Head Movement in an Agglutinative SOV Language

This talk can be roughly divided into the following two parts.

[1] Where is head movement?

I first discuss general issues surrounding head movement (HM) in modern syntactic theory, with particular attention to the place of HM in the grammar. Since Chomsky’s (2000) influential proposal that HM takes place in the phonological branch of the derivation (PF), several scholars have pushed this line of approach, while others have intensively argued against (total) exclusion of HM from syntax. After briefly reviewing the debate over the proper place of HM, I suggest that it should not be conceived of as being performed exclusively in PF.


This part is concerned with an extremely contentious topic in Japanese syntax: verb raising. My purpose is to defend the view that Japanese exhibits verb raising in a string vacuous fashion which invokes no word order permutation, advocated by Otani and Whitman (1991), Koizumi (2000), and Funakoshi (2015), inter alia. I examine ‘null objects’ in Japanese in detail, and demonstrate that null objects in this language are more divergent than they have been considered to be; that is to say, null objects in clauses whose predicates belong to (what I refer to as) native Japanese verbs (NJVs) behave differently than those found in clauses whose predicates belong to verbal nouns (VNs) in a significant way. It is argued that such a difference between NJV and VN clauses regarding null objects (which seems to have eluded serious attention so far) motivates ‘invisible’ verb raising in the language.