SIGNIFICANCE OF PSEUDO-CLEFT CONSTRUCTION IN BURMESE

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Introduction

Burmese is said to be a verb-final language. All complements of a verbal predicate, whether argument or not, precede the predicate. And the predicate is put in clause-final position, with a sentence marker and modifying elements, such as auxiliary particles.

(1) a. maun_maun_   badxu.ˆkou_   yai'-txa-le: ‖
         Mg. Mg.   whom DTH   beat RLS WHQ "Whom did Maung Maung beat?"
    b. maun_maun_   ma.ma.ˆkou_   yai'-pa_ˆte_ ‖
         Mg.Mg.   Ma Ma DTH   beat POL RLS   "Maung Maung beat Ma Ma."

But it is incorrect to say that there is no Burmese sentence without verbal predicates in final position. We can answer to question (1a) by the following non-verb-final sentence, besides verb-final (1b).

(2)   maun_maun_   yai'-ta_   ma.ma.ˆkou_ˆpa_ ‖
         Mg.Mg.   beat NRLS Ma Ma DTH POL
        "It is Ma Ma that Maung Maung beat."

Clause-final position, where *ma.ma.ˆkou_* is placed in (2), is the position for focus, the most important part of information the speaker wants to tell the addressee. It is shown by the fact that (1b), but not (2), can be used for the answer to (3).

(3)   badxu_   ma.ma.ˆkou_   yai'-txa-le: ‖
         who   Ma Ma DTH   beat RLS WHQ   "Who beat Ma Ma?"

In (2), it is presupposed by both the speaker and the hearer that the content of the *-ta_* clause (*-ta_* is a Nominal Clause Marker) preceding the focus element is true. This is why the context (4) leads to contradiction (indicated by !)

(4)   !ma.ma.ˆkou_   yai'-ta_   maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖   da_ˆpei_me.   ma.ma.ˆka.
         Ma Ma DTH   beat NRLS   Mg.Mg.   POL   but   Ma Ma SSB
        ayai'   ma-khan_ˆphu: ‖
        beating not suffer NEG
        "It is Maung Maung that beat Ma Ma. But Ma Ma was not beaten."

Thus, we can say that the sentence such as (2) has properties as a Pseudo-cleft sentences.

Pseudo-cleft is a marked construction in respect to two points. First, as mentioned above, this construction does not have a verbal predicate in final position. Second, in this construction particular discourse functions, i.e., focus and presupposition, are connected to particular positions in the sentence. Having these properties, Pseudo-cleft construction serves as a test in grammatical studies; we could expect that the research of pseudo-cleft construction would shed light on certain aspects of the grammatical system, the

ones which tend to be neglected when we look only at unmarked sentences. In this paper, I would like to suggest some instances of what the construction tells us about Burmese grammar.

1 The structural analysis of the construction itself
1.1 Equational sentence analysis

　　-*ta_* clauses (and its irrealis counterpart, -*hma_* clauses) have the usage of free-relative, referring to the inanimate Theme argument of the verb.

(5)　　cano_　[txu_　txau'-chin_ˆta_]ˆkou_　we_-pei:-me_ ‖
　　　　I　　he　drink wantˉNRLS DTHˉbuy give IRL
　　　"I will buy what he wants to drink."

Therefore, we can analyze the following pseudo-cleft sentence

(6)　　txu_　txau'-chin_ˆta_　　laphe'ye_ ‖
　　　　he　drink wantˉNRLS　　tea　　"What he wants to drink is some tea."

as an equational sentence made up from a free relative and a focus NP.

(7) a. [txu_　txau'-chin_ˆta_]　　laphe'ye_ ‖
　　b.　what he wants to drink　＝　tea

But this analysis is possible only when the focus NP is interpreted as inanimate Theme argument of the verb. The analysis is unavailable when the focus NP is interpreted as animate Theme, as in (2), or not interpreted as Theme, as in the following examples.

