DP-INTERNAL FOCUS AND TOPIC IN BANGLA

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on data from adjective-fronting in Bangla, and claims that there are functional projections higher than the DP in the nominal domain, where the fronted adjectives land. Specifically, the paper proposes that there is a fixed Foc(us)P, and a Top(ic)P in the Bangla nominal domain. This claim contributes to the developing idea in the literature that the nominal domain, in principle, is parallel to the clausal domain. And as the clausal domain has higher functional projections of FocP and TopP above the IP, these higher projections are but expected in the nominal domain as well. The proposal of the paper is also completely compatible with a claim made in Choudhury (2010) about the position of focus and topic in the clausal domain of Bangla, where she suggests that there is a fixed focus position right above the IP, and a topic position above the focus.

The paper is organized as follows. First, in section 2 I present phrasal movement within the nominal domain in Bangla, then I briefly discuss the syntax of adjectives in Syed (2012) in section 3, in section 4, I show the possibility of adjective fronting in Bangla across a demonstrative. Then I move on to section 5 to show that there is a FocP and a TopP within the nominal domain in Bangla.

2. Phrasal Movement within the DP

To show phrasal movement within the DP, I will present what Bhattacharya (1998) calls the ‘NP Object Shift’. Consider the following data:

(1) du-to boi
two-Cl book
'two books'

(2) boi du-to
book two-Cl
'the two books'

The examples above show movement of ‘boi’ across the Num-Cl. This cannot be an N-movement as more structure is allowed within the moved portion. Consider the following set:

(3) du-to lal boi
two-Cl red book
'two red books'

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1 It is important to note here that I am using the term DP loosely here. By DP, I mean the nominal domain, and not the functional projection DP.
The data shows that the unmarked order is Num>adj>book, and that Adj-N can front before the Num. This is evidence that something more than an N is moving here, and Bhattacharya takes it to be an example of NP-movement. I agree to him to the extent that it is at least an NP-movement, but I suggest that this phrasal movement involves more than an NP. In other words, I take the examples are good enough to show phrasal movement within the DP, but that does not necessarily entail that the phrasal movement has to be an NP movement. I suggest that it is actually a phrasal movement involving a higher functional phrase (I call it an aP in Syed 2012), discussed briefly in the following section.

3. The Syntax of Adjectives in Bangla

3.1. AdjP as Specifiers of Higher Functional Projections (aP)

Cinque (1999) in his seminal work on adverbs and functional heads, proposes a correlation between adverbs and functional projections that are associated with tense, aspect, modal force, etc. He argues for a fixed universal hierarchy of clausal Functional Projections (FPs), and claims that Adverb phrases are overt manifestations of the specifiers of these FPs. In other words, according to his analysis, each adverbial class occurs in the Specifier position of a phonologically null or ‘empty-headed’ FP, to which the adverbial class is semantically related.

There has been research in an attempt to extend this kind of an approach towards adjectives; Sproat and Shih (1990) and Scott (2002) argue for a similar universal hierarchy of functional projections of which AdjPs are manifest as overt specifiers. There is a huge list of FPs proposed cross-linguistically; I shall not go into the details of argumentation for these projections, but rather give the final proposed order given in Scott (2002), shown in Fig. 1.

**Fig.1**

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2 FP stands for Functional Projection here, and not a Focus Phrase

3 For a detailed discussion on each of these nodes, and many more sub-nodes for each of these functional projections, refer the original paper by Scott (2002)
Taking a similar line of thought as in Scott (2002), Syed (2012) suggests that adjectives in Bangla are generated in the specifiers of higher functional projections, and there is a universal hierarchy of these functional projections. To be more precise, the universal hierarchy proposed has size > color > provinence in that order, and that is, indeed, the order attested in Bangla. With this suggestion, I show below what the syntax of the phrasal movement shown in (3) and (4) will look like.

