

Constraining focus and extraction domains

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1. Belhare has a very liberal interrogative and focus syntax¹

Attributive clauses

- (1) a. sa-a thuu-s-u-na iŋa chept-he-ga?
who-[s]ERG [3sA]-cook-TR.PERF-3[s]P-ART beer[ABS] taste-PT[-3sP]-2[sA]
‘*Who did you try the beer that brewed?’
- a'. sa-a iŋa thuu-s-u-na chept-he-ga?
who[s]-ERG beer[ABS] [3sA]-cook-TR.PERF-3[s]P-ART taste-PT[-3sP]-2[sA]
‘*Who did you try the beer that brewed?’
- b. asen sa-ti ka-ten-ba ma?i ta-he?
yesterday who-sABS PART-hit-MASC person[-sABS] [3sS]-come-PT
‘*Who_i did the man who hit ___i yesterday come?’
- c. ye-ti ka-set-pa-chi chitt-he-chi-ga?
what-sABS PART-kill-MASC-ns[ABS] find-[3P]-ns[P]-2[s]A
(lit: ‘What_i did you find the one who butchered ___i?’)

Complement clauses

- (2) a. sa-a a-tak niu-s-u-ha n-lur-he-ga?
who-[s]ERG 1sPOSS-friend[-sABS] [3sA]-see-TR.PERF-3[s]P-N 3[s]A-tell-PT-2[s]P
‘Who did s/he/they tell you saw my friend?’
- b. sa-ti niu-s-u-ha n-lur-he-ga?
who-sABS [3sA]-see-TR.PERF-3[s]P-N 3nsA-tell-PT-2[s]P
‘Who did s/he/they tell you that she saw?’
- c. sa-a iŋ-s-u-ha matt-he?
who-[s]ERG [3sA]-buy-TR.PERF-3[s]P-N [3sA]-narrate-PT[-3sP]
‘Who did s/he/they say bought it?’

Adsententially subordinate clauses

- (3) a. sa-a ya=m-phekt-a-k=naa ŋ-khatd-at-ni-gak=phe?
who-[s]ERG call=3nsA-call-SUBJ-2[s]P=TOP NEG-go-PT-NEG-2[s]S=IRR
‘You haven’t gone if who had called you?’
- b. sa-a lab-yukt-u-lo m-phig-he?
who-[s]ERG [3sA]-grip-keep.stable[-SUBJ.PT]-3sP-COM 3nsA-pick-[3sP]-PT
‘The picked [fruits] when who kept down [the branch]?’

- b'. u-ppa-ŋa=ro lab-yukt-u-lo m-pig-he.
3[s]POSS-father-ERG=FOC [3sA]-grip-keep.stable[-SUBJ.PT]-3sP-COM 3nsA-pick-[3sP]-PT
‘They picked [fruits] when his FATHER kept down the branch.’
- b''. +> aru-ŋa n-lab-u=naŋa mi-ŋ-pikg-att-u-n.
others-ERG [3sA]-grip-keep.stable[-SUBJ.PT]-3sP=TOP 3nsA-pick-PT[-3sP]-NEG
‘If others had kept down the branch, they wouldn’t have picked [fruits].’

Chained clauses

- (4) laitar hene lept-he-ga ki sɿlai am-t-u-ga?
lighter[ABS] where throw-PT[-3sP]-2[sA] SEQ matches[ABS] light-NPT-3[s]P-2[sA]
‘Where did you throw the lighter so that you [have to] use matches?’

Summary and interim conclusions

- Question word placement in Belhare is possible in embedded structures, violating subadjacency and similar constraints (e.g. RRG’s embedding constraint).
- But wherever question words can occur, focus is also permitted, in line with the Potential Focus Domain constraint in RRG and similar constraints in other theories.

