

Focus without movement or operators: syntax-prosody interface in Georgian

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This paper analyzes the syntax and prosody of focus and wh-questions in Georgian (Kartvelian) and argues that Georgian does not have a dedicated syntactic projection for focus or wh-words. Instead, both foci and wh-words are found in situ, which is motivated by Georgian-specific requirements on prosodic prominence of these elements. All other material is base-generated in peripheral positions. While preverbal placement of focus/wh-words is found in other head-final languages (e.g. Basque, Hungarian, Turkish), we argue that Georgian differs from these languages in the absence of operator movement. These results point to two sets of implications: (i) head-final languages with preverbal focus do not form a homogenous group; (ii) information structure (IS) can be read off minimal syntactic structure, and its analysis does not require dedicated syntactic projections for IS categories.

Syntactic design of Georgian. Georgian is generally head-final, as shown by PPs, possessive expressions, participial relative clauses (RCs), small clauses (SCs), and verb-object idioms. At the same time, CPs and tensed RCs exhibit head-initial order, consistent with the Final-Over-Final Condition [13]. This serves as evidence countering Richards' [9] account of Georgian prosody, built on the idea that Georgian CP is head-final. Both OV and VO orders are found in all-new contexts. SCs, being strictly head-final (1), show that Georgian is underlyingly SOV.

(1) a. Manana [sc Gela-s č'k'vian-ad] tvlis. ([6]: 294)
 Manana.NOM Gela-DAT clever-ADV consider.PRS.3SG
 'Manana considers Gela smart.'

b. *Manana [sc č'k'vian-ad Gela-s] tvlis.

Georgian exhibits no evidence for operator-driven A-bar movement: there is no weak crossover in RCs or root clauses (2), no cross-clausal focus- or wh-movement (3), no island effects (4), and no subextraction out of NPs [5]. Availability of single-pair reading of multiple wh-questions in addition to pair-list reading provides further evidence against wh-movement. The only movement for which there is independent evidence is A-scrambling [1, 7].

(2) Mis-ma_i kmar-ma vin_i aghuc'era Giorgi-s?
 3SG.POSS-ERG husband-ERG who describe.AOR.3SG Giorgi-DAT
 'Whose husband described her to Giorgi?' (lit.: Whom did her husband describe to Giorgi?)

(3) *Vi-s/vin tkva Nino-m [CP (vi-s) unda vuqrot]?
 who-DAT/who.NOM say.AOR.3SG Nino-ERG who-DAT must watch.SUBJ.1PL
 ('Whom did Nino say that we must watch?')

(4) Levani šexvda kal-s [CP romeli-c ra-s at'arebs]?
 Levan.NOM meet.AOR.3SG woman-DAT which-COMP what-DAT wear.PRS.3SG
 'What is x such that L. met the woman who wears x?' (lit: L. met a woman who wears what?)

Properties of focus/wh-words. Georgian foci/wh-words appear in the immediately preverbal position; certain foci, strictly non-contrastive and non-wh (except for echo), can appear in the immediately postverbal position (not discussed in this talk). With few exceptions, focus and wh-words are mutually exclusive (5), which suggests that they occupy the same position within a clause. As a result, intervention effects [3] cannot be tested.

(5) a. ??(Manana-m-ac k'i)_{Foc} (romeli tojina)_{wh} misc-a švil-eb-s?
 Manana-ERG-also yes(=even) which doll.NOM give-AOR.3SG child-PL-DAT
 ('Which doll did even Manana give to the children?')

b. *(Romeli tojina)_{wh} (Mananamac k'i)_{Foc} misca švilebs?

In order to express focus and wh-words in the same utterance, a biclausal structure is needed:

(6) (Romeli ist'oria)_{wh} aris [CP romeli-c (bič'-ma-c k'i)_{Foc} c'aik'itxa]?
 which story.ABS is which-COMP boy-ERG-also yes(=even) read.AOR.3SG
 'Which story did even the boy read?' (lit.: Which was the story [that even the boy read]?)

Unlike in typologically similar Hungarian, *mxolod* 'only' behaves in the same way as *-ac k'i* 'even', (5, 6). Focus can but doesn't have to be interpreted exhaustively [11]; there are no syntactic differences between exhaustive and non-exhaustive foci. Using evidence from scope (7), binding, scalar interpretation of focused numerals, verbal idioms, and language-specific distributional facts, we show that the focus/wh-word stays in its base position.

(7) a. Sam-ze ara-nak'leb bič'i (q'ovel čanta-s)_{Foc} caighebs.
 three-on NEG-less boy.NOM all bag-DAT carry.PRS.3SG

