

NOTES ON KARAJA CLAUSE STRUCTURE

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Abstract: This paper presents two notes concerning the analysis of peripheral positions on the left side of the sentence in Karaja. A general sketch of the clause in Karaja is offered, with particular emphasis to the two aspects of Karaja grammar which allow us to make the main proposal of this study, namely, the claim that the leftmost sentence position in Karaja is occupied by a Focus Phrase, whose specifier position provides an adequate seat for topics or for focused NP's in interrogative structures and whose head has features which allow the checking of spatial and empathetic deixis.

Keywords: Focus, deixis, structure of the clause.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents two notes concerning the analysis of peripheral positions on the left side of the sentence in Karaja, an Amerindian language of the Macro-Je stock which is spoken by about 2,700 people in 20 villages located on and around the Bananal Island on the Araguaia river in Central Brazil. This analysis builds on work developed in Maia (96), in Maia (97a) and in Maia (97b) in which different aspects of the structure of the clause in Karaja are analyzed within the framework of the *Principles and Parameters* theory (Chomsky & Lasnik, 93; Chomsky, 95). A general sketch of the clause in Karaja is offered, with particular emphasis to the two aspects of Karaja grammar which allow us to make the main proposal of this study, namely, the claim that the leftmost sentence position in Karaja is occupied by a Focus Phrase, whose specifier position provides an adequate seat for topics or for focused NP's in interrogative structures and whose head has features which allow the checking of spatial and empathetic deixis in Karaja. In this respect, our work provides further empirical content to the category F which was proposed by Uriagereka (92) and (95), as an all-purpose device to encode point of view in Universal Grammar.

Uriagereka (92) discusses the positing of a syntactic category that encodes information theoretic issues, such as the point of view of a speaker. He claims that all information theoretic operations need to be mediated through a point of view. According to his proposal, linguistic phenomena such as emphasis, as well as old/new information, deixis or anaphora presuppose a speaker or some other subject who assumes a point of view whose value can

only be fully established in discourse and/or pragmatics. The essence of Uriagereka's proposal is that syntax has a designated node which enters into the determination of possible points of view in a sentence, which he calls category F.

Category F is thus thought to provide an interface between syntax and discourse. It formalizes syntactic rules determining possible points of view in a sentence, filtering the grammatically convergent points of view out of the set of pragmatically possible points of view. We turn now to the first grammatical note on Karaja grammar.

2. THE EXPRESSION OF POINT OF VIEW IN KARAJA

Karaja displays a system of spatial and empathetic deixis which is implemented in verb forms by means of phonological alternances which occur simultaneously in active subject agreement prefixes, in the plural suffix and in tense suffixes. Basically, directional markings indicate that a discourse situation is oriented towards the speaker, that is, the verbal action is conceived as taking place from there to here (cislocative), in contrast with the spatial orientation from here to there (translocative) or from there to there which are unmarked in Karaja. Thus, in example (1a), in the handout, the root *-hony-* “to leave” is not directionally marked and must be interpreted as either “they left from here to there” or “they left from there to there”. In example (1b), on the other hand, the verb is directionally marked and must be interpreted only as “they left from there to here”.

- (1) a. r-o-hony-reny-re "They left"
3A-Theme-to leave-Plural-Past
- b. d- o-hony-deny-de "They left"
3A(dir)-Theme-To leave-Pl. (dir)-Past.(dir)
(directionally marked)

Notice that the directional morphemic markings in Karaja are implemented by means of phonological alternances in the affixes that indicate person, number and tense. This is clearly a grammatical operation which is computed in syntax, before spellout because it has clear reflexes both in the levels of Phonetic Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF). Our first proposal (cf. Maia (96)) was to represent directional deixis in Karaja not as a syntactically active functional category, but as an operator generated in an A-bar position above CP with scope on the relevant functional categories within the clause. The representation of directional deixis as an independent functional category was discarded for two reasons. First direction does not seem to be a strong feature requiring overt checking in Karaja. This is demonstrated by the fact that cislocative direction can be morphologically marked in auxiliary verbs which do not move before spellout in Karaja (cf. Maia, 96), as exemplified in (2) in the handout:

- (2) Uladu mahadu waximy d-o-i-deny-de.
child group to fish 3dir-theme-move-P!(dir)-Past(dir)
‘The group of children came to fish’

Secondly, as we noted above, directional morphological markings do not require a specific slot in the verb form, but are implemented through phonological alternances that take place on affixes of other functional categories. Thus it did not seem adequate to postulate a specific intra-sentential functional category to represent directional deixis in Karaja and the operator analysis seemed to be the correct one.

