

When adverbs embed clauses: An explanation of variability in Kaqchikel Agent Focus

Background: Kaqchikel, like many Mayan languages, puts constraints on the A'-extraction of transitive subjects from a normal transitive clause. In many cases, it is actually banned, as shown in example (1), in which case, the *Agent Focus* (AF) construction must be used, illustrated in (2).

- (1) Achike x-Ø-u-löq' ri äk'? (2) Achike x-Ø-loq'-o ri äk'?
 who CPL-ABS.3S-ERG.3S-buy the chicken who CPL-ABS.3S-buy-**AF** the chicken
 *'Who bought the chicken?' 'Who bought the chicken?'

In a recent paper, Erlewine (2014) argues the restriction on A'-extracting transitive subjects in Kaqchikel is an *Anti-Locality* effect: transitive subjects are not permitted to extract because they are too close to C⁰. His version of this restriction, also discussed in Bošković 2015, is in (3).

- (3) SPEC-TO-SPEC ANTI-LOCALITY:
 A'-movement of a phrase from the Specifier of XP must cross a maximal projection other than XP.

This analysis relies crucially on Erlewine's proposal that transitive subjects undergo movement to Spec,TP while intransitive subjects remain low. For Erlewine, this derives the fact that transitive (ergative) subjects, but not intransitive (absolutive) subjects are subject to extraction restrictions. Furthermore, it makes the strong prediction that an intervening adverb—in virtue of introducing a new XP between TP and CP—should obviate the need for AF in clauses with subject extraction, which is observed in (4).¹

- (4) Achike **kan qitzij** x-Ø-u-tij ri wäy?
 who truly truth CPL-ABS.3S-ERG.3S-eat the tortilla
 'Who truly ate the tortilla?' ADVERB; NO AF — Erlewine 2014:27

Proposal: In this paper, we argue against the *Anti-Locality* analysis of AF along two lines. First, we briefly review existing Mayan literature, noting problems with the assumption that transitive, but not intransitive subjects, move to Spec,TP. Our second, and main focus, is to show that there is variation in whether AF is observed in configurations like (4), which undermines the primary argument in favor of *Anti-Locality*. We then propose an alternative to the *Anti-Locality* analysis of AF that can also account for the variation in whether AF is observed in the presence of adverbs.

Intervening adverbs: Recall that an intervening adverb, as in (4) above, is predicted to obviate the need for AF under subject extraction. This appears to provide support for the *Anti-Locality* analysis. The data are more complex, however. In natural texts we find variation: apparent A'-movement over the same adverb sometimes triggers AF, as in (5), and sometimes does not, as in (6).² In each example, note that we have an identical configuration in which a relative clause marker *ri* (which should trigger A'-bar operator movement), is followed by an adverb, and then the verb.

- (5) Ri **kan qitzij** y-e-ya'-on ru-q'ij k'o chi e üt z chuqa'.
 REL truly truth ICPL-ABS.3PL-give-**AF** ERG.3S-day must ABS.3P good also
 'Those who truly present his word must also be good.' ADVERB; AF
- (6) ...roma ri winäq ri **kan qitzij** n-Ø-u-ya' ru-q'ij ri Dios...
 because the person REL truly truth ICPL-ABS.3S-ERG.3S-give ERG.3S-day the God
 '...because the person who truly presents God's valor...' ADVERB; NO AF

¹Note that we've altered Erlewine's examples to be in accordance with standard Kaqchikel orthography.

²For space we focus on the adverb *kan qitzij* 'truly' and its synonymous subpart *kan* 'truly', which Erlewine identifies as AF-blocking. These examples are representative of a larger corpus.

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The *Anti-Locality* analysis of AF cannot handle the contrast between (5) and (6) because if the A'-movement in (6) over *kan qitzij* is long enough to obviate the need for AF, it should also be sufficiently long in (5).

Biclausality: Our proposal to explain the contrast between (5) and (6) is that despite their surface similarity, these classes of examples are radically structurally different. The examples that Erlewine (2014) identifies, like (6), are actually biclausal with a resumptive pronoun in the lower clause. With no movement, AF morphology is not predicted. In contrast, examples like (5) are monoclausal with true A'-movement over the adverb. Here AF appears because it is necessary in Kaqchikel for the extraction of ergative subjects (see e.g. Aissen 2011; Coon & Henderson 2011; and Coon et al. 2014). *Anti-Locality* simply plays no role.

This proposal crucially rests on the biclausality of examples like (6). There are a series of arguments for this. First, note in (7) that adverbs like *kan qitzij* can clearly embed clauses with the complementizer *chi*. Because the complementizer *chi* is optional in other clausal embedding contexts in the language, it is plausible that *kan qitzij* in examples like (6) above have a CP-complement exactly like in (7), but with a covert C. Further evidence for this comes from examples like (8), where *kan* 'truly' is followed a *wh*-word, which would only be possible if it took a CP-complement in which A'-movement could take place.

- (7) ...achike q-ach'alal ri **kan qitzij** [**chi** ki-nima-n ri kristo...]
which ERG.1PL-friend REL truly truth **COMP** ERG.3PL-obey-PERF the Christ
'...whichever of our friends that it's true that they have obeyed Christ...'
- (8) ...ma x-Ø-in-kusaj ta chuqa' ch'ab'el ri **kan** [**janipe'** na ru-b'an-ik...]
NEG CPL-ABS.3S-ERG.1S-use IRR also speech REL truly **how.much** PART ERG.3S-do-NOM
'...neither did I use language that truly (who knows) how great its form is...'

Finally, note that in order to render examples (7–8) with a complement CP in English, a resumptive pronoun is required because the relevant CP-complements are islands. We propose this is true in Kaqchikel as well. Kaqchikel liberally allows null *pro*, and so it is not seen in (7–8) or (6); however in elicitation speakers freely accept the introduction of an overt pronoun into examples like (7), as shown below. As our analysis predicts, the addition of an unfocused pronoun in AF examples like (5) is ungrammatical.

- (9) ...qach'alal ri **kan qitzij** [**chi riye'** ki-nima-n ri kristo...]
ERG.1PL-friend REL truly truth **COMP PRO.3PL** ERG.3PL-obey-PERF the Christ
'...our friends that it's true that they have obeyed Christ...'

The presence of overt pronouns in constructions like (9) shows that no movement is taking place out of the lower clause that the adverb embeds. This means that we do not expect to see AF when an adverb embeds a CP, even if that CP looks like it should have an ergative subject gap. Kaqchikel thus has two strategies for adverbial modification: (i) clausal embedding, and (ii) adjunction, which correspond to (5) and (6), respectively. The two options appear similar because the complementizer and pronoun are optional (as they are in other constructions), but only the monoclausal construction involves A'-movement of the subject.

We demonstrate further that the other examples that have been used to support *Anti-Locality*, like (6), are actually of a class with (9), a biclausal construction with a resumptive pronoun in which no movement has taken place. This analysis not only makes predictions about which types of adverbs are allowed to obviate AF (namely, those which can embed full CPs), but also is consistent with work internal to the language which does not place transitive subjects in Spec,TP.

References: Aissen, J. 2011. On the Syntax of Agent Focus in K'ichee'. *MITWPL*. • Bošković, Z. 2015. On the timing of labeling. *Lingbuzz*. • Coon, J. and R. Henderson. Two binding puzzles in Mayan. UCSC. • Coon, J., P. Mateo Pedro, O. Preminger. 2014. The role of case in A-bar extraction asymmetries: Evidence from Mayan. *LV*. • Erlewine, M. 2014. Anti-locality and optimality in Kaqchikel Agent Focus. *NLLT*.