(8)　　txu_　la_　ˆta_　　wun_ji:mya:youn_ˆka.　ˆpa_ ‖
　　　　he　come NRLS Ministers' officeˉfrom POL
　　　"It is from Ministers' office that he came."
(9)　　txu_-ne. cano_　twei.ˆta_　　manei.ga.ˆpa_ ‖
　　　　he　and　I　　meet NRLS　yesterday POL
　　　"It is yesterday that he and I met."
(10)　　khu. txei_-ya.　ˆta_　ˆka. ka: tai' -lou. ‖
　　　　now　dieˉhave to NRLS SSB　car bump because
　　　"It is because he had a traffic accident that he had to die now."

1.2 The analysis via natural informational patterning

　　Not being a free relative, we must interpret -*ta_* clause as an ordinary nominal clause referring to an event or a situation, as is in (11).

(11)　　cano_　[txu_　la_　ˆta_]ˆkou_　txi. ˆte_ ‖
　　　　I　　he　come NRLS DTHˉknow RLS　　"I know that he came."

Thus we assume that also in the Pseudo-cleft construction -*ta_* clause is an ordinary nominal clause, except having a gap within it. Then we can conclude that this construction consists of a nominal clause with a gap and a focus element – not always being an NP –. The gap functions as a variable X in presupposition, and the focus element specifies the value of X.

(12)a. [txu_　　　　　__　　　la_ˆta_]　wun_ji:mya:youn_ˆka.
　　b.　(he) came from the place X　X = Ministers' office
　　　　　　　PRESUPPOSITION　　　　　　　　FOCUS

Because a presupposition is old information with the propositional content and a focus is new information, the order [-*ta_* clause – focus element] directly follows an natural informational flow: first, old information, and then, new information (Fukuchi:1985:29-30).

Note that example (6) above allows both the equational sentence analysis in 1.1 and the analysis via natural informational patterning here. Both analyses are necessary, by the reason not discussed in this paper.

2 Reconsidering equational sentences

When we considered the equational sentence analysis of Pseudo-cleft construction in chapter 1, we treated equational sentences as a discrete construction. But given the notion of natural informational patterning, we can say that the case of "equational sentences" also falls within the general case of natural informational patterning.

See examples of ordinary equational sentences.

(13) di_-mein:galei:ˆka. ma.ma.-po. ‖
      this   girl   SSB Ma Ma of course   "Of course this girl is Ma Ma."

(14) txu_ˆka. maun_maun.-nyi_ma.ˆpa ‖
      she SSB Mg.Mg.'s   sister   POL
      "She is Maung Maung's younger sister"

(15) maun_maun_ caun:shaya_-la: ‖
       Mg.Mg.   teacher   QST   "Is Maung Maung a teacher?"

(16) txaun:thu' -ha_ lu_yu: ˆpa_ ‖
      Thaung Htut TOP madman POL   "Thaung Htut is a madman."

(17) maun_maun.-nyi_ma.ˆka. txu_ˆpa_ ‖
       Mg.Mg.'s   sister SSB she POL
      "Maung Maung's younger sister is she."

(18) lu_yu: -ha_ txaun:thu' -pa_ ‖
      madman TOP Thaung Htut POL   "It is Thaung Htut that is a madman."

Okell(1969) characterizes "noun clause" (our equational sentence) as follows.

"A noun clause consists essentially of two noun expressions standing in determinative relation to each other, i.e. the second 'determines', or is predicated of the first. The first noun expression is the subject and the second the determinant ..."(Okell:1969:177)

But the meaning of the word "'determines'" is so vague, and in the presence of pairs (14)-(17) and (16)-(18) the expression "is predicated of" seems inadequate. For example, in (16) *lu_yu:* would be predicated of *txaun:thu'*, and in (18) *txaun:thu'* would be predicated of *lu_yu:*, seeming inconsistent.

Both (16) and (18) mean that the individual Thaung Htut is a member of the set of madmen, hence we should regard that *lu_yu:* is predicated of *txaun:thu'* in both sentences. The difference is that in (18), but not (16), it is presupposed that there is at least one (and in fact only one) madman. In this point, the relation of (16) and (18) is the same as that of an ordinary verb sentence and its pseudo-cleft counterpart. These two sentences differ only in respect to which constituent is old information, and which is new. And both sentences conform to natural informational patterning: old information precedes new information.

