Assertion in Syntax and Semantics

Adverbial clauses, such as 'because' show interesting properties. First, the **internal** structure differs depending on the interpretation, as pointed out by Hooper and Thompson (1973, H&T). For example, the 'because' clause in (1) is ambiguous between the asserted and the presupposed reading.

(1) Sam is going out for dinner because his wife is cooking Japanese food.

H&T point out that when a 'because' clause is asserted, it accepts a Root Transformation (RT: a syntactic operation which is available in root (main) clauses) such as Left Dislocation (LD), as in (2). In (2), LD, 'his wife' is repeated as subject 'she'.

(2) Sam is going out for dinner, because his wife, she is cooking Japanese food.

A 'because' clause yields the presupposition reading with the constituent negation: then LD is impossible, as in (3).

(3) *Sam is going out for dinner, not because his wife, she is cooking Japanese food, but because his uncle George is in town.

The contrast between the asserted 'because' clause, as in (2), and the presupposed 'because' clauses, as in (3), has been discussed in the generative literature since H&T. Emonds (1976, 2004), Haegeman (2004, 2006), Sawada and Larson (2004) among others discuss the interaction between the syntax and semantics/pragmatics of 'because' clauses. However, their findings are limited to the **internal** structure of 'because' clauses. To explain it, we need to investigate the **external** structure.

As expected, RT is available in root (main) clauses, as in (4).

(4) Sam, he is going out for dinner, because his wife is cooking Japanese food.

When two clauses are asserted, as in (2), LD is possible in 'because' clause, and in theory, LD should be possible in the main clause as well; however, two RTs are unacceptable, as in (5).

(5) *Sam, he is going out for dinner, because his wife, she is cooking Japanese food.

There are four possible combinations in [main ['because']] order: a) [Prespp [Prespp]] (the clausal relation is asserted), b) [Prespp [Asst]], c) [Asst [Prespp]], or d) [Asst [Asst]]. RT is possible in one assertion, but not in two.

So far, the current syntactic theory cannot explain the occurrence of RT. For this, we need to employ semantic and pragmatic notions, presupposition and assertion. Following Jackendoff (1972), Stlanaker (1978), Krifka (1991), among others, we can assume that assertion is the expression of a proposition which determines that focus is a member of the presuppositional set (which is under discussion and has to be true). We can also assume that a whole sentence has the feature [+assertion] ([+Asst]). And the feature is transferred to more asserted clause, then RT is available in the clause. In the case of (a), no transfer, hence we could say, [+Asst] in situ. The process can be explained using Partee's (1991) tripartite structure: a complex sentence is divided into Operator, Restrictor, and Nuclear Scope (NS). The highest node (which determines the sentence property as a whole) dominates the three. It

does not represent the surface word order, nor c-command, among the three. The structure represents the interpretation of a sentence. Asserted clause falls into NS. The availability of RT is the feature transfer: the feature percolates down from the highest node to the clause in NS. It is like the feature inheritance from C to T under C-T probe (Chomsky 2004, 2007, 2008). We assume that top-down is more plausible than bottom-up (the compositionality) to explain the [+Asst] property of a clause.