Condition C in Nuu-chah-nulth
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GOAL:
- a preliminary investigation of Binding Condition C effects in Nuu-chah-nulth – or rather, the lack of them.

1. Background: relevant properties of Nuu-chah-nulth (NCN) syntax

1.1 Partial head marking

- subject arguments are freely omissible

(1) a. ńaatsičikitiš Kyle kinłümce
     see-PERF-PST-3.IND Kyle sea.anenome
     Kyle saw a sea anenome.  

(2) IP (=1b)
    
    DP
    \[ pro ]
    I‘
    \[ I ]
    \[ VP ]
    \[ \[3.IND\] ]
    \[ V \]
    \[ DP \]
    \[ ńaatsičikitiš \]
    \[ “see” \]
    \[ kinłümce \]
    \[ “sea anenome” \]

- rich subject inflection licenses a null pronominal (pro) as subject.

(2) a. ńaatsičikitiš Kyle kinłümce
     see-PERF-PST-3.IND Kyle sea.anenome
     Kyle saw a sea anenome.  

(3) a. maakukʷiš čupčupšumř buy-PST-3.Q sweater
    Did he buy a sweater?  

   (context: you see a man holding a sweater)

   b. * maakukʷiš
       buy-PST-3.Q
       Did he buy it?  

   (context: you see a man holding a sweater)

1.2 Word order


(4) a. ńuuʔbášiš Mary ńiʔn̕iƛ
     see-PST-1sg.IND Mary see
     Mary went to get dogs.  

   (Ahousaht)

   b. * ńuuʔbášiš
       Mary ńiʔn̕iƛ
       Mary went to get dogs.  

   (Ahousaht)

- In DPs, either either possessum-possessee or possessee-possessum order is possible (though the former is preferred by many speakers, cf. Ravinski in prep):

(5) a. ńačuu’áʔitač ńum̕iʔsak
     see-PST-1sg.IND mother-POSS
     Christine I saw Christine’s mother.  

   (Ucluelet)

   b. ńačuu’áʔitač Christine ńum̕iʔsak
       see-PST-1sg.IND
       I saw Christine’s mother.  

   (Ucluelet)

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stacked possessives are possible:

(6) ʔuus̕ʷəpaɬ  písəpišukʷə [ʔumʔiqəsk Florence]  
lake-1sg.IND  cat-POSS-3.POS mother  Florence  
I like Florence’s mom’s cat. (Ucluelet)

(7) ʔuus̕ʷəpaɬ [Florence ʔumʔiqəsk]  písəpišukʷə  
lake-1sg.IND Florence mother  cat-POSS-3.POS  
I like Florence’s mom’s cat. (Ucluelet)

the possessor and possessum may not form a discontinuous constituent:

(8) * ʔuus̕ʷəpaɬ Florence  písəpišukʷə ʔumʔiqəsk  
lake-1sg.IND Florence cat-POSS-3.PS mother  
[intended: I like Florence’s mom’s cat.] (Ucluelet)

(9) * ʔuus̕ʷəpaɬ ʔumʔiqəsk  písəpišukʷə Florence  
lake-1sg.IND mother cat-POSS-3.PS Florence  
[intended: I like Florence’s mom’s cat.] (Ucluelet)

1.3. Structural asymmetries

- NCN shows the following subject-object asymmetries (see references for details):

(i) Only DPs in object position may act as the source of incorporation 
(Yiu and Stonham 2000, Davis and Sawai 2001, Wojdak 2003a, b)

(10) a. haaʔumʔiqəskəs̕is  ṭuus̕ʷis̕  
food-go.get+[L]-3.IND father  
Father went to get food. (Ahousaht)

b. * ṭuus̕ʷis̕-ʔumʔiqəskəs̕is  ṭuuʔum  
father-go.get+[L]-3.IND food  
Father went to get food. (Ahousaht)

(ii) Only DPs in subject position may serve as the source of possessor 
raising (Davidson 2002, Ravinski in prep)

(11) a. hinkʷaʔiʔiʔit̕ʔis̕  pisiʔpişi  maamaatəq̕is̕  
chase-PST-3.IND cat  bird-POSS-1sg.PS  
A cat was chasing my bird.

b. hinkʷaʔiʔiʔit̕ʔis̕  písəpišukʷəs̕  maamaatəq̕is̕  
chase-PST-3.IND cat-POSS-1sg.PS bird  
My cat was after a bird.

c. hinkʷaʔiʔuksiš  písəpişi  maamaatəq̕is̕  
chase-POSS-3.IND cat  bird  
My cat was after a bird. 
(unavailable interpretation: A cat was chasing my bird.)