### 3.2. aP-Fronting in Bangla

Recall Bhattacharya’s examples of NP Object Shift that I discussed earlier in examples (3)-(4). With the suggestion in Syed (2012), adjectives are specifiers of aPs; it then follows that the cases in hand do not show NP movement, but a phrasal movement involving a bigger phrase aP. I suggest that this movement looks like the structure below (for (4), where the aP is ColourP, with the AdjP red generated in the specifier position by external merge.

\[
\text{[ColourP lal [NP boi]]}_i \text{ duto } t_i
\]

To illustrate the point in a better way, I will use a bigger phrase with multiple adjectives. Consider (17).

\[
\text{choto sobuj chine fuldani du-to}
\]

\[
\text{small green Chinese vase two-Cl}
\]

\[
\text{the two small green Chinese vases}
\]

Here, according to the stance that I am taking on Adjectives, I suggest that the highest aP (which includes the other aPs) moves up across the NumP. Schematically this is shown in (7) below.

\[
\text{[SizeP choto [ColourPsobuj [ProvenanceP chine fuldani ]]]}_i \text{ du - to } t_i
\]

That is, Bhattacharya’s ‘NP-object shift’ is accounted for in terms of a bigger phrasal movement.

### 4. Demonstrative with Adjectives

So far I have not shown any data with adjectives and the demonstrative at the same time. They can co-occur, and I show that such examples can be crucial in determining the status of the demonstrative. Consider:

\[
\text{ei lal boi-ta amar pochondo}
\]

\[
\text{this red book-Cl my like-noun}
\]

\[
\text{this red book is of my liking}
\]

Here, presumably the aP has moved up, and indeed the interpretation is definite. To recap, I give a schematic representation below.

\[
\text{ei [aP lal boi ]}_i \text{ ta } t_i \text{ amar pochondo}
\]

Let me present the same data but this time when a Num is present, as shown in (10).

\[
\text{ei du-to lal boi}
\]

\[
\text{this two-Cl red book}
\]

\[
\text{this two red books}
\]
The movement is shown in (11)⁴:

(11)  \( \text{ei } [aP \text{ lal boi}], \text{ du-to } t_i \)

### 4.1. Demonstrative as a Head

So far, I have shown that the aP moves up, below the demonstrative, and that an aP moves up for definiteness factors. Now consider this interesting piece of data below, where I show that once the aP has moved up, the adjective can move out of there and rise further up across the Dem.

(12)  \( \text{lal } \text{ ei } [aP t_j \text{ boi}], \text{ ta } t_i \text{ amar pochondo red this book Cl my liking} \)

I will argue that this movement of the Adjective across the Dem is a focus-movement. But before I provide my account for this movement, I will provide my reasons to assume the Dem to be the head \( D^0 \). Recall that the adjectives are the specifiers of aPs. So a movement of just the adjective will have to be a phrasal movement. I also showed that the aP first moves across the Num, and the landing site is below the Dem. Now if Dem is in the Spec (of QP as suggested by Bhattacharya 1999), or a specifier in general, in principle the phrasal movement of the adjective cannot happen across it. In other words, if Dem is a Specifier, it will block this Adj movement. The fact that this movement is licit shows that Dem has to be a head. I will just treat Dem as the head \( D^0 \).

Bhattacharya, in another paper Bhattacharya (1998), argues for Dem in the specifier of a Focus phrase within DP. This idea will also be problematic for the same reason as I argued against the Spec, QP; it cannot explain the phrasal movement of the adjective across it. Let me present the argument in Bhattacharya (98) against a head analysis of the Dem, and show that he had his reasons. However I will show that his concern can be explained otherwise, without having to posit Dem as a Specifier. The piece of data that Bhattacharya uses to argue for the head analysis is as follows:

(13)  \( * [\text{NP lal boi}], \text{ ei du-to } t_i \text{ red book this two-Cl} \)

He claims that because the NP cannot move across the Dem, it is evidence that Dem cannot be a head. What is NP for him is aP (higher functional projection(s)) for me, and I have argued earlier that the aP moves to get definiteness, and this definiteness is achieved below the Dem, which I show below once more.

