Three ways to "steal" an element from a CP: Evidence from three Formosan languages

Typologically diverse languages are known to have *Raising to Object* constructions (RTO), in which verbs that select for a clausal complement appear with an additional phrase (XP) that is identified with an element inside the clausal complement (YP) (1) (e.g., Postal 1974; Kuno 1976; Massam 1985).

(1) Subject Verb $\underline{XP_i}$ [… $\underline{YP_i}$ …]

Three Formosan languages, Puyuma, Amis, and Seediq, all have what appear to be instances of RTO (2).

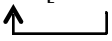
(2) ma-tiya=ku kan Sawagu$_i$ [dra tu=trakaw-aw nu=paliding e.c.$_i$].
AV-dream=1SG.ABS DF.OBL Sawagu$_i$ [C 3.ERG=steal-PV 2SG.ABS.POSS=car e.c.$_i$]
'I dreamt that Sawagu stole your car.' [PUYUMA]

These constructions share the following similarities: (i) they all involve finite CPs, and (ii) the XP behaves like a main-clause element in terms of word order, case-marking and reflexivization.

In this talk, we first show that, the similarities among RTOs in these three languages are only apparent, and they exhibit the following differences: (i) Puyuma is the only language that imposes *no* restriction on the XP-YP relation, except that XP has to be definite, (ii) unlike Puyuma, both Amis and Seediq require the YP to be an absolutive case marked element (i.e. the *ABS-only* condition), and (iii) Seediq is the only language in which the XP-YP relation has to obey *island constraints* (Ross 1967).

We then argue that (i) XP is generated external to the embedded CP and adjoined to the CP in all three languages, and (ii) RTOs in these three languages utilize three different strategies to establish the XP-YP relation: direct co-indexization (3a), co-indexization via a base-generated topic (ZP) (3b), and co-indexization via A'-movement (3c).

(3) a. Verb XP_i [… YP_i …] [PUYUMA]
b. Verb XP_i [ZP_{TOPICi} [… YP_i …]] [AMIS]
c. Verb XP_i [YP_i [... t_i …]] [SEEDIQ]



We also argue that the 'main-clause behavior' of XP can be accounted for based on (i) a novel account of "Exceptional Case Marking" based on the claim that CPs receive abstract case (Chung 1991, 1994, 1998; Rackowski & Richards 2005), and (ii) an assumption that CPs are "extraposed" near-obligatorily in these languages. Finally, we explore implications of our findings to RTO constructions cross-linguistically.

Selected References:

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