Thus, we can say that the "equational sentence" is a special case of natural informational patterning. The "equational" interpretation comes out as an unmarked way of interpretation of two succeeding NPs. Then, the difference between two analyses in chapter 1 is reduced to whether the -*ta_* clause

denotes an object or an event.

3 Some consequences on Burmese sentence structure

The problem of Burmese sentence structure, in particular hierarchical structure among constituents, appears not to have been much discussed. In this chapter, I will argue that Pseudo-cleft construction plays an important role in considering Burmese sentence structure.

3.1 The position of sentence modifiers -po./-la: etc.

Burmese has the particles indicating the attitude of speaker toward addressee, such as -po./-la:. We shall call them "sentence modifiers". In non-cleft verb sentences, they seem to be suffixed to sentence or clause markers.

(19)a. txu_ˆtou.   mi:yatha:-ne.   txwa:ˆta_ -po. ‖
         he   PLR   train   by   go NRLS of course
         "Of course they went by train."
    b. txu_ˆtou.   mi:yatha:-ne.   txwa:ˆtxa-la: ‖
                                    RLS QST   "Did they go by train?"

But it is incorrect to say that the particles are attached to these markers wherever they occur. In fact, the particles are always "suffixed to the last expression in a sentence" (Okell:1969:196). The following example of a Pseudo-cleft sentence makes the point clear.

(20)   txu_ˆtou.   txwa:ˆta_   mi:yatha:-ne.-po. ‖
         he PLR   go NRLS   train   by of course
        "Of course it is by train that they went."

If -po. is suffixed to the nominal clause marker -ta_, the sentence breaks here.

(21)   txu_ˆtou.   txwa:ˆta_-po. ‖   mi:yatha:-ne.-lei_ ‖
                                       ASSURANCE
        "Of course they went -- by train."

Okell(1969) calls these particles "Sentence-final postpositions". But their status in the sentence structure has remained open. Here we shall consider it.
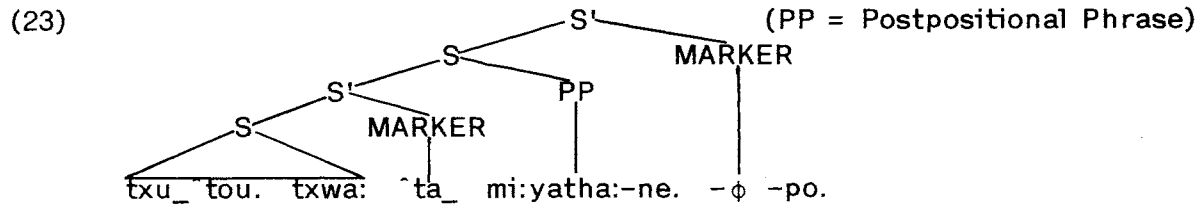It is obvious that verb-final sentences have the following structure.

(22)   S' → S MARKER

S consists of a verbal predicate with complements, roughly corresponding to the propositional content of the sentence. MARKERs are sentence or clause markers, such as -te_/-ta_/-txa etc. S is not an autonomous unit. Only when it is combined with a MARKER and forms S', it become autonomous.
Now we can say that the elements modifying S (or S') are attached to the marker immediately dominated by S'. From (19)(20), we can say that sentence modifiers can attached to the markers of independent S', but not to those of dependent S'.
We must generalize the above consideration so as to cope with non-verb-final sentences. Thus we can assume that non-verb-final sentences also have the structure (22). In Pseudo-cleft sentences, S consists of a presuppositional clause and a focus element, and MARKER is phonologically null, having only such features as [independent sentence], [dependent clause] etc. Then, the structure

of (20) is as follows. (The details of internal structure of -*ta_* clause is omitted.)

(23)

```
                              S'
                      S              MARKER        (PP = Postpositional Phrase)
              S'          PP              |
          S       MARKER    |             |
       txu_ tou. txwa:  ^ta_  mi:yatha:-ne.  -ɸ -po.
```

3.2 The position of topic marker -*ha_* and the status of subject

Burmese is regarded as a "free word order language". So, we cannot determine whether Burmese has a Subject + VP structure or not from the word order alone. But the observation of topic marker -*ha_* gives us an important clue.

