Topic, Focus, and *Wh-*Phrases in Cham (and Moken)

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Introduction

- Eastern Cham is said to be a *wh*-in-situ language (e.g. Thurgood 2005: 10)

(1) *hɨ   nɨŋ   thaw băŋ   ʞɛt*
    2SG   think dog   eat   what
    'What do you think the dog ate?' (BT_20141107)[1]

- But, *wh*-phrases may be fronted (2)

(2) *ʞɛt   hɨ   nɨŋ   thaw băŋ*
    what 2SG   think dog   eat
    'What do you think the dog ate?' (BT_20141107)

- Claim: fronted *wh*-phrases are *wh*-topics

[1]Orthography is largely IPA; in line with traditional Cham linguistic orthography (Brunelle, Thurgood, Moussay), open circles beneath consonants indicate falling, breathy tone on the following vowel. Examples are marked for speaker and date. Note that there is significant register variation between speakers (cf. Brunelle 2009, and others).

Introduction

- *Wh*-phrases are taken to be diagnostic for focus
  (e.g. Horvath 1986, Cheng 1997, Bošković 2002)
  - But, cf. Cable (2008), and others

- *Wh*-phrases are taken to be diagnostic for *not* topic (e.g. Kiss 1998)
  - But, cf. Grohmann (2006), and others

- Theoretical claim: (Eastern Cham) *wh*-phrases are orthogonal to topic/focus
  - Using a test involving discourse relations (López 2009; Asher & Lascarides 2005)

Quick outline

- Introduction to Eastern Cham
  - Focus & Topic fronting

- Discourse anaphora test
  - Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT)
  - Data from Catalán (López 2009)

- Cham data
  - DP left-dislocation
  - *Wh*-phrase left-dislocation
  - Additional tests
    - Deixis
    - D-linked *wh*-phrases

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- Conclusions
  - Methodological thoughts

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Eastern Cham

Cham, Eastern of VIETNAM

http://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/profiles/maps/m11688_vm.png

- Austronesian: Vietnam, spoken by about 100,000 people (Brunelle & Văn Hẳn 2015)

- Data from fieldwork in
  San Francisco & Seattle (2014-5),
  Ho Chi Minh City & Phan Rang, Vietnam (2015)

- SVO, no bound morphology (3a-b)

(3a) *paŋuol   doɛyʔ*
    pangolin   run
    'The pangolin runs.' (MST_20141001)

(3b) *lĭmɔŋ piǎʔ mɨʔ   paŋuol*
    lion   catch   pangolin
    'The lion caught the pangolin.' (MST_20141001)

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Eastern Cham *wh*-phrases

- *Wh*-phrases as in-situ, but may be fronted (4a-c)

(4a) *hɨ   nɨŋ   thaw bǎŋ   ʈɛt*   (4b) *hɨ nɨŋ ʈɛt thaw bǎŋ*
      2SG   think dog eat   what   (4c) *ʈɛt hɨ nɨŋ thaw bǎŋ*
      'What do you think the dog ate?' (BT_20141107)

- *Wh*-indefinites (5a-b)

(5a) *thay naw ʈaɽaʔ   plaw haʈɛt*
      who   go   market   buy   what
      'Who went to the market to buy what/something?' (MST_20141008)

(5b) *hu   thay bǎŋ   pɔh   ʔɔʔ   o*
      FOC   who   eat   fruit mango   NEG
      'Nobody ate the mango.' (DTHS_20150609)

Eastern Cham has a dedicated focus construction

- Focus is marked by *hu* 'have, EX.COP'; identificational semantics (6)

(6a) ***hɨ*** ***hu*** *cŭʔ pǝ̆taw* *mǝ̆tay*
2SG FOC shoot king die
'It was you who shot the king dead.'
SPEAKER: "I know you shot the king dead."
(MST_20140924)