(14)  \( \text{ei } [aP \text{ lal boi}], \text{ du-to } t_i \)

As the motivation of this phrasal movement is to get definiteness, there is no need for the aP to move further across the Dem as the definiteness feature has already got checked below the

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⁴ Again, the aP moves across the Num, and the resultant expression is definite. Here is an interesting puzzle in hand, as even in the non-raised position of the aP (see 30), the expression is still definite. This is an issue, if indeed the movement of the aP is for definiteness, as suggested in Syed 2012. It is suggested (Dayal 2012, in her talk at FASAL2 at MIT) that in this situation the definiteness comes from the deixis from the Dem; the question still remains, then, if without raising of the aP an expression is definite, why will there be any need of the movement in this situation? In other words, if (30) is already definite, then how come the order in (31) is also permissible? This is discussed in details in Syed 2012, and it is shown that the movement is for stronger definiteness in (31); for relevance to this paper, I will skip the details.
Dem. This is the reason why the sentence (13) is ungrammatical, and one does not need to posit that Dem is a Specifier, and thus not allowing the movement.

5. FocusP and TopicP within the Nominal Domain

In this section, I will argue for Focus(us)P and Top(ic)P within the Bangla nominal domain. Bhattacharya (1998) argues for a Focus Phrase (FocP) within the DP; however I suggest this FocP to be above the DP (thus above the Dem) instead of a lower FocP. To present my argument, I will start with an unmarked example involving a Dem and multiple adjectives. Consider the following example (15).

(15) ei du-to [lal boi] (these) two-Cl red book
   ‘(these)/the two red books’

The aP can raise above Num-Cl, but under a demonstrative, shown in (16).

(16) ei [lal boi]i du-to t
   (these) red book 2-Cl
   ‘(these)/the two red books’

5.1. Evidence for FocP in the Nominal Domain

I show in (17) that an adjective can be extracted out of the raised aP, and moved further up across the Dem, and thus above the DP, as I have already argued that Dem is the head D⁰. Crucially, this is possible ONLY when the extracted adjective is stressed and interpreted as being in focus. That is, empirically the moved element has to bear stress; if the moved adjective does not bear stress, it renders the expression ungrammatical, as shown in (18).

(17) LAL_j ei [aP t boi]i ta t amar pochondo red this book Cl my liking
   ‘this red book is of my liking’

(18) * lal_j ei [aP t boi]i ta t amar pochondo red this book Cl my liking
   ‘This red book is of my liking’

This clearly suggests that the adjective moves to a focus position above the DP.

5.2. Evidence for a Fixed Focus Position

In (16) and (17), there is only one adjective present. Now let’s consider an example where there are multiple adjectives, in the universal order, as shown in the following example.

(19) ei du-to [aP choto lal boi] this two-Cl small red book
   ‘these two small red books’

Fronting of multiple adjectives is observed. From the base order in (19), both the adjectives choto and lal can move further up across the Dem et. However, when there is fronting of more

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⁵ I shall remain agnostic to if there is a need for a lower FocP; but rather advocate for the presence of a higher FocP above the DP.
than one adjective, only one of these is ever stressed, and it is always the second adjective in
the adjective sequence, the one adjacent to the Dem that gets the stress. This is shown in (20)-(23).

(20) [choto [LAL ej [aP t j t k boi]]-ta t i
small red this book-CP
‘this small red book’

(21) * [CHOTO [lal k ej [aP t j t k boi]]-ta t i
small red this book-CP
‘this small red book’

(22) [lalk [CHOTO ej [aP t j t k boi]]-ta t i
red small this book-CP
‘this red small book’

(23) * [LALk [choto ej [aP t j t k boi]]-ta t i
red small this book-CP
‘this red small book’

The ungrammaticality of (21) and (23) shows that there is a fixed focus position which is
immediately above the DP; the second adjective which moves out across the DEM but does
not land in this position does not get stress.

That is, I claim that there is one FocP within the nominal domain, and the FocP is right
above the DP. Theoretically, this position provides a landing site for the phrasal movement of
adjectives across the Dem, and it also accounts for the empirical fact that whenever such a
movement occurs with one adjective, that adjective gets stressed, and when two adjectives
move out, the lower one (close to the Dem) gets the stress.

I will argue here that in case of movement of multiple adjectives across the Dem, each
adjective from the base order in (19) separately moves out, as opposed to both the adjectives
moving out as a chunk. The movements that I am arguing for and against can be schematized
as follows, shown in (24) and (25).

