Focus and Judgment Type in San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec[*]

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Overview

San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec (SLQZ), an Otomanguean language spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico, allows a choice between two aspects to express future events: the IRREALIS and the DEFINITE. Use of the Definite aspect (2) implies stronger speaker belief that an event will take place than use of the Irrealis (1); the emphatic reading given to Definite-marked verbs (expressed in the gloss in (2)) accounts for why this has been called the Definite aspect: [1]
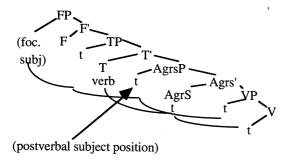
(1) **I**-to'oh Gyeihlly ca'rr   (2) **S**-to'oh Gyeihlly ca'rr
      irr-sell Mike   car   **def**-sell Mike   car
     'Mike will sell the car'   'Mike will (definitely) sell the car'

SLQZ is a VSO language that also allows SVO word order. Subject fronting results in a contrastive focus reading of the subject. SVO word order is freely allowed in sentences with Irrealis verbs (3) but disallowed in sentences with Definite verbs (4):

(3) Gyeihlly **i**-ta'z Lieeb   (4) *Gyeihlly **s**-ta'z Lieeb
     Mike   **irr**-hit Felipe   Mike   **def**-hit Felipe
    'MIKE will hit Felipe'   'Mike will definitely hit Felipe'
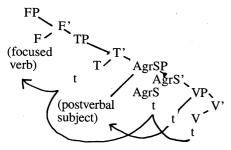
In this paper, I will propose that the differing word order constraints are due to a difference in speaker perception expressed by the two aspects. Sentences with preverbal, focused subjects are used to express a speaker's judgment that the subject is particularly salient in the discourse. Thus, such sentences represent CATEGORICAL judgments. In contrast, the emphatic future readings denoted by Definite verbs express a speaker's judgment that the existence of the event itself, rather than its participants, is especially salient. Thus, sentences with Definite aspect are used to express THETIC judgments. These notions will be explicitly defined below.

This different perceptual judgments expressed by sentences with focused subjects on one hand and Definite verbs on the other are reflected in the syntax of SLQZ in the following way: Irrealis verbs, which allow constituents to raise to the preverbal focus position, remain in the head of TP, as seen in the tree below:

(postverbal subject position)

Focused (preverbal) subjects. (Irrelevant projections omitted)

Definite verbs, which assert the existence of an eventuality (and thus represent focus of the predicate) raise to the head of the pre-IP/TP Focus projection. Since thetic judgments are predicated on eventualities rather than individuals, subjects of these constructions are blocked from raising to preverbal Focus or Topic positions:

Focused verb (=Definite aspect construction)

This paper will be structured as follows: First, I will provide an explicit definition of categorical and thetic judgments, as well as some background on how these notions have been previously applied to linguistic theory. Next, I will provide some background on the uses of syntactic focus in SLQZ. I will then draw a correlation between argument focus and categorical judgments on one hand, and verbal focus and thetic judgments on the other. Finally, I will show that these correlations are reinforced by the contrasting interpretation of indefinites in sentences whose verbs are marked with Irrealis and Definite aspect.

Thetic and Categorical Judgments in Syntactic Structure

In his 1972 paper, Kuroda, updating ideas first proposed by Franz Brentano in the nineteenth century, proposes the distinction between thetic and categorical judgments as a means of articulating differences in perception of events that cannot be described in terms of differences in logical interpretation. He gives as an example the difference in speaker perception expressed by active sentences such as *The Greeks defeated the Persians* versus that of their passive counterparts (e.g. *The*

Persians were defeated by the Greeks.) : While both sentences share the same argument structure, the former sentence (potentially) draws attention to the agent, the latter does not.

Kuroda divides such differences in perceptual judgment into two basic types: categorical judgments (in which speaker attention is drawn first to a particular entity in the sentence, then to whether or not the predicate holds true of this entity) and thetic judgments (in which speaker attention is focused on the event itself, rather than on its participants).

These different perceptual judgment types also differ in how they are constructed. Categorical judgments are constructed in two separate stages: first, the recognition of an entity that is to be the subject of predication, and second, affirmation or denial of what the predicate says about this subject. Thus, these have also been called DOUBLE JUDGMENTS.

In contrast, thetic judgments are constructed in a single stage: what Kuroda calls 'the recognition or rejection of material of a judgment'. Thus, thetic judgments have also been called SINGLE JUDGMENTS .