(6b) ***kra ʈhɨn*** ***hu*** *ăla* *cŏh*
monkey FOC snake bite
'It was the monkey the snake bit.'
SPEAKER: "It was exactly the monkey the snake bit."
(MST_20141029)

- Incompatible with 'only', 'also', or singular sets (e.g. 'sun')

(7) ***tha ʈrɛy alamin*** ***hu*** *krăʔ ʈi* *pătih ḳay* *(#mĭn/#ray)*
1 CLF Alamin FOC teach math only/also
'It is [only/also] Alamin who teaches math.' (MST_20150419)

(8) ***ʔya hăray*** ***(#hu)*** *ʈah*
sun FOC shine
INTENDED: 'It is the sun that is shining.' (MST_20150419)

Eastern Cham has a distinct topic position

- Topic fronting is unmarked,[2] separated by pause (9)

(9) ***kriy   ni***   //   *hɨ*   *hu*   *băŋ*
     orange   dem   2sG   FOC   eat
     'Was it you who ate this orange?' (MST_20141203)

- Cannot be the answer to a *wh*-question (10a-b)

(10a) *ƙeit   hɨ   ʈɔʔ   băŋ*
      what 2sG   PROG eat
      A: 'What are you eating?'

(10b) *kaw   ʈɔʔ   băŋ   **lɔ   nuʔ***   #***lɔ nuʔ**, kaw ʈɔʔ băŋ*
      1sG   PROG eat   meat chicken
      B: 'I'm eating chicken.' (NNA_20150615)

Discourse anaphora in SDRT

- Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT) as a discourse-level semantic model (Asher & Lascarides; cf. DRT, e.g. Kamp & Reyle 1993)

- Consider the following discourse

(11) a. Max had a great evening last night.
      b. He had a great meal.
      c. He ate salmon.
      d. He devoured lots of cheese.
      e. He then won a dancing competition. (Asher & Lascarides 2005: 8)

Discourse anaphora in SDRT, cont'd

- Discourse coordination (here, "narration") and discourse subordination (here, "elaboration")

π_1 [John had a great evening]

Elaboration

π_6

Narration

π_2 [He had a great meal] → π_5 [he then won a dance competition]

Elaboration

π_7

Narration

π_3 [he ate salmon] → π_4 [he devoured cheese]
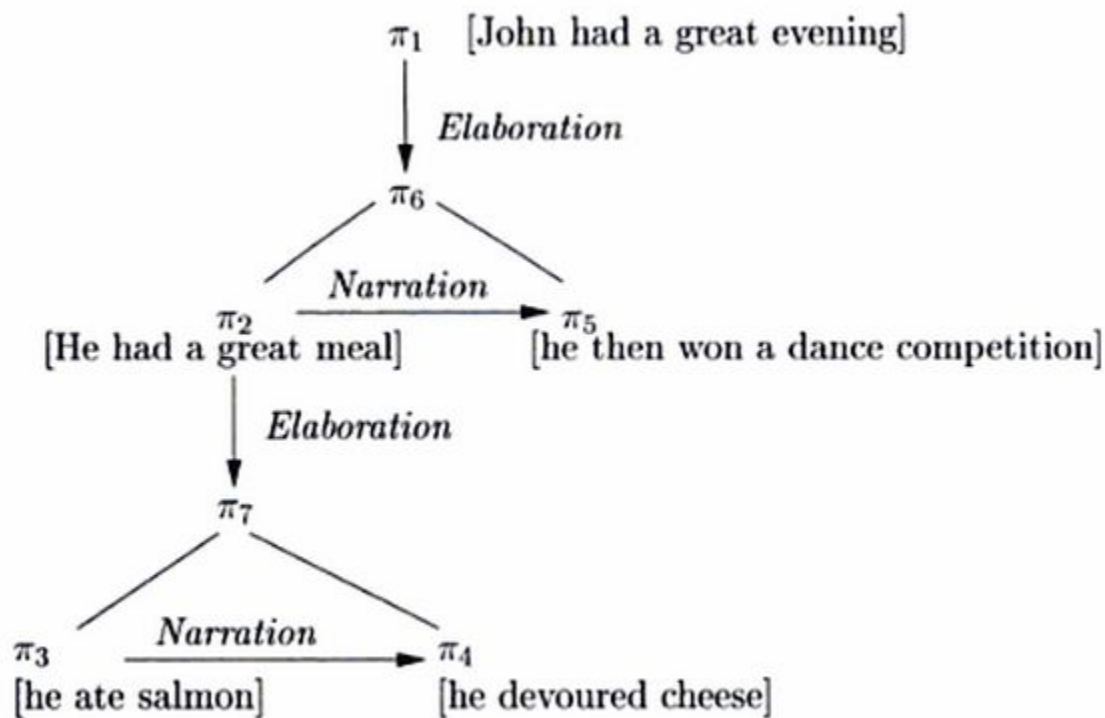
Figure 4.5: The SDRS (17), represented as a graph

