

Restructuring in Tsou

Tsou is an Austronesian language spoken in southwest Taiwan. As pointed out by previous researchers (Starosta 1982 et al., Zeitoun 2000, Huang 2002, Chang 2004), Tsou's syntax differs significantly from other Austronesian languages. Specifically, unlike other Austronesian languages, almost every Tsou sentence requires an auxiliary which can be inflected for focus/voice when the sentence involves realis mood and the serial verbs following the auxiliary must all co-vary with the auxiliary and agree with each other in focus/voice inflection (which we term as focus harmony), as in (1-5). This paper attempts to uncover the mechanisms underlying the exotic syntactic behavior in Tsou. Applying the widely observed diagnostics for restructuring (Rizzi 1982, Aissen and Perlmutter 1983, Wurmbrand 2001, Chung 2004), this paper attributes the exotic behavior to the prevailing restructuring attested in Tsou. This analysis is well-supported by the following converging evidence. First, as noted by Starosta et al. (1982) and Ross (1995), the serial verbs following the auxiliary are all inflected in an infinitive manner in Tsou, comparable to the dependent forms observed in negative and imperative constructions in other Austronesian languages. This leads to the assumption that the post-auxiliary serial verbs are all infinitival in Tsou. Second, the serial verb constructions should be monoclausal despite their biclausal appearance, given that (i) there is only one tense/mood involved, as in (1-4); (ii) the serial verbs can merge into a verb complex, as in (2), or can even be lexicalized as a compound, as in (3). Third, bound pronouns are required to occur on the auxiliary rather than on the main verbs, as in (1-5), giving rise to an effect comparable to the well-known restructuring test, namely, clitic-climbing. Fourth, arguments of lower verbs can end up as matrix subjects, as in (4), creating a situation like long passive. In Tsou, the restructuring covers the whole spectrum, ranging from the restructuring which only takes place in surface syntax, as in (1), to the restructuring which allows alternations, as in (2), and finally to the restructuring which has been lexicalized, as in (3). The merger is basically conditioned by the Binding Hierarchy (Givon 1981, 1993): the tighter the semantic bond between the higher verb and the lower verb the easier for them to merge into a lexical item. Accordingly, while aspectual/manner/frequency verbs entertain productive lexical fusion with their complement verbs, as in (2-3), modal/psychological/utterance/cognitive verbs are likely to be exempt from the co-lexicalization, as evidenced by the intervening linkers *ho* and *no* in (5).

(1) Focus harmony in Tsou (Data adopted from Lin 2002:41)

- a. mi-'o m-ici b-on-~~ʔ~~ no tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
AF(Rea)-1S AF-want AF-eat-AF Obl banana
'I want to eat banana.'
- b. os-'o uci-a an-a 'e tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
NAF(Rea)-1S want-PF eat-PF Nom banana
'I want to eat the banana.'

(2) Verb complex in Tsou

- a. mi-ta ahoi pasunaen-o
AF(Rea)-3Sb begin(AF) sing-AF
'He begins to sing.'
- b. mi-ta pasu-hoi
AF(Rea)-3S sing-begin(AF)
'He sings first.'

(3) Compounds in Tsou

- a. mi-ta-cu o-ep~~ʔ~~ng-~~ʔ~~ ta tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
AF(Rea)-3S-Asp eat-finish-AF Obl banana
'He has finished eating banana.'
- a'.* mi-ta aep~~ʔ~~ng-~~ʔ~~ b-on-~~ʔ~~ ta tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
AF(Rea)-3S finish-AF AF-eat-AF Obl banana
- b. i-ta-cu o-ep~~ʔ~~ng-a 'e tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
NAF(Rea)-3S-Asp eat-finish-PF Nom banana
'He has finished eating the banana.'
- b'.* i-ta aep~~ʔ~~ng-a an-a 'e tac~~ʔ~~m~~ʔ~~
NAF(Rea)-3S finish-PF eat-PF Nom banana
'He finished eating the banana.'

(4) Tsou

- a. i-ta ahav-a eobak-a 'e oko
NAF(Rea)-3S do.suddenly-PF beat-PF Nom child
'He suddenly beat the child.'
- b. i-ta asng~~ʔ~~cv-a eobak-a 'e oko
NAF(Rea)-3S do.often-PF beat-PF Nom child
'He often beats his child'
- c. i-ta ason-a opcoz-a 'e fuzu
NAF(Rea)-3S be.possible-PF kill-PF Nom wild.pig
'He possibly killed the wild pig.'

(5) Tsou (Lin 2002:50, Shen 2004:3)

- a. os-'o cohiv-i ho mi-ta supeoh-~~ʔ~~
NAF(Rea)-1S know-LF Conj AF(Rea)-3S fall.down-AF
'I know that he fell down.'
- b. mo ngohe~~ʔ~~ng-~~ʔ~~ no cmuh-u to teo'ua 'o mo'o
AF(Rea) afraid-AF to kill-AF Obl chicken Nom Mo'o
'Mo'o is afraid to kill a chicken.'

Selected references

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