Kuroda further argues that this distinction in perceptual judgment type is reflected in the syntax of Japanese. He notes a contrast in meaning between simple sentences whose subjects are marked with the topic marker *wa* (5) versus those whose subjects are marked with *ga* (6):

(5) Inu **wa** hasitte iru
     'The dog is running' (categorical) (Kuroda 1972)

(6) Inu **ga** hasitte iru
     'A/the dog is running' (thetic) (Kuroda 1972)

By using the topic marker *wa*, the speaker expresses the idea that the dog (which must be a specific dog already entered into the discourse) is the most salient part of the sentence. Thus, Japanese sentences with *wa*-marked arguments represent categorical judgments. In contrast, (6) would be used if a speaker were to see a dog (not necessarily a dog previously known to her) and remark 'a dog is running' (or 'the dog/Fido is running') This thetic reading expresses the idea that the existence of an event that happens to involve a dog, not the dog itself, is particularly salient.

It should be made clear, however, that the notion of subject of a categorical judgment is distinct from that of a syntactic subject, even though subjects of categorical judgments are often syntactic subjects as well, as seen in (5). Kuroda notes that Japanese sentences may appear with *wa*-marked objects, in which case the syntactic object is the subject of a categorical judgment. In such sentences, the object is foregrounded in the discourse, much like raised objects in English passive constructions.

Also, I have deliberately described thetic and categorical judgments as perceptual judgments in order to disambiguate them from the notion of grammaticality judgments. Unless otherwise noted, I will use 'judgment' in this paper to refer to perceptual judgments of the kind described in this section.

Syntactic Focus in SLQZ

Before describing how thetic and categorical judgments are reflected in the syntax of SLQZ, I will briefly describe the operation and usage of syntactic focus in

SLQZ. Focused constituents in SLQZ appear in a preverbal focus position, and generally receive contrastive focus readings:

(7) Zhini' b-ta'z Gyeihlly Lieeb?   (8) Zhini' **Gyeihlly** b-ta'z Lieeb?
    why   perf-hit Mike   Felipe   why   **Mike**   perf-hit Felipe
    'Why did Mike hit Felipe?'   'Why did MIKE hit Felipe?'

I will assume (in the spirit of Rizzi 1995) that the focus features are checked when a focused constituent raises into FocusP, a functional projection above IP/TP.

The focus projection also serves as the landing spot for wh-words in SLQZ. (Wh-movement is obligatory in SLQZ.) This is supported by the fact that wh-questions, with the exception of those with *zhini'* 'why', disallow other focused constituents. This pattern has been noted in other languages in which focus is realized by overt syntactic movement (such as Hungarian (Horvath 1986)).

Answers to argument wh-questions also appear in the focus projection. The answers to both the subject and object argument wh-questions in (9) and (10), for example, are obligatorily preverbal:

(9)
Q. Tu   b-dauhw comieed?
    who perf-eat   food?
    'Who ate the food?'

A1. (La:a:a') **Gyeihlly** (b-dauhw comieed)
     focus   **Mike**   (perf-eat food)
     'Mike did'

A2. #B-dauhw **Gyeihlly** comieed
     perf-eat   **Mike**   food
     'Mike ate the food.'

(10)
Q. Xi   i- to'oh Gyeihlly?
    what irr-sell   Mike
    'What will Mike sell?'

A. **X:-ca'rr Gyeihlly** i-to'oh Gyeihlly
    poss-car Mike   irr-sell Mike
    'Mike will sell his car'

While the second answer to (9), with a postverbal subject, is a grammatical sentence in SLQZ, it is not an appropriate answer to the question 'Who ate the food?' Felicitious answers must appear in the preverbal focus projection.

In contrast, subjects of event wh-questions cannot raise to focus:

(11)
Q. Xi   b-e:e:i'ny Gyeihlly?
    what perf-do   Mike?
    'What did Mike do?

A1. B-zhu:u:u'nny **Gyeihlly** loh Lieeb
    perf-run   **Mike**   from Felipe
    'Mike ditched Felipe'

A2. #**Gyeihlly** b-zhu:u:u'nny loh Lieeb
    Mike   perf-run   from Lieeb
    'Mike ditched Felipe'

In questions such as (11), in which a whole event, rather than a participant in the event, is being questioned, neither the subject nor object may be fronted; rather, the answer must assume canonical VSO form.

