Kaqchikel Agent Focus
and multiple extraction

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1. Introducing Mayan Agent Focus (AF)

2. My account based on "anti-locality" (Erlewine 2014, 2016) and counterarguments to it in Henderson & Coon 2018

3. Regularities in complex constructions

Agent Focus and ergativity

➢ **"Agent Focus" (AF)** is a change in verbal morphology triggered by **A'-movement** (*wh*-movement, relativization, focus fronting, existential constructions) of the **transitive subject**, in some Mayan languages.

Transitive object *wh*-question:

Achike <u>x-Ø-u-löq'$_{TV}$</u>   ri   tijonel?
what   CPL-ABS3S-ERG3S-buy the teacher
'What did the teacher buy?'

Transitive subject *wh*-question:

*Achike <u>x-Ø-u-löq'$_{TV}$</u>   ri   äk'?
who   CPL-ABS3S-ERG3S-buy the chicken
intended: 'Who bought the chicken?'

Achike <u>x-Ø-loq'-**o**$_{AF}$</u>   ri   äk'?
who   CPL-ABS3S-buy-AF the chicken
'Who bought the chicken?'

- A form of "syntactic ergativity"

- There is much more to know about Agent Focus; see especially Stiebels 2006, Coon, Baier & Levin 2021, and citations there.

Agent Focus and anti-locality

➢ **What is Agent Focus a response to?** Why does the grammar specifically distinguish transitive subjects from other arguments?

Erlewine 2014, 2016:

➢ **AF reflects a strategy to avoid A'-movement that would be "too close"**

- A'-movement from one specifier to the specifier of the next projection up is not possible (*Spec-to-Spec Anti-Locality*); subsequently further motivated in a range of work.*

- Transitive subjects are high (in Spec,TP) unlike other arguments.

$* [_{CP}$ subject C $[_{TP}$ ___ ... $[_{vP}$ ___ ...

                 X   *violates Spec-to-Spec Anti-Locality!*

✓$[_{CP}$ subject C $[_{TP}$ ... $[_{vP}$ ___ ...

                                  subject skips Spec,TP $\Rightarrow$ AF

Agent Focus and anti-locality

➤ **What is Agent Focus a response to?** Why does the grammar specifically distinguish transitive subjects from other arguments?

Erlewine 2014, 2016:

➤ **AF reflects a strategy to avoid A'-movement that would be "too close"**

- Transitive subjects can A'-move across a regular (non-AF) transitive verb, as long as it crosses additional material:

  $\checkmark$[$_{CP}$ subject C [...*intervening material*... [$_{TP}$ ___ ... [$_{vP}$ ___ ... $\Rightarrow$ no AF!

  - Intervening adverbs
  - Multiple extraction constructions

Evidence from adverbs

Erlewine 2016:

Achike kan qitzij x-Ø-u-tij$_{TV}$ ri wäy?
who truly truth CPL-ABS3S-ERG3S-eat the tortilla
'Who truly ate the tortilla?'

Coon & Henderson's reply:

➢ These non-AF examples involve **a resumptive pronoun**, not movement.

Achike [$_{REL}$ (ri) **kan qitzij** [(chi) *pro* x-Ø-u-tij$_{TV}$ ri wäy]]?
who (REL) truly truth (COMP) PRO CPL-ABS3S-ERG3S-eat the tortilla
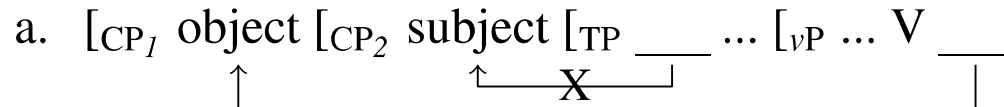'Who truly ate the tortilla?' (lit.: 'Who is it that truly he ate the tortilla?')