The analysis that we currently entertain is an alternative to the deictic operator analysis proposed in Maia (96), which raised problems concerning the very nature of operators and could also lead to an undesirable proliferation of those elements. The alternative analysis that we present here involves the postulation of category F, head of a Focus Phrase, which has been originally proposed by Uriagereka (88, 92 and 95), as reviewed above. According to Uriagereka, this category codifies the point of view of the speaker and can be conceived as a point of interface between the levels of syntactic competence and pragmatic performance. Thus, F can be associated to topics, expletives, cleft, dislocated material. Uriagereka (95) even uses F in order to analyze clitic placement in Romance, giving formal content to Emile Benveniste's intuition that the person category is basically the codification of pragmatic reference to speaker, hearer or the world. Being the syntactic element in the syntax/pragmatics interface, F would provide the ideal locus to process pronominal clitics indexation.

The adequacy of F to account for directional deixis in Karaja becomes clearer when we notice that this system also functions as a kind of deictic reference-tracking device since it can be used to locate and identify entities referred to in discourse. This system allows the speaker to express his viewpoint or interest towards a certain entity in the discourse, when he identifies himself with the viewpoint of that entity. Lyons (1977) refers to this kind of device as empathetic deixis, defining empathy as the psychological capacity of being in the place of someone or something.

As we described above directional markings signal that an entity or situation in discourse is spatially oriented towards the speaker. Additionally, this system is also used to signal that the speaker feels a psychological identification with that entity or situation, marking his interest in the event described. Thus, if an action is directionally unmarked it is neutral in terms of speaker empathetic identification. The piece of text in (3) in the handout, extracted from a narrative in which the father of the speaker had a tense encounter with a white farmer, provides a typical contrast between directionally marked and unmarked verbs:

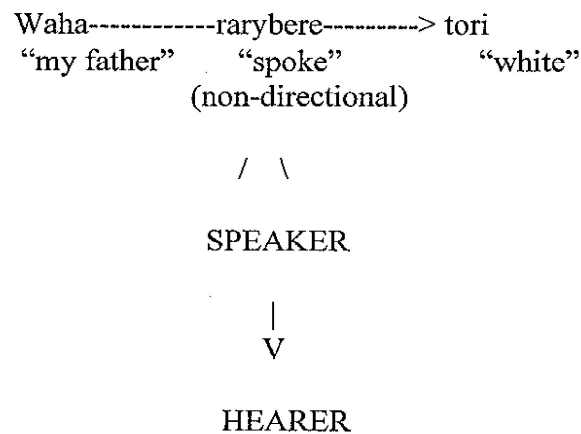
- (3) Idi waha tori-ò rarybere: boikre!
after my father white-to spoke: leave!

Tai tahe tori mahadu waha-ò narybedenydc: aõkorc!
So then white group my father-to spoke (direction): no

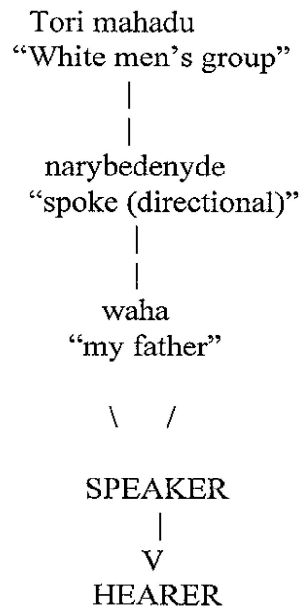
“Then my father told the white man: leave!
So the white men's group told my father: no”

The first use of the verb *rarybere* “to speak” is not directionally marked. This means that the speaker represents the scene neutrally. The action is not verbally framed to indicate any positioning of the speaker. However, the second instance of the verb, *narybedenyde*, is directionally marked. In this last case, the speaker is signalling that the action is cislocative, that is, it is oriented from there (where the white group is) to here (where his father is). Even though the speaker was not actually there, he is reporting the fact to the hearer from the point of view of his father, indicating clearly the side that he takes in the event. The schemes in (4) in the handout portray the two situations:

(4)