Correlations Between Syntactic Focus and Thetic/Categorical Judgments

The contrasting word orders of argument wh-question answers and event wh-question answers can now be correlated with the distinction between thetic and categorical judgments outlined earlier. First, consider the case of argument wh-questions. In these questions, the speaker makes two judgments: one, that an event occurred, and two, that he/she presupposes the existence of a specific participant in the event and wants more information about it. I will thus assume the following:

• Answers to argument wh-questions represent categorical judgments

Focused arguments in SLQZ (such as answers to argument wh-questions) can thus be construed as subjects of categorical judgments .
This raises the question, however, of reconciling the definitions of contrastively focused constituents and subjects of categorical judgments. While subjects of categorical judgments are by definition presupposed entities (thus 'old' information to the speaker), focused constituents are standardly assumed to be new elements in the discourse. How can a focused constituent be 'new' and 'old' information simultaneously?
The answer comes from some formal definitions of contrastive focus (Rooth 1992) and answers to wh-questions (Brennan 1995, Groenendijk and Stokhof 1984, Lee 1994): Contrastively focused arguments and answers to typical (non-rhetorical) argument wh-questions come from sets of presupposed entities. The 'new' information is the exact choice from among that set that makes a proposition true.
As previously noted, answers to event wh-questions such as (11) can only appear in standard VSO form; none of the arguments may be focused. In these cases, the speaker asking the question makes only one judgment: something happened, and he/she wants more information about it. I will thus propose the following:

• Answers to event wh-questions represent thetic judgments

Thus, this section has outlined further semantic correlations between focused arguments and categorical judgments. In the next section, I will show further evidence that focused arguments are subjects of categorical judgments.

Uses of *bu:unny*: Another Correlation Between Argument Focus and Categorical Judgments

Further evidence for a correlation between argument focus and categorical judgments (and postverbal subjects and potentially thetic judgments) comes from the interpretation of the SLQZ noun *bu:unny* 'person/one', as a preverbal and postverbal subject.

Bu:unny has a number of uses in SLQZ. It is often used as a generic term for 'people/person', in which case it appears preverbally:

(12) **Bu:unny** g-auw buhdy, burr   g-auw gyiihzh
    person irr-eat chicken donkey irr-eat grass
    'People/a person will eat chicken, donkeys will eat grass'

It is also used as an impersonal subject, in which case it appears postverbally:

(13) R-u:ally **bu:unny** liebr ira'ta zhih tyenn   g-ahcbe:e'-ru' bu:unny
    hab-read **person** book every day because irr-learn-more person
    'One reads books every day in order to learn more'

My consultant also uses sentences with *bu:unny* subjects to translate English passives, since SLQZ does not have an English-type passive construction. In these cases, *bu:unny* must appear postverbally as well:

(14) R-auhw **bu:unny** buhdy
    hab-eat **person** chicken
    'Chickens are eaten'

Sentences with preverbal *bu:unny* (such as (12)) can only be interpreted as generic statements about people. This is consistent with Kuroda's characterization of generic statements as categorical judgments. Conversely, the postverbal uses of *bu:unny* (impersonal subjects and dummy subjects of passive translations) consistently represent expressions of thetic judgments: in both cases, the eventuality itself (e.g., the reading of books or eating of chickens) is what is salient, rather than any particular participant in the event.

I will note in passing, however, that while preverbal subjects always represent categorical judgments, not all postverbal subjects represent thetic judgments. In SLQZ, as in English, identical (unmarked) forms can be used to express both judgment types. For instance, the English sentence *The dog is running* can be interpreted as expressing either a categorical judgment (as in (5)) or a thetic judgment (as in (6)).

Thus far, then, I have established the following points: First, categorical judgments emphasize a participant in an event and its relation to the predicate. Second, contrastive focus of arguments in SLQZ is realized by movement to a preverbal position. Third, since contrastively focused arguments are marked as particularly salient information, they represent subjects of categorical judgments.

The Definite Aspect and Thetic Readings

Now I return to the Definite aspect and the proposal that it obligatorily represents thetic judgments, and thus disallows preverbal subjects. While a correlation between thetic judgments and postverbal subjects has been noted cross-linguistically (German (Fintel 1993), Spanish (Mejías-Vicandi 1993, Moore 1996)), most of these accounts have posited syntactic subjects in sentences expressing thetic

judgments as occupying lower positions than subjects in sentences expressing categorical judgments. SLQZ differs from these languages in that theticity in sentences with Definite verbs is expressed by raising of the verb, rather than lowering of the subject.

