Abstract

Peripheries in Kashmiri and Hindi-Urdu

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This dissertation is an investigation of wh-movement and wh-expletive constructions in the Indic language Kashmiri. Through this investigation, we develop a theory of the periphery, or the clausal positions which mediate A-bar movement. In particular, a detailed study of wh-expletives and wh-expletive constructions reveals underlying similarity of design between the A and A-bar systems, and indicates that the two can be understood as driven by the same basic set of mechanisms. Empirically, this work addresses the lesser-studied language Kashmiri, bringing to the fore linguistic data not yet discussed in formal syntactic literature.

The dissertation advances our understanding of the A-bar system in three core areas. First, we present the basic facts of the rich left periphery of the Kashmiri clause, and provide an account of this periphery that employs a single functional head. This account seeks to build on the empirical advances of the so-called “cartographic” hierarchy of projections, while offering an analysis of the left periphery that is compatible with the notion of the phase.

Second, the dissertation presents the wh-movement and wh-expletive constructions of Kashmiri, and offers an account of wh-dependencies which in which the mechanisms driving the A and A-bar systems emerge as being parallel – in a way that does not emerge so clearly from the more closely-studied languages.
Finally, the dissertation offers a micro-comparison of the syntax of wh-questions in Kashmiri and in Hindi-Urdu. This detailed comparative work yields an important result: we can understand a set of systematic contrasts between the two languages in terms of the properties of specifically the phase-defining heads C and v. In effect, what we see is the same clausal topology in Kashmiri and Hindi-Urdu, but occurring lower in the clause in Hindi-Urdu (at the vP layer) and higher in the clause in Kashmiri (at the CP layer). This lends support to the claim that the specifier position of vP may play the same role often attributed to the specifier position of CP in wh-movement: it can be a position for wh-expletives and partially moved wh-phrases.