- At least (i) must be defined in configurational terms, since part of a DP 
object DP may be incorporated (Rose 1981):

(12) a. čuus̕čiʔaqəs̕is̕  Louis  šuwiš  
ʃu-ʃaʔa-s̕is̕  Louis  šuwiš  
new-ʃoʃe+[R]-3.IND shoes  
Louis lost a brand new pair of shoes. (Ahousaht; incorporation)

b. ʔuus̕čiʔəsqəs̕is̕  Louis  čuus̕ək  šuwiš  
ʔu-ʃaʔa-s̕is̕  Louis  šuwiš  
new-ʃoʃe+[R]-3.IND shoes  
Louis lost a brand new pair of shoes. (Ahousaht; no incorporation)

2. Condition C

- Condition C of the Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981) expresses the 
generalization that referring expressions (names) cannot normally be 
referentially dependent.

the standard formulation is that of Chomsky (1981):

(13) Condition C  
R-expressions must not be A-bound.

(14) αA-binds β iff 
  a. α is in an argument position, and  
  b. α c-commands β, and  
  c. α and β are co-indexed.
Condition C effects in English:

(15) **Clausal complement:**

a. Christine, said that she went to Tofino.
b. * She, said that Christine went to Tofino.

Adjunct clause:

c. Christine, will be happy if she wins the lottery.
d. * She will be happy if Christine wins the lottery.

Relative clause:

e. Christine, visited the man that she is going to marry.
f. * She, visited the man that Christine is going to marry.

Possessor:

g. Christine, visited her, fiance.
h. * She, visited Christine’s fiance.

3. Contexts where Condition C is apparently violated in NCN

3.1. Clausal complements

- **Ahousaht dialect:**

(16) a. wawaʔaʔs Christine ?en čatšikwííʔas sapniiʔamíičik say-3.IND Christine COMP push-gonna bread tomorrow Christine, said that she’s gonna knead bread tomorrow.
b. wawaʔaʔs ?en čatšikwííʔas(huk) Christine sapniiʔamíičik say-3.IND COMP push-PERF-gonna-(3.ABS) Christine bread tomorrow Christine is saying that she is gonna knead bread tomorrow.  

(literally: She is saying that Christine, s gonna knead bread tomorrow.)

- **Ucluelet dialect:**

(17) a. wawaama Lucy ?anič paapaqaqxiı̨íiʔiíʔas ?amíičik say-3.IND Lucy COMP-3.C bread-make-about.to tomorrow Lucy, said she, is going to bake yeast bread tomorrow.

3.2. Adjunct clauses

- **Ahousaht dialect:**

(18) a. čimq̓ʔaʔx̌ʔs Christine ?ayipliquu taana happy-FUT-3.IND Christine lots-receive-3.COND money Christine, will be happy if she gets a lot of money.
b. čimq̓ʔaʔx̌ʔs ?ayipliquu taana happy-FUT-3.IND Christine lots-receive-3.COND money Christine will be happy if she gets lots of money.

(literally: She, will be happy if Christine, gets a lot of money.)

- **Ucluelet dialect:**

(19) a. čimq̓ʔaʔx̌ma Jim ?ayipliquu taana happy-FUT-3.IND Jim lots-receive-3.COND money Jim, is going to be happy if he gets lots of money.
b. čimq̓ʔaʔx̌ma ?ayipliquu taana happy-FUT-3.IND Jim lots-receive-3.COND money Jim is going to be happy if he gets a lot of money.

