

*Below is a script (written by Jae-Young Shim) based on part of Chomsky's recent talk at the University of Barcelona on Nov. 6, 2016.  
Video clips are available at [filcat.uab.cat](http://filcat.uab.cat)*

### **Part 1: The Operation Transfer (and Spell-Out)**

**Q6:**

**Traditionally, much research has focused on locality constraints, but some linguistic phenomena show that globality is also relevant in accounting for certain phenomena. How can this tension be solved?**

**NC:**

*Well, this question is highly theory-internal unlike the others which are quite general. So the tension arises in very specific theories, namely, uh... phase-based approaches to generation. There the tension arises and it arises, I think, because of a misinterpretation for which I'm responsible of the notion Transfer.*

*Transfer is usually ... I and others have described it as, for those of you familiar with these theories, as eliminating the elements of a phase and then moving on to the next phase and then you perform things in the next phase and you eliminate those, you send them to the interfaces so you go on.*

*But then there are global phenomena and that leads to a tension. The local phenomena are phase-internal but how do the global ones work if you've eliminated every piece you went along? And I think that's the result of a serious **misinterpretation of the notion Transfer, which should not eliminate anything**. And we have good reason to believe this. This is discussed in a thesis by Miki Obata 5 or 6 years ago in Michigan but the point is very simple: If you have ... just take any phrase that includes within it a complete phase, let's say a clause. So take a phrase like the claim that .... 'the verdict that Tom Jones is guilty.' Internal to it 'that Tom Jones is guilty' is plainly a phase if anything is. Suppose you were to eliminate that and then the phrase 'the verdict that Tom Jones is guilty' is moved to a higher position, so you get ... 'The verdict that Tom Jones is guilty seems to have been reached by the jury without due deliberation' or something. How do you pronounce the phrase 'that Tom Jones is guilty' way up there, not down below where it was eliminated? Well, that doesn't make any sense.*

*So what it means is that what is called **Spell-Out doesn't exist**. What you have is just ... Transfer simply means '**identify a phase as closed and inaccessible to operations that might change something within it.**' That's what satisfies the computational motivation for phases but nothing ever is gone, it all stays there. It's not gone; it's just the unit's element, phase by phase, are marked as 'you can't change me anymore.' OK .. Uhm.. "I'm fixed." Nothing changes. At that point, the tension between globality and locality disappears. Things are local if they are local; they are global if they are global. So Condition C of the Binding Theory is gonna play over the*

*whole unit no matter how complex it is. I think the tension is a problem internal to a certain interpretation of phase theoretic approaches and what you have to do is abandon that interpretation, which is wrong anyway for the reasons I mentioned.*

**Q12:**

**Assuming some version of Phase Theory, how does the system proceed to assemble the different pieces of a derivation, a process that is needed by PF and LF?**

NC:

*Well .. actually this question goes back to one that we were talking about earlier. It's a question that arises within ... in a highly in theory-internal way in terms of a particular version of phase theory that interpreted Transfer to mean 'eliminate.' But that was wrong and if we don't interpret Transfer that way, rather we interpret **Transfer just meaning 'close this off from further change'**, which again satisfies the computational motive, but then this question doesn't arise because everything's there, so no problems.*

**Q13:**

**Are there reasons to maintain the PIC as an independent condition or could it just be derived from cyclic Spell-Out of phase complements?**

NC:

*This is the same answer. We have to **get rid of Spell-Out** 'cause it doesn't make sense for the reasons I mentioned, like movement of a phrase that's even spelled out. So if we eliminate Spell-Out, we're left with the PIC.*

*And questions then do arise, like for example, .... take the phase impenetrability condition. It says if some phase has been completed, you **can't modify what's in it but can you 'access' what's in it?** That's a factual question. Question arises at one of the cases, standard case is Icelandic: when the ... when you have a quirky nominative object, can it .... and it's within a v\*P, presumably a phase, but it does affect the inflectional element that's outside the phase. And Does that mean **penetration into a past phase without modifying anything but just accessing something?** And one approach is to say yeah that's allowed. Another approach, which was developed by Hisa Kitahara and others, is to redefine the notion phase; it's all what's in a phase. These are the kinds of questions that can arise.*

*You have the same questions arising for, say, the labeling algorithm: **can it label something deep inside, which doesn't change anything, just gives it a property.** These are all non-trivial research questions, I think. But Spell-Out, I think, is just a mistake.*

**Part 2: Phase****Q14:**

**What are the problems, empirical and conceptual, of the proliferation of phases (say, beyond C, v, D), and in particular the postulation of phases within the word?**

NC:

*Well ... there are ... the case of D raises serious problems ... what's .. several problems. For one kind of problem, **is it really D?** I doubt that very much. It's been conventional to call nominal phrases DPs but that doesn't make a lot of sense. D originally meant something. It meant determiner like 'this' or 'that'. By now D is simply used to mean whatever a nominal phrase has, even has no determiner. That just loses the notion of determiner. **These things should really be called nominal phrases, I think.** And there are interesting approaches to how to reconstruct the notion of a nominal phrase so that it ends up being an N with D just being some internal element that may or may not be there. There's a paper by Masa Oyishi(??) which unfortunately is in a pretty inaccessible festschrift which ... but I'm sure you can get hold of it, which is as far as I know the most elaborate effort to work this out, raises other questions.*

*So and then what you find is that the second question is this element .... this entity ... a nominal phrase seems to have some of the properties of phases but lacks other properties of phases. So it seems **in an ambiguous position**. And it's not clear how to, at least to me, how to sort that out. I don't know what the answer is.*

*Going beyond that, adding other phases simply adds all kinds of complications. I mean, the most, the only basic property of phases is the Impenetrability Condition. If you don't have that, you don't have ... there's no point of phases. But if you make it smaller units, the Impenetrability Condition is gonna force you to raise everything that's later changed out of the unit, right? And that just leads to madness as soon as you try to work it out. You have constant ... every little piece is being raised because later on it's gonna be changed and what's left doesn't make any sense. In fact, if you do that, there's really no point in having the notion phase.*

*My strong suspicion is that we're gonna end up with **two phases, clausal and verbal**. Probably that's related to uninterpretable features. Very curious fact about language that they have uninterpretable features. Why should a language have an uninterpretable feature? So ... doesn't add anything to the interpretation by definition. So what's it there for? The only answer that's ever been suggested to my knowledge is the **uninterpretable features mark phases**. There are uninterpretable features for CP and for vP, at least v\*P, and maybe that's what they're there for, just to mark the phases. If there's another reason, I don't know what it is. They seem to serve no function within the linguistic system and certainly not in the interpretative system by definition.*

*So kind of a guess is that that's something like what we're gonna end up with when we understand enough. That leaves the question of nominal questions in limbo; they seem to be a problem.*