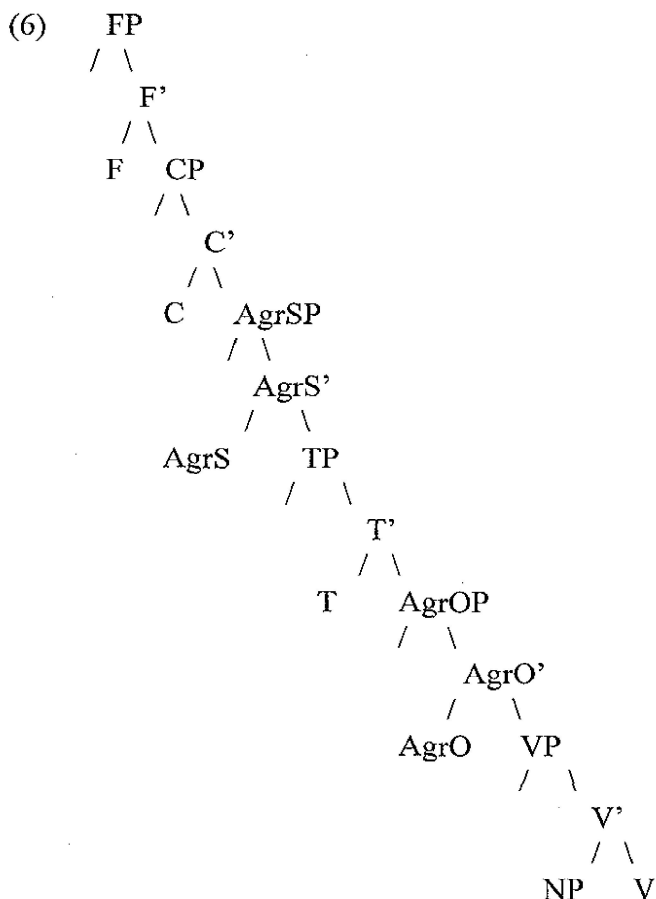


(5)



In (4) the speaker reports the facts neutrally to the hearer. In (5) the speaker framed the event cislocatively. He conceives the action coming from there (white man) to here (father) and thereby expresses his empathy towards his father position.

At this point we need to tackle the issue of the syntactic representation of the spatial and empathetic deixis in Karaja. Our proposal is represented in the diagram in (6):



According to this representation, the Karaja sentence must include an active F site, which is the head of a Focus Phrase. This node allows the interface between syntactic and pragmatic phenomena, such as directional deixis in Karaja. Note that our analysis stresses the need of a syntactic account for these matters, as syntax in the Principles and Parameters theory, which provides the analytical framework for our study, is the system that computes the relation between Logical Form and Phonetic Form. Since the Karaja directionals, as we showed above, have a clear effect at the level of LF, it would not seem legitimate to conceive of their implementation in terms of post spellout morphophonemic processes which are restricted to the morphological subcomponent of PF.

According to Maia (96), there is evidence that the only movements that take place in overt syntax in Karaja besides the movement of the Subject NP to positions outside the VP shell, are those related to the AgrO system, which are responsible for the checking of nominal and verbal features of V and of the object NP, allowing the linearization of the SOV order. In compliance with minimalist economy considerations (Chomsky, 95), the whole set of Karaja verbal affixes, which include markings for subject, aspect, plural, negation, tense/mood, as well as direction, need only to be checked at LF. After spellout, V moves to the head of Tense Phrase in order to check its tense features and then proceeds to the head of AgrS where it checks its subject agreement features. At last, it moves to F where its weak F features are checked.

Therefore, the proposal of a Focus Phrase allowed us to develop a principled account for the syntactic representation of the phenomenon of spatial and empathetic deixis in Karaja. As we will argue in our second grammatical note on Karaja clause structure, our current proposal will also be shown to offer the possibility of a unified account of other grammatical structures in Karaja, such as some types of interrogative and topic structures, which we discuss immediately below.

3. INTERROGATIVE STRUCTURES IN KARAJA

In this section we analyze the structure of yes/no questions in Karaja and show the interaction of the CP and FP nodes. Interrogative sentences of the yes/no type are formed in Karaja by entering the word *aõbo* in the second constituent position in the sentence, as exemplified in (7) and (8) in the handout. Sentence (8) is a yes/no interrogative question which differs from the declarative sentence in (7) because it has its specific intonational pattern and because of the word *aõbo*, which signals that it is a question.

