Predicate-raising and head-finality in Tenetehára

Fábio Bonfim Duarte - UFMG (fbonfim@terra.com.br)

Introduction: This paper aims to investigate the reasons why Tenetehára grammar systematically places subordinator complementizers in head-final position, cases in which the CP can intervene between the vP and the tense particles, thereby giving rise to the word order SOV-Co-To. Empirical evidence in favor of this comes from contexts below, in which the complementizers pà and mehe occur between the lexical predicate and the tense particles nehe, iko and kwez.

(1) e-pyhyk ne-Ø-takihe [aguza i-zuka pà] nehe
   2SG-get your-GEN-knife rat 3SG-kill COMP FUT
   “Get your knife in order to kill the rat.”

(2a) Purutu w-exak
    Purutu 3SG-see

(2b) [zawar, tapi’ir u-zuka mehe] iko
    jaguar i tapir 3SG-kill COMP be
   “Purutu saw that/when the jaguar was killing the tapir.”

(3) Sergio he-r-exak [he-Ø-zur mehe] kwàz
    Sérgio me-ABS-see 1-ABS-come COMP IPAST
   “Sérgio saw me, when I had just come.”

Theoretical Problem: One of the problems posed by the SOV-Co-To word order is how to derive them in light of a theory of phrase structure in which the CP is universally projected to the left of TP. Assuming Kayne’s antisymmetric theory, I will propose that all clauses in Tenetehára originate as Co-To-v-VP. Here, Co is a label for the domain in which several categories can be present, such as force, topic, focus, and finiteness features in the sense of Rizzi (1997). Additionally, To is the functional projection responsible for encoding features such as tense, mood, and aspect, while the v-VP complex is the level where the thematic relations are established.

1. Tenetehára is a language spoken by two indigenous groups: the Tembé and the Guajajára. The Tembé group lives on the border of the states of Maranhão and Pará and the Guajajára group lives in the state of Maranhão, in the northern region of Brazil. According to Rodrigues (1986:39), the Tenetehára people comprise approximately 7,100 people and belong to the Tupí-Guaraní family, Tupí Stock.
Proposal: In this paper, I will assume that the SOV-C°-T° order of the subordinate clauses is derived from the basic C°-T°-SVO order. This proposal, as in Kaynian work more generally, presupposes that the surface head-final order of the embedded clauses must be derived by successive leftward movement of the vP, first to Spec-TP, then, to Spec-CP. Notice that this movement operation is consistent with Kayne’s hypothesis according to which, when a complement precedes a given head, it has to move to a position where it asymmetrically c-commands that head. In sum, this proposal entails the existence of cyclic predicate-raising in Tenetehára, giving rise to extremely complicated structures, in which several final particles are stranded in lower positions, such as the final complementizers mehe/pà and the tense final particles kwèz/nehe/iko. This analysis is supported by the fact that the relative order of the tense and complementizer particles in relation to the main predicate is fixed. Such constraint is evidenced by the fact that the aspectual marker kwèz and the future tense marker nehe cannot occur between the verb and the complementizer, as the ungrammaticality of the sentences below demonstrates:

(4) *Sergio he-r-exak [he-Ø-zur kwàz mehe]
(5) *e-pyhyk ne-Ø-takihe [aguzà i-zuka nehe pà]

I thus assume that the derivation of the PRED-C°-T° order is not achieved by head movement of the verb, but only by predicate-raising. I also propose that the landing site of the predicate can be the specifier position of either the head C° or the head T°. Either option depends, of course, on the grammatical construction involved in the syntax. In this respect, Tenetehára differs slightly from other predicate-fronting languages such as Niuean and Chol, regarding the landing site of the predicate. In sum, the data presented in this research aims to bring further support to the hypothesis that subordination in Tenetehára is achieved by recursive syntactic operation, involving the predicate raising to specifier positions of functional categories in the C/TP layer.

References