(24) choto lal ej [aP t i t j boi] du-to

(25) * [choto lal ej [aP t i boi] du-to

Let me present my reasons for assuming the movement in (24), and not the one in (25). See
(19) once more, repeated as (26) below.

(26) ei du-to [aP choto lal boi]

Notice that the adjectives choto and lal within the aP are in the universal order of size and
colour. In case of multiple adjective fronting, if the adjectives moved as a chunk, then the
order predicted after the movement is choto lal. However, I have shown in (50) that the order
after the movement can be lal choto. I take this as evidence that the adjectives move out
independently across the Dem where multiple adjective fronting takes place. The movement
will look like (27).

(27) choto [FocP LAL ej [aP ej t t j boi]] du-to t k]
Now that I have argued that only one of the moved adjectives land in the FocP, and that both the adjectives move independently across the Dem, I will argue that the non-focussed adjective moves higher up than the FocP, and lands in the TopP above the FocP.

5.3. **TopicP within the Nominal Domain**

See (27) repeated as (28) below:

\[
\text{choto} \; \text{[FocP} \; \text{LAL]} \; \text{[DP} \; \text{ei} \; \text{[aP} \; t_j \; t_k \; \text{boi]} \; \text{du-to} \; t_k]\]

This expression can only be uttered when the adjective *small* (*choto*) is part of background information. That is, it is a situation where the information about the size of the book is already available, namely the fact that the book is small; then an additional information or a contrastive information is given in terms of the colour of the book, in this case the colour being *red* (*lal*). In this case, if someone asks a question which of the small books one wants, one can answer by uttering (30). This conversation is shown in (29)-(30).

\[
\text{kon} \; \text{choto} \; \text{boi} \; \text{du-to} \; \text{tomar chai?} \\
\text{‘Which of the small books do you want?’}
\]

\[
\text{choto} \; \text{LAL} \; \text{oi} \; \text{boi} \; \text{du-to} \; \text{amar chai} \\
\text{small} \; \text{red} \; \text{those book} \; \text{two-Cl} \; \text{I want} \\
\text{‘I want those two RED small books’}
\]

In the literature *topic* is often described as the background information of an utterance. Taking that as a standard notion of a topic, I suggest that *choto* in (28) is a topic. That is, the adjective *choto* moves further up than the FocP, and lands in the TopP. In other words, I claim there is a TopP within the Bangla nominal domain, and it is above the FocP, and the adjective *choto* in this case raises there. The relevant final structure of the Bangla nominal phrase, according to this paper, is shown below in (31).

\[
\text{[TopicP} \; \text{choto} \; \text{[FocP} \; \text{LAL]} \; \text{[DP} \; \text{ei} \; \text{[aP} \; t_j \; t_k \; \text{boi]} \; \text{du-to} \; t_k]\]
\]

The final structure can be schematically shown in (32).

\[
\text{[TopicP} \; \text{Adjective2} \; \text{[FocP} \; \text{Adjective1]} \; \text{[DP} \; \text{DEM} \; \text{[aP} \; t_j \; t_k \; \text{N]} \; \text{Num-Cl} \; t_i]\]
\]

5.4. **Evidence that Focus and Topic Are Not Outside the Nominal Domain**

I have shown movement of adjectives across the DEM, and into higher functional projections, and I have argued that these landing sites are FocP and TopP. Now one can posit a concern that the FocP and the TopP where the adjectives move to are outside the nominal domain. That is, in other words, I need to show that the FocP and the TopP that I discussed are indeed within the nominal domain, and the adjectives are not moving to the clausal Focus or Topic phrases.

Consider (33) and (34). The expression ‘lal CHOTO ei boi-ta’ may either occur below or above the subject ‘I’. The different possible positions with respect to the subject show that it constitutes a single nominal expression. If it is a single nominal, then there is only one nominal domain here, and any movement within this whole expression has to be within the nominal domain itself. I take this is as sufficient evidence that the movements of the
adjectives to the Focus and the Topic positions take place within the nominal domain, and not to any sentential/clausal Focus/Topic positions.

