Exhaustivity and Focus in Gitksan and Medumba

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We present a comparative syntactic and semantic analysis of focus and exhaustivity marking in Gitksan (Tsimshianic) and Medumba (Grassfields Bantu). Two strategies are used to mark the focused constituent: movement to the left periphery, and association with an overt particle. Neither language marks focus prosodically, so foci must be overtly marked using one of these strategies. Exhaustivity is then marked separately.

In Gitksan, a focused constituent must raise to the clause left-peripheral position. Non-exhaustive foci can also be marked with *xsax̲* (1). In Medumba, foci are marked with the H-tone focus particle *á* and remain in-situ (2).

(1) (Xsax̲) **Mary**=hl gya'a-'y.
     (FOC) Mary=CN see-1SG.II

     'I saw **Mary**.'   (Gitksan)

(2) Wàtɛ̀t náʔ-sʷɛn á   Nùŋgɛ̀.
     Wata AUX-sell FOC Nuga

     'Wata betrayed **Nuga**.'   (Medumba)

With regard to exhaustivity marking, the Gitksan exhaustive marker *k̲'am* can only associate with *xsax̲*-marked foci (3). In Medumba, the exclusive particle *ⁿdɔ̀ɔ́ʔ* associates with foci in-situ (4).

(3) K̲'am *(xsax̲) **maa'y**=hl   gub-'y.
     only *(FOC) berries=CN eat-1SG.II

     'I only ate **berries**.'   (Gitksan)

(4) Nùŋgɛ̀ ná-jɥ́n   á   ⁿdɔ̀ɔ́ʔ Wàtɛ̀t
     Nuga AUX-see FOC only   **Watat**

     'Nuga saw only **Watat**.'   (Medumba)

However, a focus-marked constituent raised to the clause left-peripheral position in Medumba is always interpreted as exhaustive (5). Following Keupdjio (in prep), ex-situ foci in Medumba move within the vicinity of a covert exhaustive operator at C where they are interpreted as exhaustive (see also Chierchia et al. (2008)). Consequently, overt exhaustivity marking is predictably incompatible in ex-situ contexts in Medumba (5).

(5) á   (*ⁿdɔ̀ɔ́ʔ) Nùŋgɛ̀ Wàtɛ̀t náàʔ   ⁿ-sʷɛ́ɛ̀n   (í)   lá.
     FOC (*only) Nuga Watat AGR.AUX N-AGR.sell 3SG.H C[-Q]

     'Wata only betrayed **Nuga**.'   (Medumba)

In contrast, we show for Gitksan using exhaustivity tests from É Kiss (1998) that movement alone cannot express exhaustivity. Contrary to previous work (Bicevskis et al. 2017), Gitksan *xsax̲*-marked foci are also non-exhaustive. Exhaustive focus must be marked overtly with *k̲'am*.

In conclusion, both languages make use of movement and particle marking strategies in the expression of focus and exhaustivity. While Gitksan uses both strategies to mark non-exhaustive focus, Medumba makes use of both to mark exhaustivity. We propose that this variation has semantic implications. While particle exhaustivity marking of arguments/adjuncts is possible in both languages, movement-only exhaustivity marking in Medumba is not compatible with functions (both natural and random). As a results, all event-modifying adjuncts (e.g.

wh-questions) and foci are predictably prohibited from ex-situ contexts in Medumba. Further investigation is needed to establishing the difference between unmarked structural focus and *xsax*-marked structural focus in Gitksan.

References

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