INFORMATION STRUCTURE PROJECTS IN SYNTAX: EVIDENCE FROM FOCUS AND MODALITY IN SINHALA

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The cartographic approach to syntax claims that discourse related features are visible for computation (Rizzi, 1997, 2004), a claim also supported by Miyagawa, (2010), Aygen, (2006), and Aboh (2010) among others. The present paper seeks to validate the above claim with evidence from Sinhala[1], motivating the argument that discourse related features lexicalized in Sinhala drive the derivation, and these features are comparable to formal features in establishing an Agree relation.

In Sinhala, Wh-, Focus, Evidential Modality, and Epistemic Modality are morphologically realized in the form of particles suffixed to a constituent. In such cases, a verbal argument or adjunct can come under the scope of the Focus or Modal particle, though both Focus and Wh- do not co-occur. When such a particle marks narrow scope, the verb should be in –**E** ending, as opposed to neutral –**a** ending. (1)

1) a) Nimal-**lu/thamai/da**   gaha   kaepu-w**E** /*w**a**
       Nimal-Evid/Foc/Int   tree   cut (Pst)-**E** /*wa
      'It is said that Nimal cut the tree'
      'It is Nimal who cut the tree'
      'Is it Nimal who cut the tree?'

I propose that these information structure related particles are Functional Heads carrying the relevant feature, that they are part of the Numeration and that they project in syntax. Since Focus and Wh- do not co-occur in Sinhala, there is only a Focus Head for both which attracts the relevant constituent to its Spec. Since Focus and a Modal can co-occur, the Mod Head, projected below Focus attracts the relevant constituent first. These movements are not case-related since in Sinhala even an adverb can come under the scope of such a particle. I consider the –E suffix as a reflex of a discourse Agree relation though in Sinhala there is no Phi-agreement.

Keywords: information structure, syntax, modality, Sinhala

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[1] Indo-Aryan, SOV, spoken in Sri Lanka

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