…q-ach'alal$_i$ ri **kan qitzij** [chi **rije'**$_i$ ki-nima-n$_{TV}$ ri kristo…]
ERG1PL-friend REL truly truth COMP PRON3P ERG3PL-obey-PERF the Christ
'…our friends that it's true that they have obeyed Christ…'
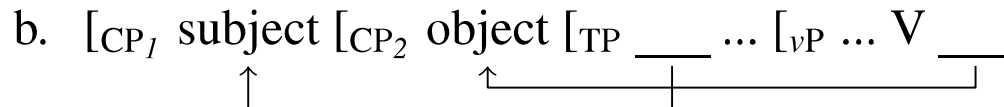
Evidence from multiple extraction

➢ In multiple extraction constructions, **"object – <u>subject</u> – V ..." order triggers AF, but "<u>subject</u> – object – V ..." does not!**

a. Achike <u>k'o</u> x-Ø-tz'et-**ö**?
who ∃ COM-B$_{3sg}$-see-**AF**
✓ 'Who did someone see?'
* 'Who saw someone?'

b. <u>Achike</u> k'o x-Ø-u-tz'ët?
who ∃ COM-B$_{3sg}$-A$_{3sg}$-see
* 'Who did someone see?'
✓ 'Who saw someone?'

a. [$_{CP_1}$ object [$_{CP_2}$ subject [$_{TP}$ ___ ... [$_{vP}$ ... V ___
⇒ movement too short, Agent Focus required

b. [$_{CP_1}$ subject [$_{CP_2}$ object [$_{TP}$ ___ ... [$_{vP}$ ... V ___
⇒ movements long enough, no Agent Focus

Evidence from multiple extraction

➢ In multiple extraction constructions, **"object – <u>subject</u> – V …" order triggers AF, but "<u>subject</u> – object – V …" does not!**

a. Ja   yïn <u>k'o</u> x-i-tz'et-**ö**.
   FOC me ∃   COM-B$_{1sg}$-see-**AF**

   ✓ 'It's me that someone saw.'
   * 'It's me who saw someone.'

b. Ja   <u>yïn</u> k'o x-Ø-in-tz'ët.
   FOC me ∃   COM-B$_{3sg}$-A$_{1sg}$-see

   * 'It's me that someone saw.'
   ✓ 'It's me who saw someone.'

a. K'o <u>k'o</u> x-Ø-tz'et-**ö**.
   ∃   ∃   COM-B$_{3sg}$-see-**AF**

   ✓ There's something that s.o. saw.
   * Someone saw something.

b. <u>K'o</u> k'o x-Ø-u-tz'ët.
   ∃   ∃   COM-B$_{3sg}$-A$_{3sg}$-see

   * There's something that s.o. saw.
   ✓ Someone saw something.

a. ri achin ri [ja <u>ri xta Maria</u> x-Ø-tz'et-**ö**]
   the man RC FOC Maria   COM-B$_{3sg}$-see-**AF**

   ✓ 'the man who MARIA (but not others) saw'
   * 'the man who saw MARIA (but not others)'

b. ri <u>achin</u> ri [ja ri xta Maria x-Ø-u-tz'ët]
   the man RC FOC Maria   COM-B$_{3sg}$-A$_{3sg}$-see

   * 'the man who MARIA (but not others) saw'
   ✓ 'the man who saw MARIA (but not others)'

Evidence from multiple extraction

Henderson & Coon (2018) only briefly discuss such evidence, suggesting at least in some cases that the higher (leftmost) nominal did not actually move.

While we leave exploration of multiple-*wh* cases for future work, we believe that they are actually a homogeneous set of constructions with various, construction-specific, implications for the distribution of Agent Focus. For instance, in examples like (62) and (63), there is reason to believe that the left-most nominal has not actually undergone A'-movement (explaining the lack of AF-marking in (62)), but is instead a high, base-generated topic. First, the higher nominal, while focus-marked, actually ...

what I call "multiple extraction" examples

➢ But I had shown in Erlewine 2016 (p. 444) that higher nominals in multiple extraction constructions are derived via A'-movement: **the higher nominal and its gap can cross clauses but is island-sensitive.** H&C do not acknowledge nor counter my evidence from islands.

Regularities in complex constructions

➤ I observed (perhaps surprising) **regularity in the behavior of complex grammatical configurations** — multiple extraction constructions — that help us distinguish between different descriptions of Agent Focus.

In this case… (assuming the validity of my evidence from island-sensitivity and thus my conclusion that these *are* multiple extraction constructions…)

➤ **AF is not one-to-one with transitive subject A'-movement:** there are also cases of **transitive subject A'-movement without AF, *specifically if the movement is longer*.**

• Erlewine 2018: The behavior of multiple extractions constructions similarly provides the crucial evidence for understanding the behavior of an extraction asymmetry in Toba Batak (Austronesian; Sumatra).

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