A Syntax-for-conversation in Tsou and Squliq Atayal

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The interactions between grammar and interaction are currently receiving considerable attention by language typologists and CA analysts.(Ochs et al.,1996; Schegloff 2006). Research in this area is primarily motivated by two considerations: (1) grammars of natural languages are not only symbolic but also interactional resources. Grammatical constituents enable members of the speech community to conduct social interaction in orderly and intelligible ways and they are components of social action; (2) social interaction, the primary environment of language use, is a process in time, and to be able to understand how grammatical formats function as components of social interaction, we must reposition them in time , that is, as units which characteristically appear in increments and unfold during social interaction..

An important insight into the nature of constituency in this line of research is the observation that syntactic practices constrain the organization of repair, and that the practice of repair helps us better understand basic syntactic categories and constituents.

Fox et al. (1996) examine the organization of repairs in conversation in English and Japanese, and suggest that differing repair strategies in the two languages arise from differences in the organization of their clause structure and verb morphology. English tends to organize repair globally by recycling back to clause-initial position, but Japanese speakers usually do local repair, that is, Japanese speakers may only repeat or replace the part of clause produced so far. Fox at al. also found that there is interesting cross-linguistic variation both in the scope of recycling, and in which constituents are typically recycled. They found that when English speakers attempt to repair during or after a direct object NP, they do not recycle back to the verb. Rather they either recycle just the object NP, or they recycle back to the beginning of the clause. These suggest that the category verb phrase may not be highly salient in the syntax of conversational English.

In this study I examine the impact of projection and repair strategies on syntax by looking at the conversational data in two languages, Tsou and Squliq Atayal, for their relevance to the nature of cross-linguistic variation in the relative salience of different constituents. Repair strategies are often used as a matter of routine and routinely project something bigger to come, and may be considered part of the participants' lexicon and grammar. Specific issues addressed include what specific projections of subsequent talk each of these strategies make and what interactional implications they have, if any. Constituents which are recycled as units are what speakers pay more attention to, or tend to orient towards as they formulate and verbalize their utterances. Since constituents emerge from frequently occurring, entrenched units in interaction. It follows that constituents are language -specific. I will show that two major constituents in Tsou and Squliq are the verb complex and the noun phrase, each organizing different types of repair. Other constituent types are possible, though they are much less entrenched in spoken discourse.

References

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