2. Belhare has a very restrictive right-dislocation syntax

2.1 The structure of right-dislocation in Belhare

- (5) a. i-na-ŋa wa khui?-t-u.
DIST-DEM-ERG chicken[sABS] [3sA]-steal-NPT-3[s]P
‘That one steals the chicken.’
- b. i-na-ŋa khui?-t-u, wa.
DIST-DEM-ERG [3sA]-steal-NPT-3[s]P chicken[sABS]
‘That one steals them, the chicken, that is.’
‘The chicken, that one steals them.’
- (6) a. iŋa thukt-he i, ama-ŋa?
beer[-sABS] [3sA]-cook-PT[-3sP] Q mother-[s]ERG
‘Did mother make beer?’
- a'. *iŋa thukt-he(,) ama-ŋa i?
beer[-sABS] [3sA]-cook-PT[-3sP] mother-[s]ERG Q
‘Did mother make beer?’
- (7) a. [*pro* Cameli-pa-lo ŋ-khi-he-chi], (Maiti-pa).
C.-father-COM 3nsS-quarrel-PT-d M.-father[ABS]
‘He quarreled with Cameli’s father, (Maiti’s father, that is).’
- b. *[Maiti-pa ŋ-khi-he-chi], (Cameli-pa-lo).
M.-father[-sABS] 3nsS-quarrel-PT-d Cameli-father-COM
Intended: ‘Maiti’s father quarreled with him, (Cameli’s father, that is).’
- c. [Maiti-pa khi-he], (Cameli-pa-lo)
M.-father[-sABS] [3sS]-quarrel-PT C.-father-COM
‘Maiti’s father quarreled with him, (Cameli’s father, that is).’

¹ Belhare is a Kiranti (Sino-Tibetan) language spoken in eastern Nepal. For more information, see the Belhare chapter in *The Sino-Tibetan Languages* (Thurgood & LaPolla, eds., London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 546-70; includes comprehensive bibliography).

Conclusion: afterthought NPs are base-generated in a right-detached position, as adjunct to the sentence. There is no evidence for movement.

2.2 The semantics and pragmatics of right-dislocation in Belhare

(8) *Topicality Constraint (universal?):*

NPs in right-detached positions must be topical and referential.

- (9) a. i-na wa khu?-yu.²
DIST-DEM[sABS] chicken[sABS] [3sS-]steal-NPT
'That one steals chicken.' ('He is a chicken-stealer')
- b. *i-na khu?-yu, wa.
DIST-DEM[sABS] [3sS-]steal-NPT chicken[sABS]
'That one steals, chicken, that is.'
- (10) wa i-na khu?-yu.
chicken[sABS] DIST-DEM[sABS] [3sS-]steal-NPT
'Chicken that one steals.'
- (11) i-na khu?-yu
DIST-DEM[sABS][3sS-]steal-NPT
'That one steals (whatever he finds).'
- (12) khar-e, sa-ti?
[3sS-]go-PT who-sABS
'[You said] WHO went?' (+> 'So, please repeat!')
- Impossible reading:* 'Who went?'

2.3 No right-dislocation coindexed with NPs in attributive clauses

- (13) a. a-ni-a thuu-s-u-na iŋa chept-he-ŋ.
1sPOSS-FZ-[s]ERG [3sA-]cook-TR.PERF-3[s]P-ART beer-[sABS] taste-PT[-3sP]-1sA
'I tried the beer that my aunt brewed.'
- b. *thuu-s-u-na iŋa chept-he-ŋ, a-ni-ŋa.
[3sA-]cook-TR.PERF-3[s]P-ART beer[ABS] taste-PT[-3O]-1sA 1sPOSS-FZ-[s]ERG
'I tried the beer she has prepared, my aunt, that is.'
- (14) a. phak ka-set-pa-chi chitt-he-ŋ-chi-ŋ.
pig[sABS] PART-kill-MASC-ns[ABS] find-PT[3P]-1sA-nsP-1sA
'I found the those who killed the pig.' ('I found the pig-killers.')
- b. *ka-set-pa-chi chitt-he-ŋ-chi-ŋ, phak.
PART-kill-MASC-ns[ABS] find-PT[3P]-1sA-nsP-1sA pig[sABS]
'I found the killers, of the pig, that is.'

