

Selective specifiers and the location of PF information

Some specifier positions appear to be limited by the size of their occupant: they are *size-selective*. Prenominal possessors in German, for instance, cannot be syntactically complex, shown in (1).

- (1) *Marias* / **Dieser Frau* *sorfältige Beschreibung* *Ottos*
M. this woman careful description O.
'Maria's/*this woman's careful description of Otto' Koopman (2014)

Size-selective specifiers raise non-trivial questions for what information the syntax has access to: **is the distinction in size between simplex and complex nominal encoded in the syntax, or in the phonology?** Both approaches have been proposed: Roehrs (2019) argues that prenominal possessors are syntactically reduced in German, with DP allowing only reduced elements in its specifier; while Koopman (2014) suggests that heads may impose certain phonological shape requirements on their specifiers.

More generally, phonological weight could be encoded as a syntactic property (a feature [L]) of certain lexical items (featural size-selectivity) or as a filter on the phonological representation that is derived from the syntactic structure (prosodic size-selectivity). In this talk, I discuss two cases of size-sensitive specifier that suggest that **both notions of size-selectivity are in principle available to the learner**. I show that the two types of size-selective specifiers display distinct profiles in terms of the elements that they allow in their specifier. Syntactically size-selective specifiers may tolerate exceptionally large elements in their specifier, provided the element in question is headed by an [L]-bearing lexical item. Phonologically size-selective specifiers, in contrast, are sensitive to the complexity of elements *within* their specifiers, whose features could not possibly project to the highest maximal projection of the specifier.

Syntactic size-selectivity: Tagalog (Philippines; Austronesian) has a class of clitic elements — pronominals and certain adverbials — which appear in second position in the clause, as shown in (2a); non-pronominal arguments, in contrast, are generally banned from such a position, (2b).

- (2) a. *Hindi siya na-tuto ng wika=ng Instsik*
NEG 3s.NOM AV.BEG-learn GEN language=LNK Chinese
'She didn't learn Chinese.'
- b. **Hindi ang pangulo na-tuto ng wika=ng Instsik*
NEG NOM president AV.BEG-learn GEN language=LNK Chinese
'The president didn't learn Chinese.'
- Kaufman (2010)

While the relative order of these elements appears to be phonologically determined, facts from scope suggest that these elements raise in the syntax to a clause initial position (Richards 2003) and are lowered post-syntactically. Following in particular Erlewine & Levin (2021), I assume that this process involves phrasal movement to a specifier position high in the clause.

This specifier appears to be size-selective: light elements like pronominal clitics may occupy it, but not heavy phrasal elements. This raises the question: is this encoded featurally in the syntax as an [L] feature, or is it the result of a PF-branch filter? Tagalog appears to instantiate a case where this is **encoded featurally, as a syntactic property of the pronoun**. Evidence for this comes from cases of "clitic coercion", as discussed in Billings (2005), Kaufman (2010), shown below.

In (3a), we see that clitic pronouns with a nominal modifier may occupy the clitic position. We expect this straightforwardly if pronouns are an instance of D that often appear without an overt NP complement (Postal 1969 a.m.o.): pronominal D bears [L] in Tagalog, which heads hosting clitics probe for. In (3b), strikingly, we see that a coordinate construction with a clitic pronoun at its left edge may appear in the clitic position. This can be treated as an instance of pied-piping: the pronominal clitic is in a position from which its [L] feature may "percolate up" to the coordinate structure as a whole (see Heck 2008 for an approach to pied-piping along these lines).

- (3) *Hindi sila=ng lima darating* (4) *Hindi ako at si Juan darating*
 NEG 3PL.NOM=LNK five AV.ASP-arrive NEG 1SG.NOM and NOM J. AV.ASP-arrive
 ‘They five won’t arrive.’ ‘Me and John won’t arrive.’ Kaufman (2010)

Both of the cases above would not be accounted for straightforwardly if the specifier to which clitics move were phonologically size-selective. Indeed, we should expect the opposite to hold were Tagalog such a language: the properties of the head of a phrase in a phonological size-selective specifier should be irrelevant for determining if the selective requirement is met. **In the talk**, I discuss how this model could extend to facts about the distribution of types of pronouns following a model like Cardinaletti & Starke (1994).