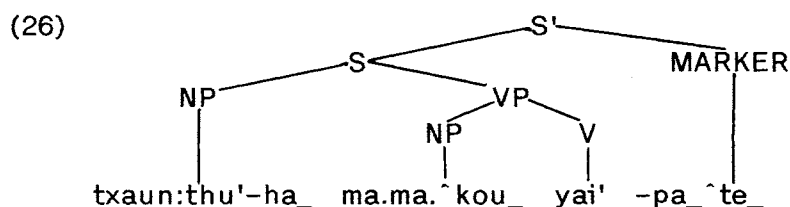In Pseudo-cleft sentences, -*ha_* can be attached only to presuppositional clauses.

(24)a. [txaun:thu'   yai' -ta_]-**ha_**   ma.ma.(^kou_)^pa_ ‖
        Thaung Htut beat NRLS TOP   Ma Ma   DTH POL
        "It is Ma Ma that Thaung Htut beat."
  b. *[ma.ma.^kou_ yai'-ta_]   txaun:thu'-ha_^pa_ ‖
  c. *[txaun:thu'-**ha_** yai'-ta_] ma.ma.(^kou_)^pa_ ‖

The higher S node in Pseudo-cleft sentences obviously has binary-branching: a presuppositional clause and a focus element. Therefore we can say that -*ha_* is attached only to the left branching element of the higher S node.
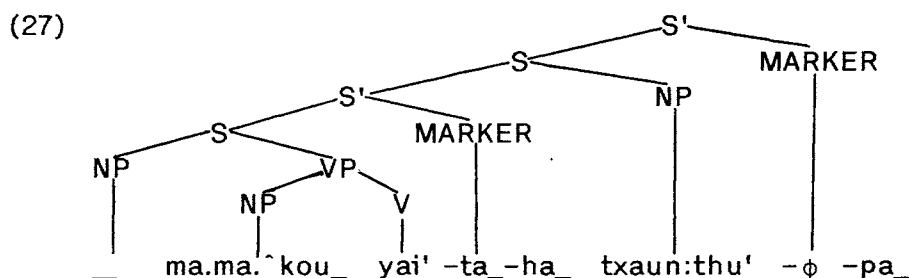
Now turn to ordinary verb-final sentences. Also in this case, there is only one element, generally called Subject, to which -*ha_* can be attached per sentence.

(25)a. txaun:thu' -**ha_** ma.ma.^kou_   yai'-te_ ‖
        Thaung Htut TOP Ma Ma DTH   beat RLS "Thaung Htut beat Ma Ma."
  b. *ma.ma.-**ha_** txaun:thu'(-ka.) yai'-te_ ‖

Thus, parallel with Pseudo-cleft sentences, we could assume that S of verb-final sentences also has the binary-branching structure: consisting of a Subject and the rest of the sentence, i.e., a Verb Phrase.

(26)

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                              S'
                      S              MARKER
          NP              VP              |
           |          NP       V          |
      txaun:thu'-ha_  ma.ma.^kou_  yai' -pa_^te_
```

Then, the complete structure of the Pseudo-cleft is as follows.

(27)