² More on this in *Himalayan Languages* (Anju Saxena, ed., Berlin: Mouton 2004, pp. 141-90).

2.4 No right-dislocation coindexed with NPs in complement clauses

- (15) a. n-tak-ŋa teŋ-s-u-ha matt-he-ŋ.
2sPOSS-friend-[s]ERG [3sA-]hit-TR.PERF-3[s]P-N narrate-PT[3sP]-1sA
'I said that your friend hit him.'
- b. *teŋ-s-u-ha matt-he-ŋ, n-tak-ŋa.
[3sA-]hit-TR.PERF-3[s]P-N narrate-PT[-3sP]-1sA 2sPOSS-friend-[s]ERG
'I said that he hit him, your friend, that is.'

2.5 No right-dislocation coindexed with NPs in adsententially subordinate clauses

- (16) a. u-tak-ŋa ya phekt-u=naa ŋ-khatd-at-ni.
3[s]POSS-friend-[s]ERG call [3sA-]call-[SUBJ]-3[s]P=TOP NEG-[3sS-]go-PT-NEG
'When his friend called him, he didn't go.'
- b. *ya phekt-u=naa ŋ-khatd-at-ni, u-tak-ŋa
call [3sA-]call-[SUBJ]-3[s]P=TOP NEG-[3sS-]go-PT-NEG 3[s]POSS-friend-[s]ERG
'When they called him, he didn't go, his friend, that is.'

3. Summary and analysis

- The constraints on question word constructions and right-dislocation are distributed in a way reversed from what many theories would lead us to expect:

	Question words	Right-dislocation
a. Complement cl	✓	*
b. Attributive cl	✓	*
c. Adsent. sub. cl	✓	*
d. Chained cl	✓	*

Possible accounts of this distribution:

- *Subjacency with IP and DP as bounding nodes?* No, as shown by (7), right-dislocation is very unlikely to involve true movement, whence it would escape the subjacency condition. And, if subjacency blocked the right-dislocation constructions, it would incorrectly also block the question word constructions in the same domains. *Possible circular ad-hoc solution:* (a) Despite appearance, right-dislocation does involve movement (because it is observed subjacency...); if so, the Subjacency Condition might be parametrized so that languages differ as to whether the Subjacency Condition applies to overt (Belhare, English) or covert (Lakhota, Chinese) movement.
- *Focus Condition* (Shimojo 2002)? Right-dislocation in Japanese is OK iff the extraction site is within the Actual Focus Domain (i.e., a subdomain of the PFD):

(17) Japanese (Shimojo 2002:93,96)

- a. [__ KAT-TA] kyaku ga okot-te iru yo, ano huryōhin o.
buy-PTCP customer NOM upset-CVB AUX.NPT PTCL that defective.product ACC
'Customers who BOUGHT it are upset, that defective product, that is.'

- b. *[_kinō kite-ta] huku ga yogorete-ta, ANO HITO GA.
 yesterday wear-PT clothes NOM dirty-PT that person NOM
 ‘The clothes that THAT PERSON was wearing were dirty.’

No, all right-dislocated NPs in Belhare originate from within the Potential Focus Domain, and there is no reason to assume that the embedded predicates could not be focussed so that the examples would turn grammatical. (Speakers reject them outright.)

- *Proposal*: Right-dislocated NPs are not extracted (moved) but they are base-generated in their position. The constraints observed above are therefore linking constraints, not movement constraints: the sentences are ungrammatical because the dislocated NPs are in a sense too far away from the argument structure that they must link to:

(18) *The Argument Locality Condition (language-specific, construction-specific)*

An NP in the right-detached position (“RDP”) must be an argument of a verb realized in the CORE (verb + syntactic arguments) that is a direct daughter of the clause to which the RDP is adjoined (assuming an RRG constituent structure).

