

Workshop "Beyond Information Structure"

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Pronominal predicates in Movima: clefts or equational clauses?

Katharina Haude

CNRS, SEDYL UMR 8202

katharina.haude@cnrs.fr



The language

General

- South-Western Amazon (Bolivia)
- genetically unclassified
- less than 1000 speakers
- all fluent speakers are older than 60, all bilingual (Mov./Span.)

The data

- Annotated spontaneous discourse corpus of >130,000 words (30h) produced by ~50 speakers

Some Morphosyntactic characteristics

- largely configurational (predicate initial)
- direct-inverse alternation in transitive clauses
- split ergativity: (direct = ergative, inverse = accusative)
- weak noun-verb distinction



Outline

1. The "fronting" construction
2. Cleft analysis
3. Equational clause analysis
4. Pragmatic functions

The basic vs. fronting construction

Basic transitive clause type (token frequency 97%): (examples of direct-marked verbs)

<u>verb=PROX (topic)</u>	<u>OBV (nontopic)</u>	
<i>yokna='ne</i>	<i>[as jokme]</i>	'She caught the/a bird.'
<i>yokna='ne</i>	<i>[--kas]</i>	'She caught it.'
<i>yokna='ne</i>	<i>[∅]</i>	'She caught (it).'

"Fronted pronoun" construction (token frequency 3%):

<u>OBV</u>	<u>verb=PROX</u>	
<i>[asko]</i>	<i>yokna='ne</i>	'That (one) she caught.'

The basic vs. fronting construction

BASIC CONSTRUCTION:

('Over there slept my hen with its chicks. And probably it woke up at night, and my sister was disturbed by it. And I was asleep, I snored. ...')

Yok-na='ne *[as* *jokme].* *Jiwatena='ne* **[ka']** *ney.*
catch-DR=3F ART.N bird bring=3F 3N here

'She caught the bird. She brought it here.'

FRONTED PRONOUN:

('My son's friend had broken his leg while playing. It was bad, you could see the bone. And then I remembered: ...')

[kos *ney* *tochik* *popoykwa* *di'* **warattey],** *ja:yaw.*
ART.N DEF small animal REL **toad** good

'... That little animal which is a toad, it is good (to heal broken limbs).'

[asko] *yokna=∅* *che* *supa:te=∅* *[as]*
PRO.3N catch=1SG and tie=1SG 3N

'That I caught and tied it (onto the broken part).'

Fronting creates a cleft

[asko] *yokna='ne* 'That (one) she caught.'

- Assumption: the argument is simply expressed by a fronted pronoun, without further changes in the structure of the clause
- Detailed analysis shows that there are significant structural differences wrt to the basic construction (Haude forthc.):
 - the pronoun is the main predicate
 - the verb is subordinate (relative clause/nominalized form)

The free pronoun as main predicate

Evidence of predicate status I: independent occurrence

asko '(It's) that.'

Evidence of predicate status II: nominalization in embedding

Embedded BASIC verbal predicate

n-os *yokna-wa='ne* [*kas*]
OBL-ART.N catch-**NMZ**=3F 3N
'when she caught it (lit. "in her catching it")'

Embedded PRONOMINAL predicate:

n-os ***asko-niwa***
OBL-ART.N PRO.N-NMZ
'when it was that'

Embedding of FRONTING construction:

n-os [***asko-niwa***] *yokna='ne*
OBL-ART.N PRO.3N-**NMZ** catch=3F
'when it was that she caught'

The verb as a subordinate predicate

The verb in the fronting construction behaves like that of a headed relative clause:

Antipassive to front A

Headed RC:

[as jokme] *di'* *yokna='ne*
ART.N bird REL catch=3F
'the bird which she caught'

Antipassive headed RC:

[kinos tolkosya] *di'* ***kwey*** *yokna* (*n-as* *jokme*)
ART.F girl REL ANTIP catch (OBL-ART.N bird)
'the girl who caught (the/a bird)/(it)'

Antipassive in fronting:

[i'ne] ***kwey*** *yokna* (*n-as* *jokme*)
PRO.F ANTIP catch (OBL-ART.N bird)
'She was (the one who) caught (the bird).'

The verb as a subordinate predicate

The verb in the fronting construction behaves like a relative clause: **Negation with *loy***

Negated basic clause:	<i>kaj</i>	<i>yokna-wa='ne</i>	<i>[kas]</i>		
	COP.NEG	catch-NMZ=3F	3N		
	'She didn't catch it (lit.: "her catching it was not").'				
Negated headed RC:	<i>[as</i>	<i>jokme]</i>	<i>di'</i>	<i>loy</i>	<i>yokna='ne</i>
	ART.N	bird	REL	NEG.SUB	catch=3F
	'the bird which she didn't catch'				
Negated fronting constr.:	<i>[asko]</i>	<i>loy</i>	<i>yokna='ne</i>		
	PRO	NEG.SUB	catch=3F		
	'That's what she didn't catch.'				