- (7) Wataju kia utura rimyra
 Wataju this fish caught
 ‘‘Wataju caught this fish’’

- (8) Wataju aõbo kia utura rimyra?
 Wataju Q-marker this fish caught
 ‘‘Did Wataju catch this fish’’

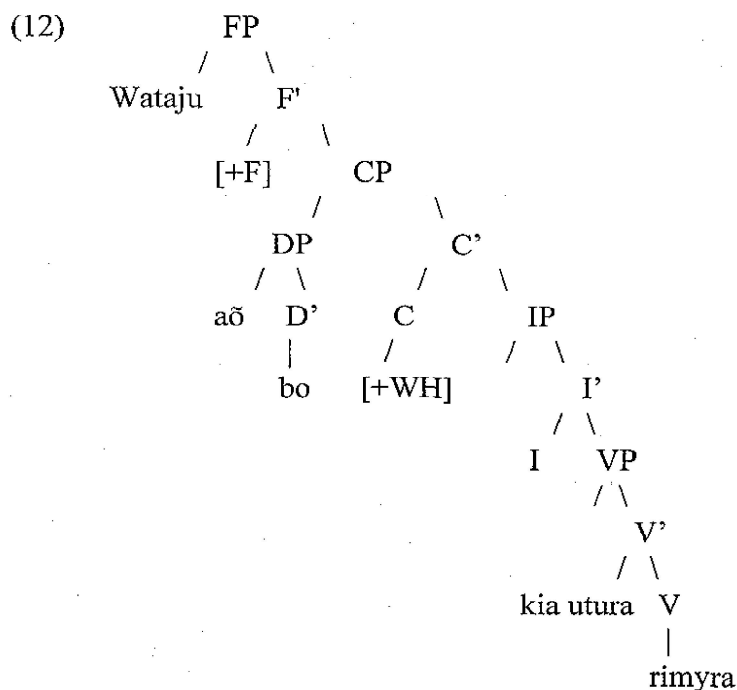
Notice now that even in sentences with an NP in topic position, the question marker must appear in the second constituent position. (9) is a declarative topic construction, which contrasts with (10), an interrogative topic structure, in which the interrogative marker *aõbo* appears in the second constituent position, as expected. The ungrammaticality of (11) shows that *aõbo* cannot occupy a different position in the sentence.

- (9) Kia utura, Wataju rimyra
 this fish Wataju caught
 ‘‘This fish, Wataju caught (it)’’

- (10) Kia utura aõbo, Wataju rimyra?
 this fish Q marker Wataju caught
 “This fish, Did Wataju catch (it)”
- (11) *Kia utura Wataju aõbo rimyra?
 this fish Wataju Q marker caught
 “This fish, Did Wataju catch (it)”

Our analysis of interrogative and topic structures resorts to the Focus Phrase node as the most adequate structure to capture their distribution. We propose that *aõbo* is generated in the specifier position of the Complementiser Phrase (CP). This is the same position that serves as the landing site to Wh-words, which have a similar morphological make-up (cf. Maia (97b)). Note that this representation makes the [SPEC, C] position a complex position, explicitly formalizing the intuition that WH words are made up by an indefinite element + the wh-feature (Chomsky, 95; Tsai, 94). Once in the Spec of C, the interrogative marker *aõbo*, which is analyzed as a wh-phrase (a *bo*-phrase in Karajá) is in the proper configuration to satisfy the Wh-criterion (Rizzi, 91) which establishes a well formedness condition to interrogative structures in the UG by requiring a Spec/head configuration between a [+wh] operator and an X^o marked [+wh].

However, if the interrogative word *aõbo* is in the Spec of CP, how is it possible to explain the linearization exemplified in (8) or in (10), in which *aõbo* appears consistently in the second sentence position? Our proposal is that yes/no questions in Karaja must inherently focus an NP in the sentence, which must move to the Spec of a Focus Phrase above CP in order to check in the over syntax a strong [+F] feature. This feature must be checked before spellout or else it will remain visible at PF in violation to the principle of Full Interpretation, causing the derivation to crash at PF. Notice the contrast between (10), a licit interrogative topic construction, and (11), an ungrammatical structure. Our suggestion is that (11) is not permitted because there is no available position for the subject NP to move, since the Spec of FP is already filled by a topic. The diagram in (12), which analyzes the sentence in (8) illustrates our proposal.



4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented two notes on aspects of Karaja grammar in support of the postulation of a Focus Phrase (FP) node above CP in the Karaja clause structure.

Note that the postulation of a Focus Phrase in Karaja sentence structure offers further empirical evidence for Uriagereka's original proposal about the existence of a category *F* in Universal Grammar which would account for the codification of point of view, unifying in a single functional category different linguistic phenomena. In Karaja, a system of spatial and empathetic deixis, which allows the expression of the point of view of the speaker with reference to a certain entity in discourse was shown to be properly analyzed by means of category *F*. Additionally, we have sought to demonstrate that category *F* is independently motivated in Karaja in order to account for focused NP's in interrogative and topic structures.

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