

Topic and Focus in Bunun

The basic word order in (Isbukun) Bunun is VSO, shown in (1). It is reported that there are two topic markers: *hai* and *aʔ*. When *hai* shows up, the topicalized NP must occur in nominative case; on the other hand, the presence of *aʔ* makes obligatory the oblique case of the preposed NP, exemplified in (2) and (3). The main goal of this paper is to explain the case differences associated with the two markers. As a more general goal, I suggest a plausible way to look at similar clefts and relative constructions in other languages and attempt to compare the approaches on the market now.

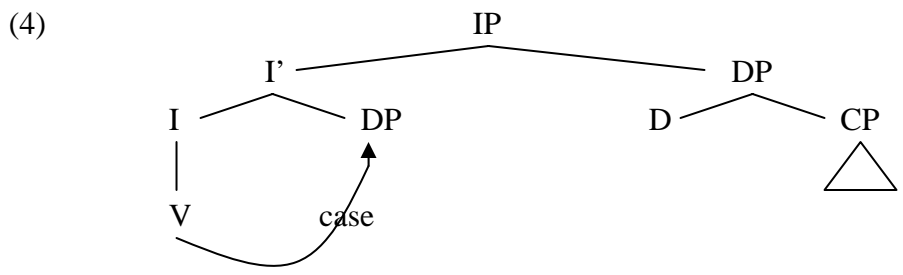
I argue that *hai* is a genuine focus topic marker whereas *aʔ* is simply a nominative case marker which often gets omitted in common sentences. First, *aʔ*-sentences under discussion are cleft equationals, where the clefted element, *ɔaku* in (3a), is followed by a constituent which is identified as the subject since it is obligatorily introduced by the nominative case marker *aʔ*. The subject, *h-in-ud saicin* in (3a), is a complex NP consisting of a headless relative with a null head. Under this configuration as in (4), I propose an abstract copula/emphatic marker serve to assign the oblique case to the clefted element. The occurrence of such a copula/emphatic marker can be overtly seen in other Formosan languages, such as *zou* in Northern Tsou (5); however, the copula is phonologically null in Bunun, perhaps due to historical loss, but the effect of its existence is still preserved in the case-assigning ability. On the other hand, as demonstrated in (6), actor-sensitivity is observed in AV, but not in NAV, sentences led by *hai* but the voice asymmetry with regard to topicalization is not observed in *aʔ*-sentences. Since, as widely assumed, topicalization obeys actor-sensitivity in many Austronesian languages, thus it is well-grounded to assume that *hai*-sentences exhibit true topic-comment construction while the cleft equational introduced by *aʔ* displays common predicate-subject constituency. This structural difference is manifested by the distinct case realization.

The proposed cleft construction analysis can be extended not only to other Austronesian languages but to genetically very different ones. For example, Japanese and Chinese demonstrate tremendously similar patterns, evidenced in (7) and (8). Given the Uniformity Principle of Chomsky (2001), which requires languages to be uniform with varieties restricted to easily detectable properties, I suggest that the similarity in clefts and (headless) relatives across these languages is best captured by Kayne's (1994) promotion analysis. Specifically, the surface variation among the languages in question simply arises from the language-particular choice in head directionality and (non-)pronunciation of certain elements such as D.

Data

- (1) Actor Voice (AV): maludah Bukun Alang. 'Bukun beats Alang.'
 beat-AV
 Non Actor Voice (NAV): ludahun Alang Bukun 'Alang is beaten by Bukun.'
 beat-NAV

- (2) a. saikin **hai** madu Alang 'I, like Alang.'
 I-nom like-AV
 b. *đaku **hai** madu Alang
- (3) a. đaku **a?** h-in-ud saicin 'Me, drank this.'
 I-obl drink-perf-AV this
 b. *saikin **a?** h-in-ud saicin



- (5) *Northern Tsou*
 (Zou) Pasuya si m-o eobak-o ta Mo?o.
 Copula nom AF-Rea hit-AF obl Mo?o
 'The one who hit Mo?o is Pasuya.'

- (6) a. Bukun hai madu (AV) Alang. 'Bukun, he likes Alang.'
 b. *Alang hai madu (AV) Bukun. 'Alang, he is liked by Bukun.'
 c. Alang hai kaduun (NAV) Bukun. 'Alang, he is liked by Bukun.'

- (7) *Japanese*
 Taro-ga tabete no wa kono-ringo-o da.
 -nom ate Nominalizer top this-apple Copula
 'The thing that Taro ate is this apple.'

- (8) *Chinese*
 shi Zhangsan da-le Lisi.
 Copula hit
 'The one who hit Lisi is Zhangsan.'