

Focus movement in the Bangla DP

Introduction

In this paper, I address the phenomenon of leftward movement of adjectives in Bangla DP. I propose that inside the Bangla nominal domain the raising of adjective below Dem and above Num, leaving the NP stranded, signals the existence of focus phrase between DemP and NumP.

In Bangla DP the elements Dem, Num, Cla, Adj and N are found in their merge order as Dem>Num-Cla>Adj>N, as can be seen in 1 below.

1. ei du -to Sundor jama (Bangla DP merge order)
this two -Cla beautiful dress
“these two beautiful dresses.”

This DP internal merge order in Bangla can be disturbed by the movement of adjective for the purpose of focus (as found in languages like Russian, noticed by Pesetsky, 2010). Syed (2013, 2015) posits a ‘*pre-demonstrative*’ focus position for the adjective in Bangla DP. The word order that he proposes involves raising of [Adj N] around NumP and then the adjective is extracted out of the raised [Adj N] and moves across Dem (shown in 2).

2. LAL_j ei [aP t_j boi]_i -ta t_i amar pochondo (Syed 2013:5)
red this book -Cla my liking
“this red book is of my liking.”

Syed (2015) also seems to notice a ‘*pre-numeral*’ position for the focussed adjective, where the NP is left stranded (shown in 3).

3. LAL_i ek -Ta t_i bari dekhlam (Syed 2015: 334)
red one -Cl house saw
“I saw a RED house”

Here, I assume that the order in 3 (as shown by Syed, 2015) is acceptable due to the lack of the presence of demonstrative. The numeral ‘*ek*’ (one) in 3 has an indefinite interpretation, whose co-occurrence with the demonstrative ‘*ei/oi*’ (this/that) will not be possible because of the definiteness reading of the demonstrative, as also in English (shown in 4 below).

4. *ei LAL ek -ta bari dekhlam
this red one-Cla house saw
*“I saw this one red house.”

However, the adjective (without raising of NP) can occur to the left of NumP and below DemP with higher numerals, as can be seen in 5.

5. ei LAL_i tin -te t_i bari dekhlam
this red three -Cla house saw
“I saw these three red houses.”

What Syed (2015) mentions as a ‘*pre-numeral*’ position of adjective, I assume it to be a ‘*post-demonstrative*’ and ‘*pre-numeral*’ occurrence of focused adjective.

Evidence for focus movement in Bangla DP

In Bangla DP, whenever the adjective bears nuclear stress it can *optionally* move to the focus positions (above DemP and between DemP and NumP). But, there are certain conditions when the adjective has to obligatorily move to the focus position. This happens when the N is optionally elided, the adjective is necessarily focussed. Let’s observe the data below.

6. Sp A: kon tin -te chele eshechilo?
 which three –Cla boy came
 “which three boys came?”
7. Sp B: oi LAMBA_i tin -te t_i e
 that tall three –Cla e
8. Sp B: *oi tin -te lamba e
 that three –Cla tall e
9. Sp B: *oi lamba_i tin -te t_i e
 that tall three –Cla e

What happens in 7 is that the noun ‘*chele*’ (boy) can be optionally elided as it is already mentioned in the discourse, i.e., in 6. Now, once the N is elided the adjective ‘*lamba*’ (tall) cannot stay in its merge position but has to obligatorily move to the left of NumP and below DemP (as shown in 8 and 7). And this movement of adjective necessarily has to be a focus movement (as can be seen in 9 and 7). Here, I suggest that the adjective necessarily moves to the focus position to license the phonological deletion of the noun. This argument follows from Ntelitheos (2004), where he assumes that in Greek DP nominal ellipses is licensed by modifier focalisation.

There is another instance of obligatory focus movement of adjective and this happens in case of contrastive focus. Let’s consider a situation where X and Y have bought small tables of different colours and X forgot which small tables he bought for himself. So, now X asks Y “which small tables are yours?” The answer to this can be both in 11 and 12. But, only the one in 12 gives Contrastive Focus reading.

10. [_{FocP} [_{DP} kon]_j [t_j] [_{NumP} [_{aP} [_{SizeP} choto] [_{NP} tebil]]_i -gulo [t_i]]] tomar?
 which small table -Cla your
 “which small tables are yours?”
11. [_{DP} ei [_{NumP} [_{aP} [_{SizeP} choto [_{ColorP} neel]] [_{NP} tebil]]_i -gulo [t_i]]] amar
 this small blue table -Cla mine
 “these small blue tables are mine.”
12. [_{DP} ei [_{FocP} NEEL_j [_{NumP} [_{aP} [_{SizeP} choto [_{ColorP} t_j]] [_{NP} tebil]]_i -gulo [t_i]]]] amar
 this blue small table -Cla mine
 “these BLUE small tables are mine.”

What happens in 10 is that the [Adj N] sequence moves to the left of Cla ‘*gulo*’ and lands at the spec of NumP (where where NumP is a complex consisting of Num⁰ and Cla⁰, as mentioned by Bhattacharya, 1999). In 10 the wh ‘*kon*’ (which) merges at the D⁰ and I assume that the DP moves to the higher FocP (which is a ‘*pre-dem*’ focus position). Now, if we notice we can see that the universal hierarchy of adjectives (as mentioned by Cinque, 1994) is maintained in 11. But in 12, the moved adjective ‘*neel*’ (blue) disturbs the universal hierarchy. In 11 where the adjective ‘*neel*’ (blue) stays in-situ, we get an Information Focus reading. But in 12 where the adjective ‘*neel*’ (blue) has moved out of the NumP and lands in a focus position between DemP and NumP, what we get is only a Contrastive Focus reading. Even in 7 also where the adjective has obligatorily moved to the focus position (below Dem and above Num) when N is optionally elided, it gives a contrastive focus reading.

Hence, based on the aforementioned data it can be proposed that in the Indo-Aryan language Bangla there exists a *higher focus phrase* which is above DemP (where the wh moves to) and a *lower focus phrase* which is below DemP and above NumP (where the adjective moves to give a contrastive reading).