

Luis Vicente

The syntax of heads and phrases

A study of verb (phrase) fronting

This dissertation defends the existence of a type of movement that has so far been considered not to be possible, namely, movement of a bare head to a specifier position, over arbitrarily long distances. Head-to-spec movement was indeed explicitly banned in previous models of syntactic theory. However, its existence is unavoidable under Chomsky's Bare Phrase Structure hypothesis. This idea is explored in detail in the first chapter of the dissertation, where it is proposed that all moved constituents land on a specifier position, irrespective of their phrase structural status. The result is a unified theory of movement that dispenses with the head vs. phrase dichotomy.

The hypothesis above is supported through case studies of three constructions that have received very little attention in the literature. Chapter two discusses predicate clefting in Spanish; chapter three, infinitive focalisation in Hungarian; and chapter four, predicate clefting in Hungarian. The common feature of these constructions is that a bare infinitive is moved to the left periphery of the clause, in what appears to be a case remnant predicate movement. It is shown, nonetheless, that a remnant movement analysis cannot be correct, given that both Spanish and Hungarian lack the means to create a remnant constituent in all the cases where it would be required. Consequently, it is necessary to allow bare heads to undergo run-of-the-mill A-bar movement, as predicted by the theory developed in chapter one.

This dissertation is of interest to a general syntactic readership, as well as to readers interested in the formal theory of movement, and in the syntax of Spanish and Hungarian.

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