

Contrast vs New Information Focus in Floating Clitics in Wakhi

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The goal of this paper is to examine pronominal Almost Wackernagel Clitics (AWC) in the East Iranian, SOV language Wakhi and, based on evidence from my fieldwork, to argue for a contrastive analysis of AWC. Evidence and support for such an analysis in Pamiri Wakhi is a novel contribution to the literature on Wakhi and to the larger dialog on AWC in East Iranian languages. These findings also support for a theory of focus in which the notions of contrast and new information focus are independent of each other (cf. Vallduvi and Vilkuna (1998)).

Almost Wackernagel Clitics (from Erschler 2010) refer to “floating” clitics that descriptively most frequently occur in second position, following the first constituent of the clause (which may be arbitrarily complex and need not be a DP) as in (1), but can also occur elsewhere to the right, as in (2). All recorded Eastern Iranian languages exhibit either Wackernagel clitics or AWC.

- (1) wuz=**əm** bil tə çɪ znax diçt-əj
1SG=1SG.CL shovel in self jaw put-PST
'I put the shovel in my jaw.'
- (2) (a) wuz bil=**əm** tə çɪ znax diçt-əj
(b) wuz bil [_{PP}tə çɪ znax]=**əm** diçt-əj
(c) wuz bil tə çɪ znax diçt-əj=**m**

There are two main approaches to AWC in the literature: syntactic or prosodic. I argue for the former in Wakhi. A syntactic movement account of AWC predicts that clitic movement is subject to syntactic constraints. Evidence from Wakhi is compatible with such an account. The position after any constituent in a clause is a possible site for a Wakhi AWC, as in (2). In addition, clitics cannot cross constituent boundaries, as in (3), or clause boundaries, as in (4). This differs from the predictions made by a purely prosodic account (Irish; Bennett et al. 2013).

- (3) [wuz(*=**nəʃ**) et ja ʃaʃ]=**nəʃ** gefs-tu
1SG and DET sheep=1PL.CL run-PERF
'I and the sheep ran.'
- (4) jem=i ja ðaj(*=**əm**) [_{CP}[kumd-e kitob]=**əm** ki dʒojetk]
this=3SG.CL DET man(=1SG.CL) who-POS book=1SG.CL COMP read.PST
'This is the man whose book I read.'

Having concluded that the clitic placement is subject to syntactic constraints, I hypothesize that the relevant landing sites are positions encoding information structure notions. Such an analysis predicts that AWC placement should be sensitive to discourse and focus effects. Again, evidence from Wakhi is consistent with such predictions. Default clitic placement after the first constituent is indicative of an information-neutral sentence; placement after any constituent further to the right may be associated with a contrastive interpretation (5).

- (5) (a) wuz bil=**əm** tə çɪ znax diçt-əj (=2a)
'I put the shovel in my jaw=**1SG.CL** (rather than my pencil or sword)'
(b) wuz bil [_{PP}tə çɪ znax]=**əm** diçt-əj (=2b)
'I put the shovel [_{PP} in my jaw]=**1SG.CL** (rather than in my arm or leg)'
(c) wuz bil tə çɪ znax diçt-əj=**m** (=2c)
'I put=**1SG.CL** the shovel in my jaw (in the distant past rather than in the recent past or future)'

Each of the above can be equivalently expressed by topicalizing the contrastive element through extraction to the left periphery; in this case the clitic also appears in second position, hosted by the fronted expression, as illustrated in (6):

- (6) (a) bil=**əm** wuz tə çɪ znax diçt-əj (=5a in interpretation)
 (b) [_{PP}tə çɪ znax]=**əm** wuz bil diçt-əj (=5b in interpretation)
 (c) diçt-əj=**m** wuz bil tə çɪ znax (=5c in interpretation)

New information focus in Wakhi is expressed through pitch accent and is independent of contrastive interpretation. It is possible for one expression in the sentence to be contrastive and host the clitic, while another bears new information focus (7a). It is also possible for one expression to bear both new information focus (indicated below by all capitals) and a contrastive interpretation, while hosting the clitic (7b).

- (7) (a) What did you put in your jaw?
 BIL=**əm** wuz tə çɪ znax diçt-əj
 shovel=1SG.CL 1SG in self jaw put-PST
 'It was the SHOVEL=1SG.CL that I put in my jaw (rather than the pencil or sword)'
 (b) Where did you put the shovel?
 bil=**əm** wuz Tə Çɪ ZNAX diçt-əj
 shovel=1SG.CL 1SG in self jaw put-PST
 'I put the shovel=1SG.CL IN MY JAW (rather than the pencil or sword)'

Clitic placement in Wakhi is thus associated with contrast. A contrastive expression can host the clitic if it is fronted – extracted into the left periphery – in which case the clitic occurs in second position, or it can occur *in situ*. Contrast has been shown above to be independent from (but not mutually exclusive with) new information focus, which is expressed through pitch accent.

Following much of the literature on second position clitics, and based on evidence from my fieldwork, I posit that the clitic is hosted in the head of the CP (although it is generated in vP to ensure agreement with the subject, following Hughes 2011). This CP is dominated in Wakhi by any number of Topic Phrases.

This structure predicts three main logically possible scenarios, all of which are accounted for in the data. **(A)** all TopPs are empty. This occurs when no discourse effects have moved constituents into the left periphery, so the sentence is neutral in terms of information packaging. An empty left periphery leaves nothing for the clitic to attach to, so it lowers to be hosted by the structurally highest constituent. Thus, the clitic surfaces in second-position after the first constituent specifically when the sentence is neutral (recall (1)). **(B)** A contrastive expression is fronted to [Spec,TopP]; the clitic occurs in second position after this contrastive topic. **(C)** There is a contrastive expression in the sentence, but it is not extracted into the left periphery. Instead, the clitic lowers onto it. This scenario is the most challenging, and further work is needed to determine the nature of this movement. In all cases, new information focus is assigned independently.

This paper provides ample support for a contrastive account of AWC in Wakhi, sketching a possible version of this account. This is a novel contribution to the literature on Wakhi and suggests a possible similar line of research at the interface of syntax and focus semantics for other East Iranian languages with AWC. It is also substantial evidence in favor of a theory of focus that maintains independent concepts of contrast and new information focus.

References: **Bennett**, Ryan, Emily Elfner, and Jim McCloskey. 2013. Lightest to Right: An Apparently Anomalous Displacement in Irish. *Linguistic Inquiry*. **Erschler**, David. 2010. On optionality in grammar: The case of East Iranian almost Wackernagel clitics. Handout from *Syntax of the World's Languages IV*. **Wackernagel**, Jacob. 1892. 'Über ein Gesetz der indogermanischen Wortstellung', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 1, 333–436. **Vallduvi**, Enric and Maria Vilkuna. 1998. On Rheme and Kontrast. In P. Culiver and L. McNally (eds), *Syntax and Semantics* 29, *The Limits of Syntax* : 79 - 108.