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Flexible word order in Taqbaylit
How much do syntax and discourse do?

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Cross-linguistic variations in word order flexibility are often explained in terms of (non-)configurationality. A language is considered to be configurational if it follows a strict word order, fixed by the syntactic functions of core arguments, or discourse/non-configurational if it has a relatively free word order, governed by discourse (Hale 1983, E. Kiss 1995, Baker 1996, Nordlinger 1998, Austin & Bresnan 2001).

Present a fraction of our current research on the syntax of the nominal state alternation — Construct/annexed vs. Free States — in Taqbaylit, a Berber (Afro-Asiatic) language spoken (primarily) in the Kabylie region of Northern Algeria. After König (2007) and Akadiev (2015), we analyse the state alternation as a case alternation following a marked nominative pattern. Marked nominative is quite rare typologically and seems to be found only in a few African languages in East Africa (König 2007). Languages with marked nominative case share some properties; e.g. V first and do not mark case in pre-verbal positions.

1- Aims of the presentation:

Nouns surface in a marked or unmarked/ neutral form (respectively form A and form B) depending on their position vis-à-vis a head, their grammatical function and the nature/ category of their head.

e.g. Post-verbal Subjects are marked (form A) but pre-verbal Subjects are unmarked (form B).

Objects of some prepositions are marked (form A), but others are unmarked (form B).

Marked nominative (i.e. construct state) in Taqbaylit occurs across different domains of sentence structure (NP, PP, verbal clauses, copula clauses) and is affected by word order, clitic-doubling, agreement and, information structure, something which has been neglected in the literature.

The aims of our research is three-fold: (i) contribute to a better understanding of case marking patterns and information structure in Berber, (ii) a better understanding of marked nominative case systems in general and (iii) add to the growing research on the role of information structure on a number of morphosyntactic phenomena (such as agreement, differential case marking, valence, switch reference..)

Today we will focus on case marking in the core clausal domain and its periphery (i.e. domain where Verb arguments are realised). We will discuss the role of topic marking

b. a-mcic, y-swa a-yəfk (nni)
 ACC-cat 3SGM.SUBJ-drink.PRF ACC-milk this
 ‘The cat, he drank the milk.’

c. a-mcic, fki-γ=as a-yəfk
 ACC-cat give.PRF-1SG.SUBJ=3SG.DAT ACC-milk
 ‘The cat, I gave him milk.’

(18) nettat, tə-rra=yi taməttut
 PRO.3SGF 3SGF-consider.PRF=1SG.OBJ COP woman.ACC

taməqrant

grown-up

‘She, she considered me as a grown-up.’

(19) sima, sidi appi , y-pi=t f zik lhal
 then sir god 3SGM-take.PRF=3SG.OBJ on early time
 ‘Then, God, he took him early.’

(20) a. yə-swa=t wə-mcic u-yifk (nni)
 3sgm.subj-drink.PRF =3SGM.OBJ NOM-cat NOM-milk this
 ‘The cat drank the milk.’

E.g. 1 relation between case and focus, relation between subject and clitic doubled object.

E.g. 2 similarities of clitic doubling/ DOM with another construction involving 'direct objects', right-dislocation → is clitic doubling grammaticalizing from right-dislocation? (...)