

The content of non-argument positions in the left periphery Evidence from Yucatec Maya

Stavros Skopeteas, Elisabeth Verhoeven
University of Potsdam, University of Bremen

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Constituent structure and IS

Research question:

Association of positions in the left periphery with IS functions

Discourse configurational hypothesis

(see Rizzi 1997, Kiss 1998, etc.)

Information structural functions are features that are associated with functional projections.

Discourse underspecification hypothesis

(see Alexopoulou 1999, Wedgwood 2003, Fanselow 2006, 2008, Neeleman & Koot 2007, Zimmermann 2007, Horvath 2008, etc.)

Information structural functions are not part of the syntactic derivation; their correlation with particular properties of the constituent structure is the result of interface strategies.

Constituent structure and IS

Heuristics:

- A. For IS-features to be inherent properties of the constituent structure, a bi-unique association between configurations at both layers is required.

(see Fanselow 2006, 2008, Fanselow and Lenertová 2008, Skopeteas and Fanselow 2008)

- B. For IS-features to be inherent properties of the constituent structure, the observed correspondences between units of the two layers are expected to be no further decomposable.

→ Implying that if the interaction between IS and CS is predictable by properties of the linearization and the prosodic structure (e.g., discourse templates, see Vallduví 1992, Neeleman and Koot 2007, Neeleman et al. 2008), then the assumption of a direct association is epiphenomenal.

Constituent structure and IS

Heuristics:

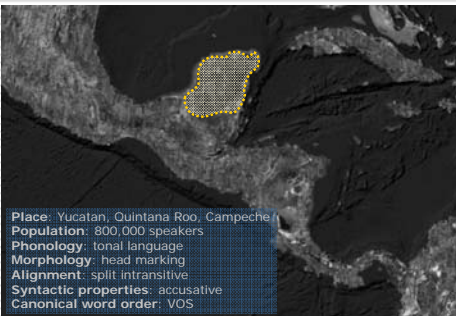
- A. For IS-features to be inherent properties of the constituent structure, a bi-unique association between configurations at both layers is required.

(see Fanselow 2006, 2008, Fanselow and Lenertová 2008, Skopeteas and Fanselow 2008)

Phenomena discussed in this talk:

Structural configurations otherwise induced by IS functions may be also induced by purely structural constraints in particular grammars.

Yucatec Maya



Contents

- Left peripheral constituents in Yucatec Maya: outline of structural evidence
- Left-dislocated constituents: Asymmetry between **V-NP₁-NP₂** configurations vs. else configurations.
- Pre-predicate constituents: Asymmetry between **definites** and **non-definites**.
- Residual problems and conclusions

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Outline of structural differences

- (1) Canonical VOS order
T-u **háant-ah** **oon** **péedrooh.**
 PFV-A.3 eat:TRR-CMPL(B.3.SG) avocado Pedro
- (2) Left dislocated constituent
péedrooh-e' **t-u** **háant-ah** **oon.**
 Pedro-D.3 PFV-A.3 eat:TRR-CMPL(B.3.SG) avocado
- (3) Pre-predicate constituent
péedrooh **háant** **oon.**
 Pedro eat:TRR(SUBJ)(B.3.SG) avocado
 ("agent-focus", see Bricker 1979, Bohnemeyer 1998, Stiebels 2006)

Outline of structural differences

	left-dislocated	pre-predicate
a. right edge enclitics	+	-
b. dependent verb form	-	+
c. relative order	precedes	follows
d. follows NEG	-	+
e. follows COMP	-	+
f. recursivity	+	-
g. co-indexed elements <i>in situ</i>	+	-

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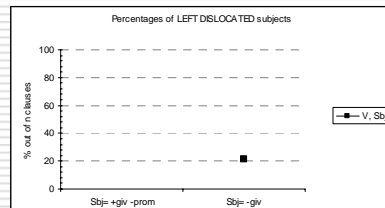
Corpus data

When does left dislocation occur?

- **Method:** Semi-spontaneous narratives elicited through discourse tasks with visual stimuli (QUIS, Project *Typology of information structure*, University of Potsdam).
- **Dataset:** Small-scale corpus of 2 423 words (309 clauses), four native speakers.
- **Decoding:**
 - non-given referent referents;
 - given, non-prominent referents;
 - given, prominent referents.