- a. OK: [SENT [CL [CORE]] [RDP]]
 b. NOT OK: [SENT [CL [CORE ... [ARG [CL [CORE]] ...] [RDP]]

Translated into category-driven theories:

- a. OK: [IP [VP]] [NP]
 b. NOT OK: [IP [NP [IP]]] [NP]

3.1 Prediction: right-dislocation should be OK under matrix-coding.³

- (19) a. [CORE [CORE na maʔi-chi ten-ma] [CORE na-rend-he-chi]].
 DEM person-ns[ABS] hit-INF [3sA-]stop-TEL-PT[3P]-nsP
 ‘He stopped hitting these guys.’ or ‘He stopped x from hitting these guys.’
 b. [CORE [CORE ten-ma] [CORE na-rend-he-chi]], [RDP na maʔi-chi].
 hit-INF [3sA-]stop-TEL-PT[3P]-nsP DEM person-ns[ABS]
 ‘He stopped hitting them, these guys, that is.’ or
 ‘He stopped x from hitting them, these guys, that is.’
- (20) a. *ten-ma na maʔi-chi na-rend-he-chi.
 hit-INF DEM person-ns[ABS] [3sA-]stop-TEL-PT[3P]-nsP
 ‘He stopped hitting these guys.’ or ‘He stopped x from hitting these guys.’
 b. na maʔi-chi ten-ma un-na na-rend-he-chi.
 DEM person-ns[ABS] hit-INF 3-[s]ERG [3sA-]stop-TEL-PT[3P]-nsP
 ‘He stopped hitting these guys.’

³ More on this in *BLS 27* (2001).

- (21) a. [CL [CORE [CORE tenma] [CORE narendhechi]], [RDP na maʔichi]. = (19b)

stopʹ(3sgA_[agr], [doʹ(x, hitʹ(these people_{PO[agr]}))])
 ‘He stopped hitting them, these guys, that is.’ or
 ‘He stopped x from hitting them, these guys, that is.’

- b. *[CORE [ARG [CL [CORE te ʔisuha]]] [NUC mattheŋ]], [RDP ntakŋa]. = (15b)

doʹ(1sg[narrateʹ(1sgA_[agr], [doʹ(your friend^a_{A[agr]}, hitʹ(α, 3sgPO_[agr]))])
 ‘I said that he hit him, your friend, that is.’

3.2 Functional motivation

The Argument Locality Condition is a language-specific conventionalization of a processing principle which minimizes the structural distance, i.e. the amount of intervening distractor material, between filler and gap and thereby maximizes the kind of activation level maintenance needed when processing filler-gap dependencies (Deane 1991, 1992; Hawkins 1999).

4. Conclusions

- The Belhare evidence supports theories of extraction and question formation that are sensitive to *both information structure and structural distance*.
- Theories of grammar need to be able to accommodate constraints that are language-specific and that are tied to a particular *construction* (here, right-dislocation), while still being motivated by universal principles of human cognition (here, based in language processing).
- We still underestimate the range of syntactic diversity in the world’s languages!

Abbreviations and symbols

A ‘actor macrorole in transitive clauses’, ABS ‘absolutive’, ART ‘article’, COM ‘comitative’, d ‘dual’, DEM ‘demonstrative’, DIST ‘distal’, ERG ‘ergative’, IRR ‘irrealis’, MASC ‘masculine’, N ‘nominalizer’, NEG ‘negative’, NPT ‘nonpast’, ns ‘nonsingular’, P ‘primary object’, PART ‘participle’, PERF ‘perfect’, POSS ‘possessor’, PT ‘past’, s ‘singular’, S ‘sole argument of intransitive clauses’, SUBJ ‘subjunctive’, TEL ‘telic’, TR ‘transitive’. Elements in square brackets are zero-marked (= entailed by paradigm structure). The symbol ‘+>’ introduces conversational implicatures.