

A Yucatec- French comparative look on headless relative clauses in focus constructions

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Focus constructions: cleft constructions or fronting?

The mayanist literature present two analysis of focus constructions (FC) : First, a clefting account (i.a. Bohnemeyer 1998, Tonhauser 2003) explains the morphosyntactic convergence of FC, content questions and relative clauses by considering them to be bi-clausal constructions. A fronting account on the other hand (i.a. Verhoeven & Skopeteas 2015, Gutiérrez Bravo 2017), attributes this convergence to the extraction occurring within the given contexts. This poster will look at a subset of the wide array of convergent proofs supporting the fronting account, namely the comparison of FC and clefts constructions using *le* relatives, and question if the dissimilarity of both types constructions, used a argument against the cleftness of FC, could not simply lie in the dissimilarities of the relatives. Analogous constructions from French will provide a tentative comparison.

Yucatec Maya

○ Basic structure (Verhoeven & Skopeteas 2015)

(1) T=u hàant-ah òon Pèedròoh.
PFV=A.3 eat:TRR- CMPL(B.3.SG) avocado Pedro
'Pedro ate avocado.'

○ Focus construction (Verhoeven & Skopeteas 2015)

(2) Oon t=u hàant-ah Pèedròoh.
avocado PFV=A.3 eat:TRR-CMPL(B.3.SG) Pedro
'Pedro ate an AVOCADO.'

▪ Binding test (Verhoeven & Skopeteas 2015)

(3) Tèech k=a bin tak Yaxley.
2. SG IPFV=A.2 go as.far.as Yaxley
'YOU are going up to Yaxley.'

(4) *Tèech k=u bin tak Yaxley.
2. SG IPFV=A.3 go as.far.as Yaxley
intended: 'YOU are the one that is going up to Yaxley.'

(5) Tèech le k=u bin tak Yaxley=o'.
2. SG DEF IPFV=A.3 go as.far.as Yaxley= D.2
'You are the one that is going up to Yaxley.'

As counterparts to Yucatec headless *le* relatives, headless *ce que* relatives are used. Although both apparently resemble light headed relatives, they both differs from those according to the criteria laid out by Gutiérrez-Bravo (2012: 260-263).

(6) Tèech hats'-ik a/*u báah.
2. SG beat:TRR- INCMPL(B.3.SG) A.2/ A.3 self
'YOU are hitting yourself.'

(7) Tèech le k=u hats'-ik u báah=o'.
2.SG DEF IPFV=A.3 beat:TRR-INCMPL(B.3.SG) A.3 self= D2
'YOU are the one that is hitting himself.'

▪ Inversion test (Gutiérrez Bravo 2017)

(8) Leti' kiiin-s-øj-ø.
3.SG die.AF-CAUS-IRR-ABS.3SG
'HE killed him.'

(9) *Kiiin-s-øj-ø leti'.
die.AF-CAUS-IRR-ABS.3SG 3.SG
intended: 'HE killer him'

(10) Ba'ale' le k-a w-a'al-ik-ø ko'olel=o' X-táabay.
But DET HAB-ERG.2 EP-say-IND-ABS.3sg woman=cl X-táabay
'What you thought was a woman was actually the X-táabay.'

▪ Negation test (Gutiérrez Bravo 2017)

(11) Mixmáak il-ik-ø.
nobody see.af-ind-abs.3sg
'no one sees it.'

(12) *Mixmáak [le il-ik-ø=o'].
nobody DEM see.af-ind-abs.3sg=cl

(13) Mixmáak [le k-u jóok'-ol=o'].
nobody dem erg.3 exit-ind=cl
'Mr. Nobody was the one who left.'

French

○ Basic structure

(1') Pedro a mangé un avocat
Pedro AUX.3.SG eat.GRD DET avocado
'Pedro ate avocado.'

○ Focus construction

(2') C'est un avocat que Pedro a mangé
DEM=COP DET avocado REL Pedro AUX.3.SG eat.GRD
'It's an avocado that Pedro ate.'

▪ Binding test

(3') C'est toi qui vas à Yaxley
DEM=COP 2.SG REL go.2.SG to Yaxley
'It's you who is going to Yaxley.'

(4') *C'est toi qui va à Yaxley
DEM=COP 2.SG REL go.3.SG to Yaxley
intended: 'It's you who is is going to Yaxley.'

(5') C'est toi celui qui va à Yaxley
DEM=COP 2.SG DEM REL go.3.SG to Yaxley
'You are the one that is going up to Yaxley.'

For the *c'est* cleft's CLEFT RELATIVE CLAUSE see Karsenberg (2018). This relative construction is also known as PREDICATIVE RELATIVE CLAUSE

(6') C'est toi qui te / *se frappe
DEM=COP 2.SG REL 2.SG / *3.SG hit.2.SG.
'It's you who is hitting himself.'

(7') C'est toi celui qui se frappe
DEM=COP 2.SG DEM REL 3.SG hit.3.SG
'Its you the one hitting himself'

▪ Inversion test

(8') C'est lui qui l'a tué
DEM=COP 3.SG REL 3SG.OBJ=AUX.3.SG kill.GRD
'It's he who killed him'

(9') *Qui l'a tué c'est lui
REL 3SG.OBJ=AUX.3.SG kill.GRD DEM=COP 3.SG
intended: 'It's he who killed him'

(10') Mais ce que tu pensais être une femme,
But DET REL 2.SG think.2.SG be DET woman
c'était la X-táabay
DEM=COP.3.SG DET X-táabay
'What you thought was a woman was actually the X-táabay.'

▪ Negation test

(11') C'est personne qui les dit (Rouquier 2018:7)
DEM=COP nobody REL 3.PL say.3.SG
'Nobody says that'

(12' / 13') C'est personne celui qui les dit
DEM=COP nobody DEM REL 3.PL 3.SG
Only: 'It's a nobody, the one who says that'

Yucatec clefts structures with *le* relatives seem to differ in the same way from fronting constructions as french *ce que* relatives from predicative relative clauses in *c'est* clefts constructions. More language internal comparisons in Yucatec with other cleft constructions (?) could help differentiate if particular syntactic behaviors are related to cleftness or to the use of *le* relatives.

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