A'-dependencies in Spanish and Basque

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Dissertation Information

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**Abstract:** This dissertation offers a study of A'-dependencies in Spanish and Basque. More specifically, I analyze wh-movement, its interaction with Focus and Topic and the adjacency requirement between wh-phrases and the verb. In order to offer an analysis of these phenomena, I explore the following topics: in situ questions in Spanish, (multiple) question formation in Basque, and comparative subdeletion phenomena in Spanish. In chapter 2 I provide an account of the behavior of wh-in-situ questions in Spanish. The analysis pursued in the chapter reveals that the distribution of in situ wh-phrases is governed by phonological properties. More precisely, in situ wh-phrases in Spanish need to appear last within their intonational phrase. This generalization captures the behavior of all in situ wh-phrases in this language. In chapter 3 I discuss the strategies Basque employs to formulate a multiple wh-question. I show that in the in situ strategy no wh-phrase remains in situ in the structure: the postverbal wh-phrase raises overtly to check a topic feature. I offer an analysis for Multiple Wh-fronting structures in which the wh-phrase closer to the verb is focalized and the rest of the wh-phrases are topicalized. I propose that Basque has a head with two features: Attract-all-discourse and Attract-1Topic (cf. Bošković 1999, 2002). Under this analysis, all wh-phrases bearing focus or topic are moved to the front of the sentence. Furthermore, the highest wh-phrase must move first. The fact that only one wh-phrase is focalized follows from the adjacency requirement of a PF verbal affix. In chapter 4 I examine the role of contrastive focus in comparative subdeletion constructions in Spanish. Spanish allows Comparative Subdeletion under the two following circumstances: obligatory verb gapping and word order alteration of the elements in the comparative clause ("Inversion Strategy"). I capture the Spanish data by appealing to the claim that there is a strong focus feature requirement in the "Inversion Strategy". I claim that the NP containing the quantity term must undergo overt movement to check a strong focus feature. If the feature is not checked, the derivation can still be rescued by deleting the strong feature in PF.
The research question investigated in the present study has merit, because Basque and Spanish are structurally different languages (section 2), and thus different syntactic cues may underpin different strategies in the comprehension of wh-dependencies in the two languages. If syntactic cueing strategies in L1 affect comprehension of wh-dependencies in L2 in early Basque-Spanish bilinguals, then predictions based on L1 will interfere with the predictions that would be made solely on the basis of L2 cues, which would result in longer RTs in bilinguals.