Discourse anaphora in SDRT, cont'd

- Discourse Coordination
  - Narration (*a*, then *b*…)
  - Continuation (*a* does *x*, *b* does *y*…)
  - Background (*a* overlaps with *b*; e.g. "Max entered the room. It was pitch dark.")

- Discourse Subordination
  - Elaboration (*b* is a subpart of *a*)
  - Explanation (*b* is the cause of *a*)
  - Result (*b* is the result of *a*)

- Discourse subordination results in anaphoric accessibility
  - Discourse anaphora may only refer to an entity that is anaphorically accessible

- Discourse coordination does not

Discourse anaphora in Catalán

- Catalán clitic left-dislocation and right-dislocation (CLLD & CLRD) (López 2009; elsewhere described as topic positions; e.g. Rizzi 1997)
  - Discourse coordination contexts: #CLLD/CLRD

(12a) **Narration**
*El Joan va cuinar **la carn***.
'Joan cooked the meat.'

(12b) #*Després   se   la   va   menjar,   **la   carn.***
Afterwards   CL   CL.ACC   PAST   eat.INF   the   meat
'Afterwards he ate the meat.' (López 2009: (2.62))[3]

(13a) **Continuation**
*El gos li va mossegar **la ma***.
'The dog bit his hand.'

(13b) #*i   el   gat   se   la   va   esgarrapar,   **la   ma***.
and   the   cat   CL   CL.ACC   PAST   scratch.INF   the   hand
'and the cat scratched his hand.' (López 2009: (2.64))

[3]Note, I have checked the Catalán examples with a fluent non-native speaker, Justin Davidson.

Discourse anaphora in Catalán, cont'd

- Catalán discourse subordination contexts: ✓CLLD/CLRD

(14a) **Elaboration**
   *El Joan va cuinar **mai carn**.*
   'Joan cooked the meat.'

(14b) *La   fa   molt be,   el   Joan, **la   carn**.*
   CL.ACC   makes   very well   the   Joan the   meat
   'He cooks the meat very well.' (López 2009: (2.65))

(15a) **Explanation**
   *El Joan no cina **mai carn**.*
   'Joan never cooks meat.'

(15b) *Això és   perquè   és   vegetarià, **el   Joan**.*
   thus is   because   is   vegetarian the   Joan
   'That's because Joan is vegetarian.' (López 2009: (2.66))

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The discourse anaphora test

- López (2009) reduces "topic" to a [+a] discourse anaphora feature
  - [+a] = anaphoric accessibility

- *Wh*-phrases, may not undergo CLLD/CLRD and therefore must be [-a]

	Discourse Coordination	**Discourse Subordination**
Catalán CLLD/CLRD	#	✓
Catalán *wh*-movement	X	X

Eastern Cham data

- Eastern Cham topic-fronting passes the discourse anaphora test
  - Discourse coordination contexts: #topic-fronting

(16a) *kɛn ni*   *ŋaʔ*   ***ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ***   *plɔ̀h*   **Narration**
      Kenny   make   ing-aong   before
      'Kenny cooked the ing-aong [frog sp.].'