Intransitives: Non-given Sbj

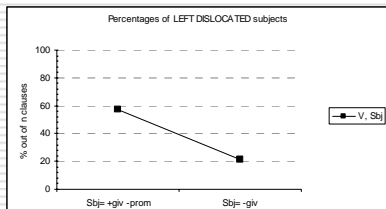
- (4) (no pretext) **H** **lúub** **hun-p'éeel** **che'**,
 PFV fall one-CL.INAN branch
káah **táal** **hun-túul** **x-ch'úup-e'** ...
 CNJ PFV come one-CL.AN F-woman-D3
 'A branch fell down, then a girl came, ...' (L 37.2)



Intransitives: Given, non-prom. Sbj

(5) Context: 'Near the water, there is a woman. The door of the house is open and a man is going there ... The man is standing with the pot...'

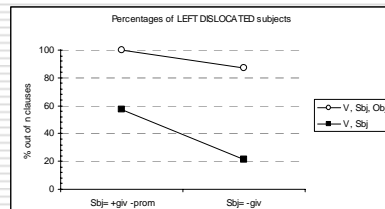
... le x-ch'úuppal-o' káa káa wa'l-iah tu'x ...
 DEF F-woman:child-D2 CNJ CNJ stand-CMPL(B.3.SG) where
 '...the woman is standing where (the pot is)'



Transitives

(6) (no pretext)

te'l-a' hun-túul máak-e' u mach-mah
 there-D2 one-CL.AN man-D3 A.3 seize-PART.PF(B.3.SG)
 hun-p'éel k'áanche' ...
 one-CL.INAN chair
 'There, a man holds a chair, ...' (L 31.4)



Conclusions on left dislocation

In sum:

- Subjects of intransitive verbs are left dislocated in the contextual conditions that may license topicalization.
- Subjects of transitive verbs are left dislocated in all contexts.

(converging evidence from language comprehension, cf. Skopeteas and Verhoeven 2005, and other corpus studies, cf. Gutiérrez Bravo & Monforte y Madera 2008)

We hypothesize that a particular constraint applies only for linearizations with two postverbal arguments:

Distinctness condition (see Richards 2006)

* <XP_α, XP_α>

Conclusions on left dislocation

Distinctness condition (see Richards 2006)

* <XP_α, XP_α>

Further evidence:

(evidence from naturalistic corpus of 20 narratives):

- when either the Sbj or the Obj is local (1st or 2nd person),
- when one argument is extracted in the pre-predicate position,

the only realized argument shows the same properties with the subjects of intransitive verbs (in situ in the majority of cases; I-dislocated when contextual conditions are met).

Conclusions on left dislocation

Consequences for the distributional properties of the construction at issue:

No distributional restrictions on the left-dislocation of non-referential NPs (even preferred option when two arguments are present).

(7) hu'huntuulil káala'n-e' u k'áat servéesáah.
 every drunk;RSLV-D3 A.3 wish beer
 'Every drunk person likes beer.'

Conclusion:

Topicalization is a subset of the factors that induce left dislocation.

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Pre-predicate constituents

- Association with a semantic operator
Behavioural data (study on language production eliciting semi-spontaneous answers to several question types) as well as *competence data* suggest that the pre-predicate position in Yucatec Maya is not associated with an identificational operator. As an illustration:

(8) **tak xan le h-meen k'aat-ik wáah-o'.**
as.far.as also DEF M-curer ask-INCMPPL tortilla-D2
'Even the curer asks for tortilla.'

Compare with a pseudo-cleft construction:

(9) ***tak xan le h-meen le k'aat-ik wáah-o'.**
as.far.as also DEF M-curer DEF ask-INCMPPL tortilla-D2
'Even the curer is the one that asks for tortilla.'

Pre-predicate constituents

- With respect to the influence of structural factors: asymmetry in focusing **definite** and **non-definite NPs**.

Pre-predicate constituents

- NPs with the determiner *le* 'DEF' are obligatorily accompanied by a deictic enclitic:

(10) a. **le kéeh-o'**
DEF deer-D2
b. **le kéeh suuk-o'**
DEF deer tame-D2

- This enclitic is associated with salient prosodic properties (rising contour, followed by an intonational break) and determines the right edge of a prosodic constituent.

(11) V OBJ SBJ
k-u ximbat-ik le h-meen hun-túul h-k'in-o'.
IPFV-A.3 visit-INCMPPL DEF M-shaman INDEF-CL AN M-priest-D2
'A priest visits the shaman-there.'

Pre-predicate constituents

These enclitics may separate the left-dislocated constituent from its complement XP:

(12) What is the seller doing?
Le ah koonol-o' túun y-áalkab.
DEF M seller-D2 PROG:A.3 0-run
'The seller is running.'

