

## Frequency of overt NP orders in selected Pahka'anil (Tübatulabal) narratives

Pahka'anil (exonym Tübatulabal, ISO code [tub]) is a Uto-Aztecan language spoken in Kern County, California. In its grammar, there is only a comment and footnote concerning the topic of word order that it "is stylistic rather than obligatory" (Voegelin 1935a: 151, 185). However, this study investigates the role of overt NP in describing the most frequent word order (particularly in transitive main clauses) and its motivating discursive and pragmatic phenomena.

Word order can be viewed through information structure: how clausal arguments are positioned according to the knowledge of the audience, and what type of discursive knowledge that are attributed to these arguments (Lambrecht 1994). Specifically, the type of information are categorized by their longevity in discourse: New marks information that has not been mentioned before, and conversely, Old marks familiar information (Chafe 1987). These labels are recontextualized with predictability in discourse: Topic describes a predictable proposition (Old), and Comment describes an unpredictable proposition (New) (Chafe 1987, Lambrecht 1994). Topic and Comment can be reorganized with discursive techniques such as topic shift (a proposition that is not the previous Topic is uttered first) and newsworthiness (the ordering of the same type of information) (Mithun 1992).

Using fourteen texts from Voegelin (1935b) and an additional text, all of which are controlled for author gender (male), word order frequencies were collected from 855 clauses containing one or two overt NPs. Clauses with nominalized verbs, relativizers, and quotations were counted in the total but not word order. Concerning one overt NP, subjects before verbs (SV: 14.3%) and objects after verbs (VO: 4.7%) are more prevalent than their counterparts. Regarding clauses with two overt NPs, SVO is most frequent (3.9%). A chi-square test for independence revealed a statistically significant association between grammatical relation and position from the verb in transitive main clauses ( $\chi^2(1, 108)=33.903, p<0.001, \phi=0.579$  [large effect size]).

Topic-Comment is the preferred information structure with discursive and pragmatic pressures primarily from information separation, newsworthiness, and topic shift. Given two overt NPs in a clause, the newer referent tends to be placed earlier, and the older referent tends to be placed later (Mithun 1992). The large effect size from the statistical test suggests a strong motivation for SVO, for which this study argues to be because of discourse age.

This differs from the preferred Comment-Topic order of other Uto-Aztecan languages, Papago and Ute (Payne 1987, Givón 1983). Since Ute and Pahka'anil are members of the Northern Uto-Aztecan group, a question arises of the possible reasons for the differing word orders. In addition with confirming consistent results from excluded clauses of this study, the current findings can be compared with previous research exploring ten texts from Voegelin (1935b) to elucidate an overview on Pahka'anil word order so far (Ahland & Lycan 2019).

## References

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