(16b) *ŭni, saʔay*   *ʈɔʔ*   *bă̆ŋ*   ***ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ***   *#ŭni,* ***ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ****, saʔay ʈɔʔ bă̆ŋ*
      now   brother   PROG   eat   ing-aong
      'Now, he's eating the ing-aong [frog sp.].' (HL_20151127)

(17a) *myaw mɨh, kaw* *bă̆ŋ*   ***lɔ***   ***nuʔ***   **Continuation**
      first   1SG   eat   meat   chicken
      'First, I ate the chicken.'

(17b) *plɔh nă̆n, ay*   *bă̆ŋ*   ***lɔ***   ***nuʔ***   *#plɔh nă̆n,* ***lɔ nuʔ****, ay bă̆ŋ*
      after   DEM   brother   eat   meat   chicken
      'Then, my brother ate the chicken.' (NNA_20150615)

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- Discourse subordination contexts: ✓topic-fronting

(18a) *mɔŋ kɛn ni ŋaʔ **ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ***   **Explanation**
      look Kenny   make   ing-aong
      'Look at Kenny cooking the ing-aong [frog sp.].'

(18b) *ɲu ŋaʔ **ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ** piɲi lo*   ✓***ʔiŋ ʔɔ̀ŋ***, *ɲu ŋaʔ p̣iɲi lo*
      3sɢ make   ing-aong delicious very
      'He cooks the ing-aong [frog sp.] very well.' (HL_20151127)

(19a) *hɨ iŋ bǎŋ **lɔ** **nuʔ** lay*   **Elaboration**
      2sɢ want eat   meat chicken   ʏ/ɴ
      A: 'Do you want to eat chicken?'

(19b) *iŋ o, kaw bǎŋ yɨʔ*   ✓***lɔ nuʔ***, *kaw bǎŋ yɨʔ*
      want ɴᴇɢ 1sɢ eat   already
      B: 'No, I already ate (chicken).' (NNA_20150615)

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

	Discourse Coordination	Discourse Subordination
Catalán CLLD/CLRD	#	✓
Catalán *wh*-movement	X	X
Eastern Cham topic-fronting	#	✓

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- *Wh*-phrases likewise pass the discourse anaphora test
  - Discourse coordination contexts: #*wh*-topic-fronting

(20a) *hyay ni ṭahḷaʔ   niʔ ŋaʔ huaʔ lɔ   nuʔ*   **Narration**
      day DEM 1SG   cook make eat meat chicken
      A: 'Today, I cooked chicken.'

(20b) *pḷɔh nan zut   ŋaʔ **ḳeit** wɨʔ   #**ḳeit**, *zut ŋaʔ wɨʔ*
      after DEM friend   make what ITER
      B: 'After that, what did you do?' (TDK_20150625)

(21a) *sɨ̀   huaʔ   hɔŋ kan*   **Narration**
      Sɨ̀   eat.rice   with fish
      A: 'I (Si) ate (rice) with fish.'

(21b) *huaʔ   pḷɔh, hɨ ŋaʔ **ḳeit***   #**ḳeit,** *hɨ ŋaʔ*
      eat.rice   after 2SG make what
      B: 'After eating, what did you do?' (DPNS_20150623)

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- Discourse subordination contexts: ✓*wh*-topic-fronting

(22a) *ʈahɭaʔ*   *ʔa*   **ɓih ʈɛy ay** *paʔ ɭam ni*   **Elaboration**
1sɢ   invite   all   y.b.   o.b.   to   in   DEM
A: 'I invited everyone here.' (I can't invite anyone else)

(22b) **thay**, *ɓlɔh zut*   *ʔa*
who after friend   invite
B: 'Who did you invite then?' [fronting strongly preferred] (TDK_20150625)

(23a) *sɯ̀*   *băŋ* **tha số**   **đồ**   **Elaboration**
Sɯ̀   eat   1   number(VN)   food(VN)
A: 'I (Sɯ̀) ate some food.'

