

Microparameters in a tiny space: Standing at the edge

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In a paper published some years ago (2002), I examined a previously un-recognized species of quantifier float, one in which a universal quantifier ('all') associates at a distance with a fronted *wh*-phrase in a question. The pattern is characteristic of certain sub-communities in the northwest corner of Ireland. In this talk I return to the issues raised by those observations in a new context. The new context is defined in part by certain advances in syntactic theory (notably the theory of phases and the multiple occurrences theory of movement), but also by careful follow-up studies of the phenomenon carried out by Lisa Hegarty (2011) and Alison Henry (2012). These studies have uncovered a complex pattern of micro-variation (which I was mostly unaware of at the time of my initial work) with respect to the quantifier-stranding phenomenon, variation which centers on networks of speakers which are very small indeed and which seem to turn on the (im)possibility of stranding in intermediate position – at the CP edge or at the vP edge. The paper asks what theory of syntactic variation best allows an understanding of such patterns and (ii) considers the very difficult issues for the theory of acquisition that now arise.