows that the Finnish EPP is checked when certain phrasal elements raise to a pre-verbal position (1b) or if an expletive is inserted (1c). However, a clause may not remain verb-initial if an eligible EPP-checker such as \textit{nyt} ‘now’ is present in the clause (1a).

(1) a. \textit{*Meni nyt hullusti.} & \textit{go.pst.3sg now wrong} \\
    b. \textit{Nyt meni hullusti.} & \textit{Now go.pst.3sg wrong} \\
    c. \textit{Sitää meni nyt hullusti.} & \textit{exp go.pst.3sg now wrong} \\

‘Now things went wrong.’ [Holmberg 2005: 541]

Evidence that this is an EPP-process includes the use of expletives (1c), the fact that fronting is obligatory, and the lack of any interpretive effect caused by fronting (Holmberg 2005). Indefinites can also undergo this fronting process (2), showing that it is not triggered to mark for topic, as topics must be specific (É. Kiss 1995, in Koskinen 1998).

(2) Amnalle \textit{kukaan ei anta-isi kukkia.} & \textit{A.all anybody.nom neg.3sg give-cond flower.pl.par} \\
‘Nobody would give flowers to ANNA.’ [Holmberg 2005: 547]

This cannot be a requirement for [D] features, contra to Holmberg (2005), as non-D elements are able to check the EPP, such as the referential adverb \textit{nyt} ‘now’ in (1b), above. Furthermore, some DPs are unable to check it. For example, predicative DPs, as in (3), are unable to front and check the EPP.

(3) a. \textit{Oli onnettomus.} & \textit{be.pst.3sg accident} \\
    b. \textit{*Onnettomus oli.} & \textit{accident be.pst.3sg} \\
‘There was an accident.’ & ‘There was an accident.’

Finally, there are a variety of minimal pairs of elements that suggest that the crucial property for EPP-checking is referentiality. For example, although referential null pronouns are able to check the EPP, generic null pronouns are not. This is shown in the meaning contrast in (4). When the DP \textit{jäällä} ‘on the ice’ is not fronted (4b), the null pronoun is interpreted as referential. However, when it is fronted (4a), the null pronoun is interpreted as generic.

(4) a. \textit{Jäällä kaadut pro\textsubscript{gen}.} & \textit{ice.a.de fall.2sg} \\
    b. \textit{pro\textsubscript{2sg} kaadut jäällä.} & \textit{fall.2sg ice.a.de} \\
‘One falls on the ice.’ & ‘You fall on the ice.’

This can be explained if the null generic pronoun cannot raise to check the EPP. In that case, \textit{jäällä} must front to check the EPP. When the referential pronoun is the subject, however, it can check the EPP and there is no reason for \textit{jäällä} to raise. Likewise, although referential adverbials, such as \textit{nyt} in (1b), are able to check the EPP, manner adverbials are not, as in (5).

(5) \textit{*Nopeasti meni hullusti.} & \textit{quickly go.pst.3sg wrong} \\
‘Things quickly went wrong.’

Data such as these suggest that referentiality operates in the formal syntax, and is needed for the EPP in Finnish. I will also discuss issues in the formalization of a referentiality feature.
References