Phonological size-sensitivity: Bùli (Ghana; Mabia/Gur) has a process of predicate doubling, shown below (see Hiraiwa 2005 for an in-depth discussion of the syntactic properties of his construction, data in this section p.c. Abdul-Razak Sulemana). Here we see two instances of the verb: once, nominalized, in a clause initial position, preceded by the focus particle *ka*, and again in its canonical position. For the sake of concreteness, I follow Hiraiwa in assuming the fronted instance of the predicate to occupy spec,CP.

- (5) *ká dē-kā àtì Àtìm dè mángò-kǔ*
 FOC eat-NML C A. eat.PST mango-DEF
 ‘It’s eating that Atim did to the mango.’

Predicate doubling may pied-pipe an internal argument, as shown in (6). However, the pied-piped argument may not itself be internally complex: modifiers, for instance, may not appear on the internal argument of a doubled predicate, as shown in (7). Note also that the presence of the definite marker *-kǔ* on the pied-piped nominal provides an argument that the nominal has not incorporated into the fronted verb, as it would block adjacency between the head nominal and the verb it putatively incorporates with.

- (6) *ká mángò-kǔ dē-kā àtì Àtìm dè* (7) **ká mángò kpìón dē-kā àtì Àtìm dè*
 FOC mango-DEF eat-NML C A. eat.PST FOC mango big eat-NML C A. eat.PST
 ‘It’s eating the mango that Atim did.’ ‘It’s eating a big mango that Atim did.’

The facts here suggest that this is a **filter on the size of elements that may occupy spec,CP**, rather than the result of C probing for elements bearing [L]. Spec,CP in Bùli allows elements no larger than a minimal ϕ (in the sense of Ito & Mester 2012): only in (6), where the object consists of a single phonological word, is this condition met. In (7), in contrast, the object consists of two phonological words and thus itself constitutes a ϕ : the clefted phrase by definition cannot be a minimal ϕ , since it contains a distinct ϕ .

Bùli has a process of low tone spread (LTS; Akanling-Pare & Kenstowicz 2002) which provides convergent evidence for this proposal: if a low tone is followed by an underlying high tone, the high tone is realized as a raising tone. In (8), where the underlyingly high tone bearing second object, *bí:k*, is adjacent to the low tone bearing first object, *nà:b*, and surfaces with rising tone. Contrast this with (9), where *bí:k* surfaces with high tone. The same linear relationship here holds between *bí:k* and *nà:b*, but the second object consists of two separate words. This follows if LTS applies only within a ϕ , and complex objects in Bùli map to ϕ .

- (8) *Fì tē nà:b bí:k* (9) *Fì tē nà:b [bí:k bīaká]*
 2.SG give.PST chief boy 2.SG give.PST chief boy dog.DEF
 ‘You gave the chief a boy.’ ‘You gave the chief the boy’s dog.’

What we see here contrasts with the Tagalog case: here, the properties of the constituent as a whole, rather than that of its head, are what determine whether it satisfies spec,CP’s selective requirement. **In the talk**, I discuss comparable restrictions on specifier size in predicate fronting in a number of related languages, such as Dagaare (Hiraiwa & Bodomomo 2008) and Ewe (Collins 1994), and their implications for the theory developed here.

Selected references: Akanling-Pare & Kenstowicz “Tone in Bùli” • Erlewine & Levin “Phillippine clitic pronouns and the lower phase edge” • Hiraiwa *Dimensions of symmetry in syntax* • Kaufman *The morphosyntax of Tagalog clitics* • Koopman “Recursion restrictions: Where grammars count”