Fronting creates a cleft structure

A syntactic definition of clefts:

"A CLEFT CONSTRUCTION is a complex sentence structure consisting of a **matrix clause** headed by a **copula** and a **relative or relative-like clause** whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions." (Lambrecht 2001: 467; emphasis mine)

Movima has no copula, but:

- the predicate function is covered by the free pronoun
- the verb functions as a relative clause whose argument is represented by the pronoun
- complex structure: matrix clause + RC
- same propositional content as corresponding basic clause
- pragmatically marked (lower discourse frequency)
- cleft analysis seems adequate

But: no focus marking

A pragmatic definition of clefts:

"Cleft constructions are **focus-marking devices** used to prevent unintended predicate-focus construal of a proposition. Clefts serve to mark as focal an argument that might otherwise be construed as nonfocal, or as nonfocal a predicate that might otherwise be construed as focal, or both." (Lambrecht 2001: 489)

In Movima, the pronominal predicate is prosodically nonprominent. It refers to a discourse referent that was newly introduced just before (i.e. last-mentioned, but not the discourse topic) and that does generally not persist in the subsequent discourse.

jisa-na=is [*is* *deretto*] *che* *isko* *dan-na=is*
make-DR=3PL.AB ART.PL maize_ball and PRO.PL.AB chew-DR=3PL.AB
'(They toasted the maize.) They made maize balls and **they chewed them**. (... They chewed them to make them sweet; there was no sugar at that time.)'

- The pronoun conveys a presupposition (as expected of a pronoun); the verb asserts something of the pronominal referent.
- This is the inversion of a cleft.

Taking a different perspective: equational clauses

- There is no copula
- Nouns can function as predicates, too (no difference in intonation)
- Fronting is common with predicate nominals (... which show the same syntactic properties, i.e. ANTIP and NEG.SUB); 75% of unpossessed predicate nominals that occur with a pronoun occur in this construction
- But possessed nouns can only function as predicates of relative constructions

<u>Predicate</u>	<u>BASIC</u>	<u>PRO + RC</u>	
transitive verb	<i>yokna='ne [kas]</i>	<i>[asko] yokna='ne</i>	'She caught it/that one.'
intransitive verb	<i>jo'yaj [as]</i>	<i>[asko] jo'yaj</i>	'It/That one arrived.'
unposs. noun	<i>jokme [as]</i>	<i>[asko] jokme</i>	'It/That one is a bird.'
possessed noun	<i>*jokme='ne [kas]</i>	<i>[asko] jokme='ne</i>	'(It) That one is her bird.'

Taking a different perspective: equational clauses

BASIC nominal predicate with bound pronominal argument

kas *juye<ni~>ni=as* *bo* ***rulrul[--as]***
COP.NEG person<NMZ~>=3N CONJ jaguar--3N

'It is not a human, **it is a jaguar.**'

Predicate nominal with FRONTED pronominal argument

[os *chabo:na* *di'* *deskatolej]* ***asko*** ***rulrul***
ART *cipío(bird)* REL jump:MLT:branch PRO.3N jaguar

'The bird which jumped around in the branches, **that was the/a jaguar.**'

Possessed predicate nominal (always with FRONTED pronominal argument)

jaysot *rey* ***[i'ne]*** ***majniwa=kinos*** ***Salta***
it_seems MOD PRO.F offspring_of=ART. F proper_name

'(I heard a child crying.) It seems that she is Salta's daughter. (I'll go and have a look.)'

So: it's not a cleft, but ...

- In the fronting construction, a verb occurs in a slot typically occupied by nouns
- A relative clause “turns a propositional expression into a referential one” (Bickel 2011: 428)
- The RC is a nominal expression (see also e.g. Shibatani 2009)
- Movima sentences with an initial free pronoun are equational clauses, independent of the predicate type:
"PRO is (the/a/one who is/does) N/V"

The information structure of an equational clause is the opposite of a cleft:
Subject (presupposition) - Predicate (assertion)

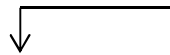
- The Movima "cleft" is not a focus construction because it is an equational clause, with the corresponding information structure.

Beyond Information Structure?

With nouns, the fronted pronoun is the most common or (with possessed nouns) even exclusive way to form an equational clause with a pronominal subject.

With verbs, this construction is an alternative to a basic clause, used

- to refer anaphorically to a newly introduced discourse participant
- to make sure that the verb is understood as asserting something about this participant and not about the previous/ongoing discourse topic (cf. "anaphoric demonstratives", Diessel 1999):
- Simplified:



TOP ... TOP ... TOP ... [nonTOP] ... **PRO** ... TOP ... TOP ...

- What can be analyzed syntactically as a cleft is an equational clause, employed as a reference-tracking device in discourse.
- A description of clefts in languages where clefts have the structure of an equational clause, prosody may be the only formal device that identifies them

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