

Clefting and Predicate-Fronting in Austronesian Languages

It is fairly uncontroversial that *wh*-questions in a great many Austronesian languages take the form of clefts and are not derived through movement of the *wh*-phrase (Paul 2000, Massam 2003, among many others). For example, in the Seediq example in (1a), the *wh*-phrase is the matrix predicate, while the remainder of the clause takes the form of a headless relative clause. (1b), which is derived through *wh*-movement to [Spec, CP], is ungrammatical.

Numerous analyses have been proposed for the structure of clefts in Austronesian languages. In this paper, I focus on the question of why the cleft strategy is favored over movement in these languages. Oda (2002) and Massam (2003), building on Oda's work, have proposed that *wh*-movement is generally disallowed in verb-initial languages because clause-initial position is reserved for predicative material. However, this proposal is too restrictive. Tagalog, a language which employs the cleft strategy for DP *wh*-questions (as shown in (2)), does allow fronting of PPs and adverbials, as shown in (3). Note the position of the clitic pronouns in (2) and (3). The clitic must be inside the headless relative in (2), indicating the biclausal status of this sentence. The clitics in (3), however, raise and adjoin to the fronted XP, indicating that this phrase is still contained in the originating CP.

I argue that the true generalization is not that clause-initial position is reserved for predicates but rather that DPs are prohibited from appearing in this position. Specifically, I propose the PF filter in (4). This filter is active for CP phases in most Austronesian languages and additionally for *v*P in some. The filter plays an important role in the generation of VOS word order in languages like Seediq and Malagasy. Obligatory topicalization of the subject or absolutive DP must be followed by fronting of the remnant predicate or the filter will be violated at PF. The filter additionally accounts for the Malagasy bodyguard construction. The topic DP can appear to the left of TP only when it is preceded by an adjunct (which is not a DP), as shown in (5). Multiple *wh*-fronting in Malagasy follows the same pattern. A DP *wh*-phrase can move to clause-initial position, but it must be preceded by another *wh*-phrase which is not a DP, as shown in (6).

The filter clearly accounts for the ungrammaticality of DP *wh*-movement discussed above and shown in (1b) and (2b). The DP *wh*-phrase cannot be spelled out in the outermost CP specifier. This raises the question, however, of whether subsequent TP-fronting could salvage a *wh*-movement derivation. Such a derivation is not possible, as shown for Seediq in (7). Under my analysis, (7) is ruled out by the principle in (8). The *wh*-phrase would not receive the intended interpretation, so the sentence is semantically anomalous. In the cleft derivation, however, the *wh*-phrase is contained in the matrix predicate, which moves to clause-initial position and receives a focus interpretation. The headless relative clause follows it and receives a presuppositional interpretation.

[CP [TP [*v*P *t*_{CP} [*v*' *v* [DP *wh*]]]] [C' [CP ...] [C' C *t*_{TP}]]]

At first blush the interpretive principle in (8) appears to be a stipulation. However, it should rather be understood as the underlying motivation for the filter in (4), and its existence is clearly demonstrated by the distribution of new (the predicate or fronted adjunct) and old information (topic DP or D-linked *wh*-phrase) in all of the constructions discussed above.

- (1)a. Maanu [DP ka [TP b-n-ari=na]]? (Seediq)
 what Abs -Perf-buy=3s.Erg
 “What did she buy?”
- b. *[CP Maanu=na [TP b-n-ari t_{Ano}]]?
 what=3s.Erg -Perf-buy
 “What did she buy?”
- (2)a. Ano [DP ang [TP ga-gaw-in=mo]]? (Tagalog)
 what Abs Red-do-Tr=2s.Erg
 “What are you going to do?”
- b. *[CP Ano=mo [TP ga-gaw-in t_{Ano}]]?
 What=2s.Erg Red-do-Tr
 “What are you going to do?”
- (3)a. *Sa* *Maynila=ako* pu-punta. (Tagalog)
 to Manila=1s.Abs Red-go
 “I will go to *Manila*.”
- b. *Saan=ka* pu-punta?
 where=2s.Abs Red-go
 “Where are you going?”
- (4) Stranded DP Filter
 A DP cannot be spelled out in the leftmost position in a phase edge.
- (5) **Amin’ity** **savony** **ity** *Rasoa* [no manasa lamba].
 with.this soap this Rasoa Cl AT.wash clothes
 “With this soap Rasoa washed the clothes.” (Malagasy, Keenan 1976)
- (6) **Aiza** **iza** no mividy ny vary?
 where who Foc Pres.AT.buy the rice
 “Where does who buy the rice?” (Malagasy, Sabel 2003)
- (7) *[CP [TP B-n-ari=na t_{maanu}] [C' [DP ka maanu] [C' C t_{TP}]]]
 -Perf-buy=3s.Erg Abs what
 “What did she buy?” (Seediq)
- (8) Phase Edge Interpretation (applies at LF)
 If the edge of a phase HP has the form [HP XP [H' DP ...]], where X is not D, DP is mapped to the presupposition and XP to focus.

References

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