

Evidence for ‘finiteness’ in Telugu

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Abstract Surface morphology is notoriously inconsistent both language-internally and cross-linguistically in providing any kind of reliable reflex of covert syntactic features. This paper addresses the difficult question of how the acquirer is able to deduce the presence/absence of particular (covert) features on functional items, here features of finiteness, given that they cannot rely on morphology. The paper has the following goals. First, it makes a fairly narrow empirical claim, specifically, that Telugu does not have PRO in its lexicon (and therefore does not have Control). Clausal subjects can easily be accounted for by *pro*, needed in Telugu for independent reasons. Second, because PRO/Control is so closely associated with finiteness, the paper explores whether there are other elements in Telugu that correspond to those usually associated with finiteness cross-linguistically. Third, the paper argues that, although traditional aspects of finiteness seem to be lacking, a more coherent notion of finiteness, based upon requirements of temporal and logophoric anchoring, should be adopted.

Keywords Telugu · Finiteness · PRO/Control

1 Introduction

This paper presents data from Telugu (Dravidian family, Andhra Pradesh state, India) that raises a number of questions, first in the narrower domain of Telugu syntax regarding the existence of PRO/Control, but ultimately for our understanding of how an acquirer can deduce the existence of particular (covert) features on Lexical Items (LIs) in the frequent cases where surface morphology is either null or misleading. The covert features of particular concern here are those that govern ‘finiteness,’ a domain

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