

Transitivity in the Venetian left periphery: a challenge for cartography

Outline

This paper discusses a problem for the cartographic approach to the left periphery (Rizzi 1997). It shows that Clitic Left Dislocated phrases (henceforth CLLDed XPs), *wh*-phrases and the complementizer *che* ‘that’ in Venetian cannot be correctly linearly ordered under such an account. The alternative I pursue is based on Neeleman & Van de Koot (2006) and assumes that movement is licensed when its outcome feeds a mapping rule between syntax and the information structural component.

Introduction: cartography and transitivity

Cartographic analyses of word order typically translate statements about linear precedence into particular structural configurations. If a phrase α linearly precedes a phrase β , then the specifier hosting α asymmetrically c-commands the specifier hosting β . The ultimate goal of this research program is to arrive at a complete mapping of the clause. In order for it to work, though, transitivity must be respected. This principle states that if α linearly precedes β , and β in turn precedes γ , then α should also precede γ . Given that cartography seeks a complete linear ordering of the clause, transitivity is a cornerstone for any such endeavor. In this paper I discuss a set of data from Venetian in which transitivity breaks down (cf. also Nilsen 2003).

The paradox: a transitivity failure in the Venetian left periphery

Venetian is an obligatorily doubly filled COMP dialect. This means that embedded *wh*-questions always contain the complementizer *che* ‘that’. Moreover, the order is fixed: *che* always follows the *wh*-phrase. This is shown in (1).

- (1) Me domando < * **che** > **chi** < **che** > Nane ga visto al marcà.
me I.ask that who that Nane has seen at.the market
‘I wonder who Nane saw at the market.’ (Venetian)

Secondly, CLLDed XPs obligatorily follow *che* ‘that’ in Venetian:

- (2) Me dispiase <* **a Marco** > **che** < **a Marco** > i ghe gabia ditto cussi.
me is.sorry to Marco that to Marco they to.him have told so
‘I am sorry that they said so to Marco.’ (Venetian)

The data in (1)/(2) provide the ideal testing ground for transitivity: *wh*-phrases obligatorily precede *che* and *che* in turn obligatorily precedes CLLDed XPs. Hence, *wh*-phrases should obligatorily precede CLLDed XPs. This prediction is not met:

- (3) * Me domando **a chi el premio Nobel** che i ghe lo podaria dar.
me I.ask to who the prize Nobel that they to.him it could give
(4) * Me domando **a chi che el premio Nobel** i ghe lo podaria dar.
me I.ask to who that the prize Nobel they to.him it could give
INTENDED: ‘I wonder to whom they could give the Nobel Prize.’ (Venetian)

The data are slightly complicated by the fact that the examples also obligatorily contain the complementizer *che* (cf. supra), but regardless of whether *che* follows (as in (3)) or precedes (as in (4)) the CLLDed XP, the order *wh*-phrase < CLLD is out. What is more, the inverse order *is* allowed:

- (5) Me domando **el premio Nobel a chi** che i ghe lo podaria dar.
me I.ask the prize Nobel to who that they to.him it could give
‘I wonder to whom they could give the Nobel Prize.’ (Venetian)

The data in (1)-(5) form a transitivity failure: *wh* obligatorily precedes *che*, *che* obligatorily precedes CLLD, and yet CLLD in turn obligatorily precedes (rather than follows) *wh*. As cartographic approaches are crucially based on linear orderings that respect transitivity, these data constitute a serious challenge for such a theory.

A non-solution: multiplying positions

In the face of such word order puzzles the cartographic literature often proposes to multiply the positions in which an element can be moved or merged. For example,

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Benincà (2001) suggests that *che* ‘that’ can be merged in several of the Rizzian C°-heads. In (1) and (5) it would spell out a low C°-head (say, Fin°), while in (2) it is merged in a high C°-head (e.g. Force°). This is illustrated in (6).

(6) ... [ForceP *che*₍₂₎ [TopP CLLD Top° [FocP *wh* Foc° [FinP *che*_{(1)/(5)} ...]]]]

Support for this view comes from the phenomenon known as *che*-recursion:

(7) A chërdo **che**, col liber, **ch’** a l’ abia già lesulo

SCL believe that that book that SCL it have already read.it

‘They believe that s/he has already read that book’ (Turinese, Paoli 2003:157)

In this example the CLLDed XP *col liber* ‘that book’ is sandwiched between two complementizers (the higher *che* and the lower *ch’*), exactly as predicted by the structure in (6). The problems with this approach, however, are manifold. Firstly, it vastly overgenerates, allowing structures such as *che wh*, *che wh che*, *che CLLD wh* and *che CLLD wh che*, none of which is attested in any northern Italian dialect. Secondly, it cannot account for the fact that there is no correlation whatsoever between dialects allowing *che*-recursion and dialects displaying the transitivity paradox. Thirdly, the lower *che* in *che*-recursion imposes different morphological restrictions on the embedded verb than the complementizer in (1) and (5). Summing up, multiplying *che* is not an adequate solution for the transitivity puzzle. Moreover, I will show that a similar fate befalls Rizzi’s (1997) account in terms of multiple positions for CLLD, Poletto’s (2000) analysis in which the complementizer undergoes head movement and Nilsen’s (2003) account in terms of scope.

A new approach: flexible landing sites and mapping rules

The alternative I propose is based on Neeleman & Van de Koot (2006). They argue that A’-movement can in principle adjoin to any projection in the structure, as long as the resulting configuration can serve as the input for a mapping rule between syntax and the information structural component. For topicalization the relevant mapping rule can be represented as in (8) (cf. N&VdK’s 2006:6 Comment Mapping Rule).

(8) If XP in [XP [_α ... t_{XP} ...]] is interpreted as topic, then interpret α as comment.

What is crucial about this rule is that it is the sister of the moved element (rather than the moved element itself) that receives new interpretive possibilities as a result of the movement operation. Topicalization serves not to mark the moving element as a topic, but rather the sister of the moved element as comment. What we need to add to this in order to account for the data in (1)-(5) is the assumption that Italian CLLD-movement always marks the smallest propositional unit as comment. In (2) this is the IP, hence there is no reason for *a Marco* ‘to Marco’ to move higher than the complementizer. In (5) on the other hand, the IP is non-propositional, as it contains an unbound variable (the trace of *a chi* ‘to who’) and hence, the CLLDed XP *el premio Nobel* ‘the Nobel prize’ is forced to move past the binder of that variable in order to be able to mark its comment. In other words, the *wh*-phrase forces the CLLDed XP to move higher than it normally would, thus creating the transitivity paradox.

Summary

In this paper I have shown that certain word order phenomena in the Venetian left periphery constitute a problem for cartography and should instead be handled in a non-cartographic, flexible theory of word order and movement. Time permitting, I will also show that the present account makes the correct predictions for long *wh*-movement across CLLD and for multiple CLLD.

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