Evidence for the obligatory raising of SLQZ verbs with Definite aspect comes from the fact that they disallow not only preverbal subjects, but other focused elements as well:

(15) Laa:a' izhih   i-to'oh Gyeihlly ca'rr?
     quest tomorrow **irr**-sell Mike   car
     'Will Mike sell the car TOMORROW?'

(16) *Laa:a' izhih   s-to'oh Gyeihlly ca'rr?
     quest tomorrow **def**-sell Mike car
     'Will Mike sell the car TOMORROW?'

This suggests that Definite verbs themselves necessarily raise to higher positions than do verbs with other aspect markers. I thus claim that verbs with Definite aspect raise to Focus. This will account for both their incompatibility with other focused elements and their emphatic future readings.

The emphatic future readings of sentences with Definite-marked verbs are derived in the following way: Following Rooth 1992, I assume focus serves to contrast the focused element from a set of other candidates. Thus, the element checked in the focus projection makes a proposition true, while other elements from the set of possible candidates do not.

When a Definite verb (and its lexical and inflectional features) raises to the focus projection, ALL of its features are contrasted against those of other candidates. Thus, the proposition expressed by the sentence could only be true if all of the verb's features are true. For instance, the proposition expressed in (2) (repeated below) is only true if there is a selling event involving a car and Mike, and this event takes place in the future:

(2) S-to'oh Gyeihlly ca'rr
    def-sell Mike   car
    'Mike will (definitely) sell the car'

Thus, of all the possible events that could happen in the world perceived by the speaker, the only one that MUST happen is the event of Mike selling the car sometime in the future.

In the case of verbal focus, it is not the participants in the event depicted by the verb that are perceived as particularly salient, but the event itself. Thus, sentences with Definite verbs express thetic judgments. The focus on the predicate draws attention to the predicate–and thus, the event it expresses–rather than to the subject or object of the sentence.

Further evidence for the raising of Definite-marked verbs to focus comes from the fact that contrastively focused verbs in other aspects disallow preverbal subjects as well:

(17) B-i:lldy **Gyeihlly** cïity n-gyi'a:a-dya' Gyeihlly
     perf-sing **Mike**   neg subj-dance-neg Mike
     'Mike SANG, not danced'

(18) ***Gyeihlly** b-i:lldy cïity n-gyi'a:a-dya' Gyeihlly
    Mike   perf-sing neg subj-dance-neg Mike
    'Mike SANG, not danced'

This confirms the hypothesis that verbal focus, like argument focus, involves movement to a higher (preverbal) projection. This also reinforces the correlation between verbal focus and the ungrammaticality of preverbal subjects.

    This raises the question of why verbs in aspects other than the Definite receive contrastive focus, rather than emphatic, readings when raised to the focus projection. A possible hint at a solution comes from the following English examples:

    (19)   Mike will SING (not dance)
    (20)   Mike DOES sing

(19), with focal stress on the verb, gives a contrastive focus reading akin to that in (17). (20), with the auxiliary given focal stress, gives the emphatic reading. The crucial difference between these is that in (19), the verb itself is given contrastive focus, while in (20), only the tense and agreement features associated with the verb are given contrastive focus.

    When the verb alone is focused, as in (19), the contrast expressed is between the activity denoted by the focused verb and other possible activities. Focusing of the tense and agreement features of the verb, however, forces the entire event to be focused, since the syntactic subject (via agreement) and temporal matrix of the verb are raised into the focus projection (at LF in English). Thus, it is not simply the activity denoted by the verb that is being focused, but the entire event denoted by the sentence.

    While English allows tense and agreement features to appear separately from verbs (by means of auxiliaries), SLQZ does not have this option. Thus, while English contrastive focus can overtly distinguish the two types of verbal focus in (19) and (20), SLQZ focus movement cannot, since verbs obligatorily carry aspect marking (which also encodes tense features.)

    A possibility I will consider is this: Focus features are generated on heads or XPs, and checked by movement into the Focus projection. When verbs are given contrastive focus interpretations, as in (19), focus features are generated on V. When an emphatic reading results (as in SLQZ sentences with Definite verbs), the focus feature is generated in the Tense/Aspect projections. Definite verbs, which incorporate with Tense and Aspect, are thus forced to raise to the Focus projection as well.

    This section, then, can be summarized as follows: First, verbal focus in SLQZ expresses speaker emphasis on the event being described, rather than its participants. This is consistent with the definition of thetic judgments, which reflect a speaker's attention toward an eventuality, rather than a participant in an event. Thus, sentences with verbal focus in SLQZ reflects thetic judgments.