(literally: He, will be happy if Jim, gets a lot of money.)

3.3. Relative clauses

- **headless relative clause in the Ahousaht dialect:**

(20) a. ńaatsičiʔitís? Christine yaaʔx̌ʔitii hinii ńačaar’yák see-PST-3.IND Christine REL-do.to-3.REL give book Christine, saw the one she, handed over a book to.
b. ńaatsičiʔitís? yaaʔx̌ʔitii Christine hinii ńačaar’yák see-PST-3.IND REL-do.to-3.REL Christine give book Christine saw the person that she gave a book to.

(literally: She, saw the one that Christine, gave a book to.)
headless relative clause in the Ucluelet dialect:

(21)  a.  ḳaatsičiʔitma Christine yaqʷiʔitiʔi hiniʔi ḳaacatqʷak
       see-PST-3.IND Christine REL-do.to-3 give book
       Christine saw the one she handed over a book to.

       b.  ḳaatsičiʔ-šitma Christine yaqʷiʔitiʔi hiniʔi ḳaacatqʷak
           see-PST-3.IND REL-do.to-3 Christine give book
           Christine saw the one she handed over a book to.
           (literally: She saw the one Christine handed over a book to.)

note: Condition C effects in headed relative clauses have been more difficult
to elicit
the nominal that would potentially be interpreted as the head of the relative
clause is instead typically treated as the subject of the matrix clause.

headed relative clause in the Ucluelet dialect:

(22)  a.  ḷaɕuʔar-ʃeʔin Lucy čaqup-ʔi yaqʷiʔitiʔi
       see-3.QUOT Lucy man-DET REL-do.to-3.REL give book
       Lucy, seen the guy she gave a book to.

       b.  ḷaɕuʔar-ʃeʔin čaqup-ʔi yaqʷiʔitiʔi Lucy hiniʔi ḳaacatqʷak
           see-3.QUOT man-DET REL-do.to-3.REL Lucy give book
           The guy saw the one that Lucy gave a book to.
           * She, saw the guy that Lucy gave a book to.

3.4. Possessives

preliminary results show that that Condition C appears to be violated in
Nuu-chah-nulth possessives (based on tests developed by Davis (1993))

(23)  kʷaʔatqʰ-ay-ap-šiʔ [ʔuʃʰyums-uk Christine] kʷaʔaṣaʔus-uk
       Christine’s relative broke her chair into pieces.
       (Ucluelet)

       a.  kʷaʔatqʰ-ay-ap-šiʔ [ʔuʃʰyums-uk Christine] kʷaʔaṣaʔus-uk
           Christine broke her relative’s chair into pieces.
           (Ucluelet)

       b.  kʷaʔatqʰ-ay-ap-šiʔ pro [ʔuʃʰyums-uk Christine] kʷaʔaṣaʔus-uk
           Christine broke her relative’s chair into pieces.
           (Ucluelet)

the Condition C-violating interpretation is (23/24b).

given the ban on discontinuous constituents in possessives (see 1.2 above),
an alternative interpretation of (23/24b) with no antecedent pro is not possible.

4. Contexts where Condition C is apparently satisfied in NCN

between co-arguments(name):

(25)  ḷaɕuʔariʔweʔin Christine see-PST-3.QUOT Christine
       She, saw Christinei.
       (Ucluelet)

between co-arguments (variable, i.e. strong cross-over)

(26)  ḵaʔaʔatʰiʔa
       who-aux-3.Q like
       Whoi,j does he, like?
       (Ucluelet)

Q:  ḵaʔaʔatʰiʔa
    who-dream of-PST-3.Q
A:  yaa Ḹuʔcuʔmeʔi
    DEIC woman-DET
    That woman.

Can the answer mean:

a.  Someone dreamt about that woman.  YES
b.  That woman dreamt about herself.  NO

(27)  ḵaʔaʔatʰiʔa
       who-aux-3.Q like
    Whoi,j does he, like?
    (Ucluelet)
Q: ʔača-číʔ- xa ʔušk*ap  
who-aux-3.Q like

A: yaa ḥučme-ʔi  
DEIC woman-DET  
That woman.