They cannot separate the pre-predicate constituent from its complement XP (see assumption of DEF/FOC constraint in Tonhauser 2003):

(13) Who is running?
#Le ah koonol-o' túun y-áalkab.
DEF M seller-D2 PROG:A.3 0-run
'The seller is running.'

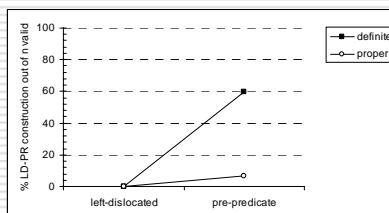
Pre-predicate constituents

The crucial question is how speakers resolve this conflict in order to focus definite NPs:

(14) Who is running?
Le ah koonol-o' leti' túun y-áalkab.
DEF M seller-D2 DEM PROG:A.3 0-run
'The seller, that one is running.'

Pre-predicate constituents

(14) Who is running?
Le ah koonol-o' leti' túun y-áalkab.
DEF M seller-D2 that.one PROG:A.3 0-run
'The seller, HE is running.'



13 speakers
Total 208 utterances

position:
 $F_{1,12} = 26.68$; $p < .001$

enclitic:
 $F_{1,12} = 25.94$; $p < .001$

position*enclitic:
 $F_{1,12} = 25.94$; $p < .001$

Pre-predicate constituents

Conclusions:

- The prepredicate position does not show restrictions that suggest an identificational operator.

- Purely structural constraints have the effect that only a subset of the structural configurations that may be narrow focused is realized in this position.

Residual issues and conclusions

• We presented evidence that purely structural factors influence the occurrence of the Yucatec Mayan left-peripheral positions in discourse.

• However, the two positions are not interchangeable:

(15) [?]chen pëedróoh-e' k-u hàant-ik bu'l.
only Pedro-D3 IPFV-A.3 eat:TRR-INCMP beam
'Only Pedro eats beans.'

(16) chen pëedróoh hàant bu'l.
only Pedro eat:TRR(SUBJ)(B.3.SG) beam
'It is only Pedro that eats beans.'

• If IS-functions are not determined by the association of syntactic operations with features but by templates that refer to linear properties such as TOP<COM or FOC<BACKGROUND, then the minimal pair (15)-(16) is not expected.

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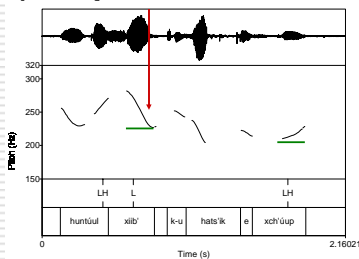
• Prosodic domains:

(17) a. Left dislocation: (XP)_{MajP} (V YP)_{MajP}
b. Pre-predicate position: (XP V YP)_{MajP}

• Deictic enclitics may separate the left-dislocated constituent from its complement XP, but not the pre-predicate constituent from its complement XP.
• Second position particle *wàah* 'Q' (follows the verb, or the pre-predicate constituent if any).

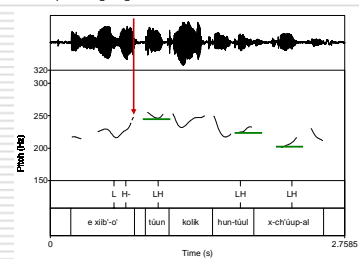
Residual issues and conclusions

hun-túul xi'b k-u hats'-ik e xch'úup
one-CL.ANIM boy PFV-3.SG hit-CMPL DEF girl
'It is a boy, that the girl hit.'



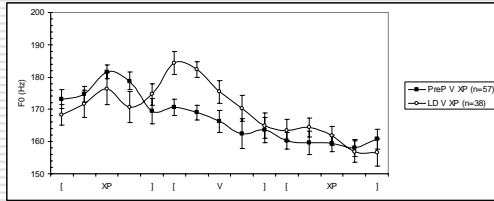
Residual issues and conclusions

e xliib-o' túun kol-ik hun-túul xch'úupal
DEF man-D2 PROG push-CMPL one-CL.ANIM girl
'The man is pushing a girl.'



Residual issues and conclusions

Figure 1.
Average F_0 measurements of utterances involving left peripheral constituents



Residual issues and conclusions

Left dislocated constituents are adjoined to the left and form a separate p-phrase that cannot carry the main stress of the assertion.