(33) ami [lal CHOTO ei boi-ta] porechi
      I  red small this book-Cl has read
         'I have read this red small book'

(34) [lal CHOTO ei boi-ta] ami porechi
      red small this book-Cl I  have read
         'I have read this red small book'

5.5. Mechanism

In this section, I talk about the mechanism of the movement of adjectives to the focus and topic positions. I have shown earlier, regarding focus, that the constituent in Focus is marked by prosodic prominence; that is, it bears the primary stress. I will side with Aboh (2008) in that the information structure of a sentence is pre-determined in the numeration. In other words, topic and focus are functional categories that are selected as lexical choices in the numeration. In Aboh’s words, “a numeration N pre-determines the Information Structure of a linguistic expression”. The constituent that bears the feature related to the Information Structure then needs to move up in a local checking configuration with the relevant functional head that has the matching feature (cf. Rizzi 1997, 2006). Criteria, a set of principles, constrains such local checking configurations; it requires that a Specifier/Head agreement relation obtains between the criterial functional head and the corresponding features of relevance, say, topic or focus. In more precise terms, the functional projection XP and the relevant head must have the same feature F (where F is focus or topic), and XP_F and X_F must be in a Spec-Head configuration. Criteria then triggers the movement, in the sense that it gives an attraction capacity to the X_F, and thus the XP moves up and lands in the specifier position of the X_F.

In the case in hand, namely in (59), the adjective lal is marked with Focus feature, and the adjective choto is marked with Topic feature. Recall that I argued that an adjective is an AdjP; that is, lal is an XP with the feature focus marked in the numeration, and choto is an XP with the feature topic marked in the numeration. Criteria triggers the focus movement, when the covert Foc⁰ attracts the XP_focus, and thus lal moves to the specifier of the FocP, and is in a Spec-Head configuration with the Focus head. The topic movement is triggered in a similar way by criteria, and the Top⁰ attracts the AdjP choto (which has Topic feature marked), and thus choto moves up to the specifier of the TopP, and is in a Spec-Head relation with the Topic head. I take the focus movement to be a representative case and show it in a tree diagram in (35); the topic movement happens in the same fashion.

5.6. Comparison with the Clausal Domain

Since Rizzi (1997) it is a well-known idea in the literature that the left periphery of a clause (CP) has finer divisions, and has higher functional projections like Topic phrases,
Focus phrases, Fin phrases etc. If DP is taken as the counterpart of IP in the nominal domain, in this paper I have shown that there are higher projections within the nominal domain as well; namely FocP and TopP above the DP. My evidence from Bangla adjective fronting extends Rizzi’s core proposal to the nominal domain, and adds to the recent research that focuses on the parallelism between the two domains.

Choudhury (2010) looks into focus and topic structure in the clausal domain of Bangla, and she argues for a FocP above the IP in Bangla, and for a TopP above the FocP. If we assume the parallelism hypothesis, then the clausal and the nominal domain of Bangla should be parallel. This paper provides evidence on the parallelism in the discourse-related sub-domain (CP in case of the clause); assuming Choudhury (2010) in terms of the position of focus and topic in the clausal part, I show that the Focus and the Topic present in the nominal domain are exactly parallel to the clausal structure. In other words, the IP in the clausal domain is the DP in the nominal domain. I showed in the paper that there is a fixed Focus position right above the DP, and a Topic phrase above the FocP, which is what Choudhury (2010) argues for the clausal counterpart. This is shown schematically in (36).

(36)  Clause:  TopP…FocP…IP
       Nominal: TopP…FocP…DP

6. Conclusion

Using data of multiple adjective fronting, this paper argues that there is a focus and a topic projection within the nominal domain of Bangla. I discuss how a feature driven analysis can explain such adjectival movement to higher discourse-related functional projections. This is parallel to the general clausal structure proposed in Rizzi (1997), and also to an existing account of focus and topic positions in the clausal domain of Bangla (Choudhury 2010).

References


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6 The Parallelism Hypothesis will state that the structure of a clause [CP… [IP… [VP]]] should be parallel to the nominal domain as well.
Syed, S. Adjectives, Adjective-fronting, and evidence for Focus and Topic within the Bangla nominal domain. MS, University of Southern California. 2012.