Topics in Udmurt

Erika Asztalos (RIL – HAS, ELTE) & Orsolya Tánczos (RIL – HAS)
Claims

• Positions of topical (contextually given) constituents in contemporary Udmurt:

1. initial
2. middle-field
3. postverbal

→ Seemingly three different topic positions
  → One structural topic position for initial and middle topics
  → Postverbal pragmatic topic
Background

• Tánczos (2010):
  - topic-focus articulation
  - topics are
    1. sentence-initial (→ always precede the foci)
    2. recursive

1. recursive

(1) \((\text{top})^* (foc) \text{ comment}\)

(2) \([_{\text{Top}} \text{Terminatorez kinoteatryn } [_{\text{Foc}} \text{SASHA uchkiz]}]\)

  Terminator.ACC movie.INESS Sasha watch.PST.3SG

  ’It was Sasha who watched the Terminator in the movie.’
Pilot Study - Research questions

• In which positions can we find (non-contrastive) topics in the sentence?
• Which structural positions can be associated with them?
• Are these positions recursive?
• And if they are, are topicalized constituents strictly ordered?
• Does Russian have any effect on the topic positions?
Methods

• questionnaire filled out by native speakers of Udmurt in 2016
• grammaticality judgement of different word order variants
• 5-point Likert scale
Relative order of Adv-s and topical constituents

• Structural topics can either follow or precede high Adverbs, e.g., ‘once’:
  TOP ADV TOP ADV Pred

• Structural topics always precede predicate adverbs, e.g., ‘again’:
  *ADV TOP ADV Pred
Results
Position of non-topical subjects

• order of the predicate Adv ‘again’ + non-specific subject:

‘What is new in the hospital?’

(3) a. Bolńicayn tunne noš ik nylpi vordskiz. → Adv – S
     hospital.INE today again child be_born.PST.3SG

b. *Bolńicayn tunne nylpi noš ik vordskiz. → *S
     ‘Today a child was born in the hospital again.’
Initial topics: **specific subjects** and **objects**

- initial topics precede the predicate **Adv** ‘again’:

  ‘How is it going with Daniel and Vera?’

  (4)  **Dañil**  **Verajez**  **noš ik**  **aldaz.**  \[\rightarrow S_{spec} - Adv\]

  Daniel  Vera-ACC  again  cheat_on.PST.3SG
  ‘Daniel has again cheated on Vera.’

→ specific S-s are higher than non-specific ones → topics
→ recursion (S, O)
Initial topics (cont.)

• they can be preceded or followed by high Adv-s:

‘Tell me something interesting about Artjom.’

(5) a. Art’om ogpol Elbruz gureź vyle tubem.
   Artjom once Elbruz mountain onto climb.

   b. Ogpol Art’om Elbruz gureź vyle tubem.
   ‘Once Artjom climbed the Elbruz.’
Initial topics (cont.)

• relative order of $S_T$ and $O_T$:

(6) a. *Dańil Verajez noš ik aldaz.*
    Daniel Vera-ACC again cheat_on.PST.3SG
b. *Verajez Dańil noš ik aldaz.*
    ‘Daniel has cheated on Vera again.’

$\rightarrow$ both are grammatical, but $S_T O_T$ is preferred to $O_T S_T$
Initial topics – interim summary

• specific S-s and O-s can precede the predicate Adv → topics → in Spec,TopP
• iterative projection
• non-rigid order of iterated topics (S_T O_T
  slightly preferred to O_T S_T)
• high Adv-s precede TopP
Syntactic Structure
Middle-field topics

• for some speakers, focus can be sentence-initial (Asztalos–É. Kiss 2016)→ precedes the topics:

‘Where did Sasha invite Mary?’

(7) a. ? Zooparke Saša Mašajez ötiz.
   zoo.ILL Sasha Mary-ACC invite-PST.3SG
b. ? Zooparke Mašajez Saša ötiz.
   zoo.ILL Mary-ACC Sasha invite-PST.3SG

‘Sasha invited Mary TO THE ZOO.’

• recursion
• $S_T O_T$ preferred to $O_T S_T$
Middle-field topics

• sentence-initial Foc in Udmurt: under Russian influence (Asztalos–É. Kiss 2016)

‘What did Jacob bring?’

(8) Posylku Jakov prinos. (Russian)
    parcel-ACC Jacob bring.PST.SG.M

‘Jacob brought A PARCEL.’ (Bailyn 2012: 281)
Are the initial and middle topic fields different?

• if the sentence-initial Foc is in Spec,CP, it precedes TopP
• possibly the same topic position in Spec,TopP
Postverbal topics

• **S**: ‘Victor said that this week, he would be on holiday and go to Sochi but apparently, he stayed here. / You are wrong.’

(9) Zemze no Sočije koškiz **Viktor**.
really PTCL Sochi-ILL go_away.PST.3SG Victor
‘Victor really left for Sochi.’

• **O**: ‘What happened to Lena and Dima?’

(10) L’ena kuštiz **D’imajez**.
Lena throw.PST.3SG Dima-ACC
‘Lena dumped Dima.’
Postverbal topics (cont.)

• more than one topic in postverbal position:

‘Where did Sasha invite Mary?’

(11) a. Zooparke öťiz  
    Saša  Mašajez.
    zoo.ILL  invite-PST.3SG  Sasha  Mary-ACC

b. Zooparke öťiz  
    Mašajez  Saša.
    zoo.ILL  invite-PST.3SG  Mary-ACC  Sasha

‘Sasha invited Mary TO THE ZOO.’

• ! $O_T S_T$ preferred to $S_T O_T$
Cataphoric antecedent

- only elements in topic position can license a cataphoric pronoun (Reinhart 1981):

Hungarian:

(12) a. Bár pro beteg volt, János elment szavazni.
    although ill is.PST.3SG John go.PST.3SG vote-INF
    ‘Although he was ill, John went to vote.’

b. */? Bár pro beteg volt, elment János szavazni.
    although ill is.PST.3SG go.PST.3SG John vote-INF
Postverbal topics: no cataphoric antecedent

(13) a. pro Viśiz ke no, Vladik doryś užze leśtiz.
   be_ill.PST.3SG although Vladik homework.3SG.ACC make.PST.3SG

b. pro Viśiz ke no, doryś užze Vladik leśtiz.
   be_ill.PST.3SG although home work.3SG.ACC Vladik make.PST.3SG

c. * pro Viśiz ke no, doryś užze leśtiz Vladik.
   be_ill.PST.3SG although home work.3SG.ACC make.PST.3SG Vladik

‘Although he was ill, Vladik did his homework.’
Postverbal topics – interim summary

• $O_T S_T$ preferred to $S_T O_T$

• not a structural topic position (cataphoric test)
Derivation of postverbal topics

• in situ object in head-initial VP
+ rightward extrapolposition of the subject
Derivation of postverbal topics

- rightward extraposition of the **subject** and the **object**
Research questions with possible answers

• In which positions can we find (non-contrastive) topics in the sentence?
topical constituents $\rightarrow$ initial, “middle-field”, postverbal positions

• Which structural positions can be associated with them?
initial and middle-field $\rightarrow$ Spec,TopP
postverbal $\rightarrow$ rightward extraposition

• Are these positions recursive?
Recursive

• And if they are, are topicalized constituents strictly ordered?
S and O not strictly ordered

• Does Russian have any effect on the topic positions?
Russian influence: more on the focus than on the topic positions
References


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