Can the answer mean:  
a. Someone likes that woman, YES  
b. That woman likes herself, NO

BUT: these could all be cases of Condition B violations, under Reinhart and Reuland’s (1993) version of the Binding Theory.

- Condition B violations are induced by reflexive uses of predicates which are not reflexive-marked. This means that Condition C is generally not testable between co-arguments.

- It is impossible to check for strong crossover inter-clausally, because A’-movement in NCN is generally strictly clause-bound (Davis and Sawai 2001).

5. Summary

- Condition C with R-expressions (names) is systematically violated in NCN in every context where it is possible to test its effects.

- It is impossible to tell whether Condition C is respected with variables, due to independent restrictions on A’-movement and the possibility of reinterpreting intra-clausal Condition C effects as Condition B violations.

6. Preliminary analysis

- three possible strategies to deal with cross-linguistic variation in the application of Condition C:

  (i) keep Condition C constant, and account for the variation via differences in configurationality (Jelinek and Demers 1994 on Salish, Baker 1996 on Mohawk, Russell and Reinholtz 1995 on Cree).

  (ii) keep Condition C constant, and account for variation via differences in the binding properties of names (Lee 2003 on Zapotec and Thai).

  (iii) allow limited variation in the domain of Condition C itself.

- evidence against variation in configurationality:
  ◊ in order to avoid being bound i.e., c-commanded by a coindexed antecedent in an A-position, all Condition C-violating DPs must occupy or be contained in constituents occupying adjunct positions above the position of the potential (A-)binder.

  ◊ in the case of NCN, this means all subordinate clauses and all DPs must then occupy adjunct positions.

  ◊ but, to the extent that e.g. subject-object asymmetries depend on hierarchical structure (see 1.3.) this kind of configuration will fail to account for other properties of NCN syntax.

- evidence against variation in the binding properties of names:
  ◊ under the analysis of Zapotec and Thai proposed by Lee, names and pronouns can optionally be interpreted as locally bound variables (essentially, as reflexives).

  ◊ Condition C violations of this type typically involve two co-indexed names (or pronouns)

  ◊ but these are ungrammatical in NCN:

(27) a.  wawaamitma Jim ḥanič nanaʔaqaq  
say-PST-3.IND Jim COMP-3.C smart-very  
Jim, said he, is very well-educated.  (Ucluelet)

b.  wawaamitma ḥanič Jim nanaʔaqaq  
say-PST-3.IND COMP-3.C Jim smart-very  
Jim said he is very well-educated.  (Ucluelet)  
(literally: He, said Jim, is very well-educated.)

c. * wawaamitma Jim ḥanič Jim nanaʔaqaq  
say-PST-3.IND Jim COMP-3 Jim smart-very  
Jim, said that Jim, is very educated.  (Ucluelet)  
(consultant’s comment: “Is there two Jims? (laughing)”)

• evidence against variation in Principle P:

◊ none so far. But a number of issues:

◊ hard to tell bound variable anphora apart from coreference in NCN, (unlike in Salish, where the two are clearly separable: Demirdache 1997).

◊ no data yet on intersentential ‘Principle P’ (precedence) violations. (Salish has them: Davis 2003).

→ if NCN, like Salish, turns out to be a Principle P violating language, then obvious questions arise as to why such a rare phenomenon should crop up in two neighbouring but unrelated sets of Northwestern languages.

→ Two possibilities:

(i) it relates to syntax (via predicate-initial order: Davis 2003)

(ii) it relates to information structure

• If possibility (i) is correct, this kind of Condition C violation should be a characteristic of predicate initial languages.

• If possibility (ii) is correct, then the topic-subject mapping will be criterial for Condition C violations.

• One important lacuna in our NCN data is Condition C violating cases with the bound R-expression in an object rather than an (embedded) subject position. These should be helpful in elucidating (ii).

Selected References


Woo, Florence. 2004. Recent research on Nuu-chah-nulth syntax: word order. Ms., UCSC.