

Clausality and Long Distance Agreement in Marathi

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That all grammatical phenomena are subject to locality constraints is one of the fundamental premises in Linguistics. Linguistics shares this premise with several other disciplines such as Physics. Therefore, any phenomenon that apparently violates locality to show long distance effects are considered ‘spooky’ (as Albert Einstein would call them). Upholding the premise of locality in the light of apparent long distance effects calls for serious engagement with such spooky phenomena. Hence the heightened interest in the phenomenon of long distance agreement (LDA) across several languages. Such engagements have led to constant conceptual refinement of our concept of locality. As with most grammatical phenomena, typically, a clause serves as a local domain of agreement in language. Investigating LDA includes identifying clause boundaries, and determining conditions under which across-the-boundary agreement is permissible. However, determining clause-boundaries is not a trivial task, especially in South Asian languages. As these languages exhibit rich verb-stacking and multi-verb complex predicates, determining clause boundaries poses considerable challenges. In this presentation, I focus on a set of constructions in Marathi, a major South Asian language from the Southern Indic family. With help of clausality tests, I determine which of the constructions are genuine instances of cross-clausal, long agreement. Further, I propose that Marathi demonstrates non-finite clause embeddings of different sizes which correlate with occurrence of LDA. It is my contention that such an investigation of LDA in languages like Marathi not only enhances our understanding of agreement patterns but also enriches our understanding of clause structure in human languages.