(23b) *hɯ*   *băŋ* **ƙeit**   ✓**ƙeit**, *hɯ băŋ*
2sɢ   eat   what
B: 'What did you eat?' (DPNS_20150623)

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Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- *Wh*-topic-fronting acceptable in discourse subordination contexts

(24a) *ʈahḷaʔ*   *m̥yaw*   *băŋ*   **klam ni**   **Elaboration vs. Clarification**

       1SG   just   eat   night DEM

       A: 'I just ate dinner.' (TDK_20150625)

(24b) *zut*   *băŋ* *ɠeit*   **#*ɠeit* zut băŋ**   ✓ **ɠeit** *zut băŋ*

       friend   eat what

       B: 'What did you eat?'   # if B didn't hear A   ✓if asking what kind of food

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

	Discourse Coordination	Discourse Subordination
Catalán CLLD/CLRD	#	✓
Catalán *wh*-movement	X	X
Eastern Cham topic-fronting	#	✓
Eastern Cham *wh*-topic-fronting	#	✓

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- If deixis can render a DP anaphorically accessible, then it should make topic-fronting acceptable
  - This is borne out for DP's and *wh*-phrases

(25) ***tha poh taw ni,*** *kaw ʈɔʔ thɔw*

1 CLF stone DEM 1SG PROG hold.in.hand

'This stone, I have in my hand.' [physically] (NNA_20150915)

(26a) *kɛn ni* *ʈɔʔ bǎŋ* ***ƙeit***

Kenny PROG eat what

'What are you (Kenny) eating?' [Just walking into a room] (HL_20151008)

(26b) ***ƙeit,*** *kɛn ni* *ʈɔʔ bǎŋ*

what Kenny PROG eat

'What are you (Kenny) eating?' [Walking into a room, pointing at Kenny's food] (HL_20151008)

Eastern Cham data, cont'd

- D-linked *wh*-phrases, particularly *which* X and *how many* X prefer fronting
  - Cf. elaboration

(27) ʈam pìh ʈom   niʔ,   **niʔ**   **hlay**   mɔŋ seh băŋ
     in   all how.many animal   animal   which   tiger like eat
     'Of all the animals, which does the tiger like to eat?' (PTHN_20150624)

(28) ʈam mɨ raŋ   nan, **ʈom**   **raŋ**   hɨ   seh
     in   5   person   DEM   how many person   2SG like
     'Of the 5 people, how many do you like?' (NNA_20150615)

Eastern Cham data: Summary

- Eastern Cham *wh*-phrases may be topic-fronted
  - According to the discourse anaphora test

- *Wh*-phrases are not always overtly focus-marked
  - At least in the ID-focus construction

- Eastern Cham *wh*-phrases seem completely orthogonal to topic and focus

- If *wh*-phrases are to be retained as a diagnostic for topic and focus, these facts must be accounted for
(cf. also Cable 2008, Grohmann 2006, and others)

Eastern Cham data: Summary

	Discourse Coordination	Discourse Subordination
Catalán CLLD/CLRD	#	✓
Catalán *wh*-movement	X	X
Eastern Cham topic-fronting	#	✓
Eastern Cham *wh*-topic-fronting	#	✓

Conclusion: Methodological thoughts

- Naive elicitation would miss this generalization
  - "Optional *wh*-movement" (e.g. Denham 1997)

- Naive text collection would also miss this generalization
  - Pro-drop is favored over topic fronting in narratives
  - No tokens of fronting in narratives so far

- Discourse anaphora test can be used in initial fieldwork
  - Produces reliable, clear results for Eastern Cham and Catalán
  - Can be further tested by more targeted elicitation and text collection

Acknowledgements

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