

Wide wh-scope from a postverbal adjunct in Bangla

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In this note, I consider Bangla sentences such as (1) and (2), where a wh-constituent and an Emphatically Topicalized (ET) constituent, respectively, appear in situ in a postverbal adjunct clause, without constituent preposing or pied piped clausal preposing, and yet take wide scope, thus appearing to counterexemplify the main point of Bayer's (1996) account that emerged from some work that he and I did jointly in 1988. I am referring to the claim that postverbal clauses in Bangla are wh-scope islands – a claim elaborated in the context of more recent architecture in Bayer & Dasgupta (forthcoming):

- (1) ram rege gEche jodu ka-ke biye koreche bole?
Ram angry go-PST-3 Jodu who-OBJ marriage make-PST-3 BOLE
'Who-x is Ram angry because Jodu has married x?'
- (2) amra Onek ceSTa korchi tumi jate niScint-e kaj kor-te par-o
we much trial make-PST-1 you so-that peace-LOC work do-INF can-2
'We are trying hard so that you can work in peace'

What needs commentary is the fact that in Bangla, though not in Bavarian, wh and ET constituents can remain in situ in certain postverbal adjunct clauses and take wide scope, whereas such constituents – as becomes apparent in the robustly ill-formed sentences (3) and (4) – cannot remain in situ in postverbal complement clauses and take wide scope:

- (3) *tumi Sunechile jodu ka-ke biye kor-b-e bole?
you hear-PST-2 Jodu who-OBJ marriage make-FUT-3 BOLE
intended reading 'Who had you heard Jodu would marry?'
- (4) *ram Sunechilo jodu je Sita-ke biye kor-b-e
Ram hear-PST-3 Jodu COMP Sita-Obj marriage make-FUT-3
intended reading 'Ram had heard that Jodu would marry Sita'

In his earlier work referencing the Principles and Parameters conceptual architecture, Bayer (1996), in order to protect the core of the account from these examples, proposed that examples like (1) go through because the upstairs VP does not properly contain the adjunct, which makes the adjunct clause as well as its wh constituent accessible to the upstairs Comp, enabling the wh to be associated with this Comp. In that framework, (3) is excluded because the wh is not directly accessible to the upstairs Comp, and the upstairs V does not enable access into a postverbal clause.

It is of course possible to pursue the question of whether such an account can be replicated under more contemporary assumptions. However, that enterprise might turn out to be a misdirection of effort, given the difficulty of generalizing that account to the ET case, and given the point (made below in some detail) that augmenting the empirical data base shows that in any case that account did not work for the full range of relevant facts even for wh scope phenomena in Bangla adjuncts.

During our joint work in 1988 on which the Bayer (1996) analysis rests, it did not come to our attention that only some adjunct clause types in postverbal position behave as in (1). Specifically, postverbal adjuncts headed by a conjunctive participle like *Sune* ‘hear-CJV = having heard’, as in (5), or by a progressive participle like *dekhte dekhte* ‘watch-PROG = watching’, as in (6), exhibit (1)-type behaviour; this property correlates with the fact that such participles do not license a volitional nominative subject:

- (5) ke rege gEche ka-r khObor Sun-e?
 who angry go-PST-3 who-GEN news hear-CJV
 ‘Who got angry on hearing news about whom?’
- (6) ke ghumiye poReche kon cEnel dekhte dekhte?
 who asleep fall-PST-3 which channel watch-PROG
 ‘Who fell asleep while watching [TV programs on] which channel?’

For the purposes of this pattern, a clause with the complementizer *bole*, formally a non-finite participle form but semantically bleached, functions as a non-finite adjunct clause – it has other properties of that template, including rigid verb-finality. In contrast, the participle types that support a volitional nominative subject, such as the conditional *dile* ‘give-COND’, i.e. ‘if.gives’, the circumstantial *deWaY* ‘on.giving’ and the anterior *dite-i* ‘as.soon.as.gives’, resist the pattern of (1), as shown in ill-formed (7)- (9) below illustrating this resistance as well as the licensing of agentive subjects by such participles, and in well-formed (10)- (12), which illustrate only the nominative agent licensing:

- (7) *ram rege ja-b-e tumi ka-ke SaRi di-le?
 Ram angry go-FUT-3 you who-OBJ sari give-COND
 ‘Ram will get angry if you give whom a sari?’
- (8) *ram rege gEch-e tumi ka-ke SaRi deWaY?
 Ram angry go-PST-3 you who-OBJ sari give-on
 ‘Ram got angry when you gave whom a sari?’
- (9) *ram beriye ja-b-e tumi ka-ke boy pherot dite-i?
 Ram leave go-FUT-3 you who-OBJ book back give-as-soon-as
 ‘Ram will leave the moment you give a book back to whom?’
- (10) tumi ka-ke SaRi di-le ram rege ja-b-e?
 you who-OBJ sari giveCOND Ram angry go-FUT-3
 ‘Ram will get angry if you give a sari to somebody – who is it?’
- (11) tumi ka-ke SaRi deWaY ram rege gEch-e?
 you who-OBJ sari give-on Ram angry go-PST-3
 ‘Ram got angry when you gave a sari to someone – who was it?’

- (12) tumi ka-ke boy pherot dite-i ram beriye ja-b-e?
you who-OBJ book back give-as-soon-as Ram leave go-FUT-3
'Ram will leave the moment you give the book back to somebody – who is it?'

Pending a more complete analysis of the participle system of the language – not a project I can take up in this context, but readers will find van der Wurff (1989) helpful, and can expect some insight in forthcoming work by Devarati Jana – I propose the following empirical generalization relevant to the present context. Whenever a postverbal adjunct clause containing a *wh* constituent is headed by either *bole* or a 'weak' participle, one incapable of containing an agentive (volitional nominative) subject, structures like (1) are well-formed, other things being equal. (Note that *bole* itself is formally a 'weak' participle.) In contrast, whenever such an adjunct clause is headed by a 'strong' participle that can support an agentive subject, such sentences are ill-formed, and only variants that place the adjunct clause on the left are well-formed.

I could, in the name of concreteness, make some formal moves here to connect this generalization to other hypotheses now under active consideration in certain dialects of syntactic inquiry. But such ad hoc moves cannot make a viable contribution to our understanding until there is a credible analysis in place for the various types of adverbial participles. I thus present the above generalization both in order to give notice that there must be an alternative to the account of postverbal adjunct structures in Bayer (1996) – an account offered at a time when nobody had had an opportunity to take on board a fuller range of adverbial participle constructions – and to support the claim that the existence of such examples as (1) and (2) in Bangla, in contrast to the unavailability of such cases in Bavarian, is consistent with the account provided by Bayer & Dasgupta (forthcoming).

I have argued in this note that (1) is a special case, and pointed towards the phenomena that need to be investigated more carefully in order to ascertain just what type of special case it is. I suggest that (2) is a special case as well, for reasons that will come to light once (1) comes to be better understood. Readers interested in pursuing the matter in a substantivist theoretical framework are welcome to consult Dasgupta (2011); assiduous followers of the substantivist thread will probably see at once the lines along which a biaxial solution to the problem would be devised; but an exposition of biaxial syntax here would take us too far afield.

References

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