

On the Asymmetry of Root vs. Embedded clauses. Evidence from Shipibo Second-position Clitics

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In most European languages, embedded clauses have a similar structural configuration as root clauses: embedded clauses may project to CP, just as root clauses. This is true even in languages that have V2 properties. Such parallelism follows if CP is one of the minimal interface units (a strong phase in Chomsky 2000, 2001, among others). In other languages, however, embedded clauses have clearly distinct properties from root ones. Shipibo, an Amazonian language, for example, has a set of 2nd position discourse-related clitics: an evidential *-ra* and *-ronqui* in (1a-b), an interrogative *rin* in (1b) and an imperative *ba-non* in (1d), all from Faust 1973 and Black 1992. These clitics are only possible in root contexts, as seen in (2) from Black (1992): *-ra* can only appear after the first, root-clause constituent (cf. (2a)), not after an embedded-clause one (cf. (2b-c)). Additionally, embedded verbs lack the tense and aspect morphology of main verbs, and only add a switch-reference morpheme (cf. *shon* in (3)) that marks whether the embedded event is simultaneous, preceding or following the main event. The first property suggests that embedded clauses do not project full CPs (since they cannot have the discourse heads associated with the left-periphery). The second property also suggests that embedded verbs are not full-fledged finite forms, but closer to non-finite forms (such as inflected infinitives in Portuguese or gerunds in English).

Based on this, we can distinguish between **fully-projecting embedded clause (FEC)** languages and **reduced embedded-clauses (REC)** languages, in addition to Shipibo, Capanahua and Quechua would fall into this category, among others.

This distinction can be correlated with another observation that holds for REC in Shipibo, Capanahua and Quechua, at least: as observed by Black, 2nd position clitics in Shipibo may range over a number of clauses, as represented in (4), where the evidential *-ra* takes scope over a whole paragraph. I suggest that the difference between FEC and REC is related to the ability of the discourse-operator to bind several clauses: RECs exist whenever a discourse-related operator (evidentiality, topic, mood, etc.) takes scope over several clauses. Thus, the reason why embedded clauses lack a left-periphery, is because they inherit it from the root clause. By economy of projection, it becomes impossible to project one.

Finally, I will discuss the connection between REC and control clauses, which can be seen as a subset of REC in an otherwise FEC language: controlled infinitives lack inflectional morphology and can be argued to lack a left-periphery; in addition, their subject is determined by a higher-up root clause.

- (1) a. E-n-**ra** binon be-que
 1s-ERG-IND aguaje bring-ASP
 ‘I brought aguajes.’
- b. Caí-**ronqui** reocoocainyantán-que
 go-SS.REPORT turn.over-ASP
 ‘They say that when he had gone, he turned over.’
- c. Tsoa-**rin** mi-pecao?
 who-INT.NOM 2sg-behind
 ‘Who is behind you?’

- d. Mia e-n ashon-**ba-non**
 2s 1s-ERG do/make-IMP1-IMP2
 ‘Let me make it for you!’
- (2) a. [Ean-ra onan-que] Jose-can chomo toe-a
 1s-IND know-ASP Jose-ERG jar break-PCPL
 ‘I know that Jose broke the jar.’
- b. [*Ean-ra onan-que] Jose-can-ra chomo toe-a
 1s-IND know-ASP Jose-ERG-IND jar break-PCPL
- c. [*Ean-ra onan-que] chomo-ra Jose-can toe-a
 1s-IND know-ASP jar-IND Jose-ERG break-PCPL
- (3) Nima oin-shon-ra, Jose-can quen-ai
 Nima see-SS-PREC-IND Jose-ERG calls-ASP
 ‘Having seen Nima, Jose called him.’
- (4) [CP XP-**ra** [IP1 . . .] [IP2 . . .] [IP3 . . .]]

References

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