```
                                      S'
                              S              MARKER
                  S'              NP              |
          S          MARKER        |             |
      NP      VP        |          |             |
       |   NP    V      |          |             |
       _  ma.ma.^kou_  yai' -ta_-ha_  txaun:thu'  -ɸ -pa_
```

3.3 The ellipsis of the presuppositional clause

See the following sentences.

(28) cano_ sa_ou'-ta-ou' we_ˆte_ ‖   --   **maun_txa_ya.-wu'thu.-la:** ‖
      I   book   1 CLS buy RLS   Mg.Thar Ya   novel   QST

      "I bought a book. -- Maung Thar Ya's novel?"

(29) cano_ maun_maun_-ne. twei.ˆte_ ‖   --   **be_-hma_-le:** ‖
      I   Mg.Mg.   with   meet RLS   where at   WHQ

      "I met with Maung Maung -- Where?"

The boldfaced sentences in (28)(29) are incomplete, and may be thought to involve the ellipsis of some constituents. But then, what is the source of them?

Since *-la:/-le:* are sentence modifiers, marking the end of the sentence, the phrases with them must be in final-position. And both *maun_txa_ya.-wuthu.* in (28) and *be_-hma_* in (29) are the foci of the question. Then we can think of the boldfaced sentences in (28)(29) as being made up by the ellipsis of presuppositional clauses from Pseudo-cleft sentences (30)(31), respectively.

(30) (khamya: we_ˆta_) **maun_txa_ya.-wu'thu.-la:** ‖
      you   buy NRLS Mg.Thar Ya   novel QST

      "Is it Maung Thar Ya's novel that you bought?"

(31) (khamya: maun_maun_-ne. twei.ˆta_) **be_-hma_-le:** ‖
      you   Mg.Mg.   with   meet NRLS where at   WHQ

      "Where is it that you met with Maung Maung?"

4 Pseudo-cleft and complement modifiers *-to./-le:* etc.

Burmese has particles such as *-to./-le:* etc., which are attached to complements, including subordinate clauses, and which indicate the role of complements in context. We call them "complement modifiers" tentatively, although the term is not so adequate. (Okell(1969)'s "sentence-medial postposition"). What role each complement modifier indicates has not been well-considered. Those roles must contain discourse functional ones, and if a complement modifier indicates a discourse functional role, we can expect that it enters in interaction with such construction as a Pseudo-cleft.

Complement modifiers are divided into two classes with respect to attachability to the presuppositional clause of the Pseudo-cleft.

(32)a. pyin_txi'hin: che' -ta_ ˆto. maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
      french dish cook NRLS as for Mg.Mg.   POL

      "As for cooking french dishes, it is Maung Maung that cooked them."

   b. pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_-le: maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
                      also

      "It is Maung Maung that also cooked french dishes."

   c. pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_ˆko: maun_maun_-la: ‖
                   as for?   QST

      "As for cooking french dishes, Is it Maung Maung that cooked them?"

   d. *pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_ˆ**phe:**   maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
                   EMP

   e. *pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_ˆ**chi:**(ˆ**phe:**) maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
                   only   EMP

   f. *pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_-**hma.**   maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
                   only

   g. *pyin_txi'hin: che'-ta_ˆ**taun_**   maun_maun_ˆpa_ ‖
                   even

Note here that a presuppositional clause denotes an event, and is not a complement in itself. A complement modifier attachable to presuppositional clauses is the one sensitive to the discourse function of the element it is attached to, whether the element is a complement or not. On the other hand, a complement modifier which cannot be attached to presuppositional clauses is the one which can be attached only to complements.

Further research on the attachability of complement modifiers to elements other than presuppositional clauses, i.e., focus elements or the elements within the presuppositional clause, would make their function clearer.

Conclusion

The contents of each chapter of this paper might be somewhat disparate, and the analyses presented need further consideration. The aim of this paper is only to call the attention to the significance of this construction in grammatical studies. Indeed, there remain many problems on this construction to be solved, including its status in discourse, not discussed in this paper at all.

Acknowledgement

Transcription

Sawada(1992)'s system is adopted in this paper. The characteristic points are as follows: The aspirate series of stop, affricate and fricative take the form of C*h*-, not *h*C-; *tx*- and *dx*- are dental voiceless and voiced stop, respectively; _ marks low-level tone, and -*a* without mark represents atonic syllables; ˆin word -boundary indicates that the voicing of the initial consonant following it occurs.

Abbreviations

CLS	classifier	PLR	plural indicator on nominals
DTH	disambiguated Theme marker	POL	politeness
EMP	emphasis	QST	yes-no question indicator
IRL	sentence marker, irrealis	RLS	sentence marker, realis
NEG	sentence marker, negative	SSB	selective subject marker
	neutralized form	TOP	topicalized subject marker
NRLS	nominal clause marker, realis	WHQ	WH-question indicator

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