Acknowledgments

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The content of non-argument positions in the left periphery Comments by Artemis Alexiadou

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Typology of left dislocation

Comment:

As is known from other languages, left-dislocation is an umbrella term that covers at least three constructions:

- (1) Contrastive Left Dislocation (CLD)
- (2) Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD)
- (3) Hanging Topic Left Dislocation (HTLD)

- How does left dislocation in YM fare with respect to these types?
- How can we integrate the Maya data into a typology of left dislocation?

Typology of left dislocation

Answer:

A. Evidence for HTLD in Yucatec Maya

Possibility of co-referent pronoun in situ

(→emphatic pronoun, not possible in CLLD; also examples with lexical NPs)

Péedroh₁-e' t-u y-il-ah leti'₁-e' ba'x uuch.
Pedro-D3 PFV-A.3 0-see-CMPL(B.3.SG) DEM-0 what happen
'Pedro₁, he₁ sees what happen.

Typology of left dislocation

Answer:

A. Evidence for HTLD in Yucatec Maya

Preposition drop

(similar phenomena in Asian languages, see Xu 2006)

in nah-il-e' yan u yáantal hun-p'éel
A.1.SG house-REL-D3 DEB A.3 exist:PROC one-CL.INAN
cha'n sáamal-I'.
spectacle tomorrow-D4
'As concerns my house, there will be a party tomorrow.'

Typology of left dislocation

Answer:

B. Similar to CLD in Yucatec Maya:

Le ah kóonol-o' leti' tuun y-áalkab.
DEF M seller-D2 DEM PROG:A.3 0-run
'The seller, HE is running.'

functional difference:

CLD is not an answer to wh- question, the above construction occurs only in this case under particular structural conditions, structural similarities: adjacency to the d-word restriction to definites is reminiscent to referentiality related restrictions of CLD/CLLD (see Anagnostopoulou 1997), however in YM is the result of a structural constraint: it does not hold for proper nouns.

Typology of left dislocation

Answer:

C. Conceptual reasons to assume that there is also a lower position that derives from movement, especially since we assume that this is the case at least for structures with two postverbal arguments. This position would be similar to the landing site of CLLD.

However:

- no independent evidence (no reliable data concerning island restrictions and binding relations yet)
- left-dislocated constituents in YM occur in root contexts and some types of subordinate clauses such as complements of verbs of saying whose structural status is not clear (-> CLD/HTLD). Other types of subordinate clauses allow prepredicate constituents but not LD: this restriction applies equally for every type of LD in Yucatec Maya.

Focus movement

Comment:

Granting the conclusion that the pre-predicate position is a focus position, it is not clear why this cannot be derived via feature movement. In principle, one could assume an underspecified +F feature that triggers displacement. Do we have evidence against that?

Answer:

The presented data provides evidence against the assumption of an identificational operator that triggers displacement, but **does not exclude** an underspecified +F feature that triggers displacement.

If this underspecified concept can be accounted for in terms of prominence in the linearization/prosodic structure, the question is whether it is necessary to assume non-compositionally an unspecified feature associated with a syntactic operation.

Distinctness

Empirical data:

Sbj_{LD} V Obj (contextually unrestricted)
Sbj_{LD} V (requires contextual licensing)
Sbj_{LD} V <loc O> (requires contextual licensing)
Sbj_{LD} Obj V (requires contextual licensing)

Account 1:

If a linearization statement < α , α > is generated, the derivation crashes. (Richards 2006)

Account 2:

By Spell-Out vP can contain no more than one argument with an unchecked Case feature. (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001, 2007)

Distinctness

Problem 1: Structural requirements for distinctness effects:
Are Obj and Sbj part of the same phase?
In particular, does VOS in Yucatec Maya result from
VP raising?

(a) Evidence against VP raising in Mayan languages: VPs are not
islands for extraction, all arguments and adjuncts may undergo *wh*-
movement (in contrast to the restrictions in Malagasy)
(see Aissen 1996, Chung 2006)

(b) If the prosodic domains that restrict the occurrence of enclitics are
determined by phases, then

VP-raising → V Obj-e Sbj
VOS=basic → V Obj Sbj-e

Distinctness

Problem 2: Properties of V-NP1-NP2 constraint

(a) **Gradience**

Evidence that VOS is less likely to occur when O and S
are both animate, than when they differ in animacy,
similar pattern with definiteness (evidence from
comprehension in Skopeteas & Verhoeven 2005, evidence
from intuition of native speakers in Bohnemeyer 2008).

(b) **Optionality**

The restrictions on VOS in Yucatec Maya are optional,
hence a VOS sentence is accepted by native speakers, but
rarely produced (different from restrictions on stylistic
inversion).

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