Word Order Choices, Information Structure and Common Ground in Tagalog

Anja Latrouite
Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf

Languages differ with respect to the way they realize informational structural concepts like topic and focus. There are languages that preferably use passivization to turn an argument into a topic, while others use fronting or inversion structures. Similarly, there are languages that happily realize focus in situ, while others exhibit *ex-situ* focus only (cf. Skopeteas & Fanselow 2010). For these languages focus is not a sufficient condition for triggering the related syntactic reordering. In this talk I take a close look at Tagalog, a verb-initial language well-known for allowing for different kinds of diatheses as well as different kinds of fronting/inversion constructions and alternating post-verbal word orders. For Tagalog the selection of voice forms as well as of inversion constructions and post-verbal reorderings is often related to information structural choices and functions. However, up to date corpus studies showing when and how these different constructions are used are missing. Five different types of inversions have been proposed for Tagalog in the literature (cf. Schachter & Otanes 1972). Descriptions of and labels for the constructions vary from author to author. Often we find listed an identificational focus or argument narrow focus construction for subjects, a contrastive or oblique narrow focus construction for non-subjects, adverbial inversion with an unclear information-structural function as well as two types of inversion - with and without *ay* - in which the preverbal constituent is sometimes characterized as a frame-setting topic, sometimes as a contrastive topic. While notions like topic, focus and contrast are happily used to characterize these constructions, it is in no way clear in which contexts these marked constructions are chosen and licensed in texts and conversations. Without such an account it is not possible to say with precision in what ways syntactic positions and information structural concepts correlate in a language.

In this talk I give a first overview of a corpus study - based on a novel and a number of chosen newspaper articles - showing which constructions we find, how often and in what contexts we find them, and in how far they can be consistently matched with the information structural concepts that have been proposed. The goal of this study is to describe the interaction of discourse-related principles with the output of syntactic rules, with a special focus on the role and modelling of the Common Ground.

References:

Guzman-Lingat, Rosario de. 2008. *Kung wala na ang tag-araw.* Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Schachter, P. & F. Otanes. 1972. *Tagalog reference grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Skopeteas, Stavros & Gisbert Fanselow. 2010. Focus types and argument asymmetries. In: *Contrastive information structure*. Breul C, Göbbel E (eds); Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins: 169-197