More Evidence: The Interpretation of Indefinites

    Another feature of constructions expressing thetic judgments, frequently noted in recent literature (Ladusaw 1994, Fintel 1994, Kennelly 1996), is their association with indefinite and weakly quantified subjects. In this section, I will

show that the possible interpretations of indefinite noun subjects in SLQZ clauses with Definite verbs further supports the correlation established between Definite aspect and thetic judgments.

Sentences with Definite aspect disallow specific indefinite readings of bare nouns. This is consistent with Ladusaw's (1994) assertion that weak (non-presupposed) readings of indefinites result from 'existential closure due to the thetic mode of judgment':

(19) Ira'ta' bu:unny ri: jweer nah pehr baall gyaab nnihsgyihah
      all   people go out now but if   falls   rain
      'Everyone is outside now but if it rains

      ngaasy **n-u'uh *z-u'uh**   bu:unny la:a'ny yu'uh
      later **neut-exist/(*def-exist)** people in   house
      later there will be people in the house'

In (19), the people that will be in the house are necessarily coreferential with the people outside, and the sentence in ungrammatical with Definite aspect on the verb *ru' uh* 'exist'.

The Definite form of 'exist' *zu'uh* , however, is allowable in contexts in which the bare noun does not refer to some presupposed entity:

(20) Naahsy ciity tu   n-u'uh   la:a'ny yu'uh ngaisy **z-u'uh**
      now   neg who neut-exist in   house   later **def-exist**
      'There's nobody in the house now, but later there will be

      bu:unny la:a'ny yu'uh
      people in   house
      people in the house'

Bare nouns can occur as subjects of future clauses with either Irrealis or Definite aspect in neutral contexts. In the following cases, for example, no set of people is assumed to exist or not exist:

(21) **Ch**-igueiny   bu:unny bisitaar Sann Luu'c loh beraann
      irr-go.to.do person visit   San Lucas to summer
      'People will visit San Lucas next summer'

(22) **Z**-igueiny   bu:unny bisitaar Sann Luu'c loh beraann
      def-go.to.do   person visit San Lucas   to summer
      'People will visit San Lucas next summer'

In contexts in which the bare noun (*bu:unny*) can only be interpreted as an indefinite group of people, however, only Definite aspect may be used. This is seen in the contrast between grammatical (23) and ungrammatical (24):

(23) Teebag tu ny-a-dya'   wduhbiihahz pehr loh beraann
      neg   who subj-come-neg last.year   but to summer
      Nobody came last year, but this summer,

re:e' **z**-igueiny   bu:unny bisitaar Sann Luu'c
this **def**-go.to.do person   visit San Lucas'
people will visit San Lucas'

(24)   *Teebag tu ny-a-dya'   uuduhbi:ahz pehr loh beraann re:e'
        neg who subj-come-neg last.year   but to   summer this
        'Nobody came last year, but this summer, people

   ch-igueiny bu:unny bisitaar Sann Luu'c
irr-go.to.do person visit   San Lucas
     will visit San Lucas'

Conversely, coreferenced bare noun subjects may not appear with Definite verbs. (This is consistent with Kennelly's (1996) proposal that nonspecificity in Turkish is a reflection of thetic judgments):

(25)   N-u'uh   ra   bu:unny Ba'c
        neut-exist plural person Tlacolula
        'There are people in Tlacolula now'

(26)   Loh beraann re:e'   **chi**guiny   ra   bu:unny bisitaar Sann Luu'c
        to summer this   **irr**-go.to.do plural person visit San Lucas
        'This summer, the people will visit San Lucas'

(27)   # Loh beraann re:e' **zi**guiny ra bu:unny   bisitaar Sann Luu'c
        to summer   this   **def**-do plural person visit   San Lucas
        'This summer, people will visit San Lucas'

        The fact that Definite-marked verbs disallow specific indefinite or corefenced readings of bare nouns is consistent with Ladusaw's and Kennelly's assertion that thetic judgments assign existential readings to their subjects, and thus are incompatible with specific indefinites. The incompatibility of Definite-marked verbs with specific indefinites, then, further supports the claim that Definite-marked verbs express thetic judgments.

Summary

        In this paper, I have accounted for the incompatibility of preverbal subjects with Definite-marked verbs in SLQZ in the following way: First, I showed that preverbal subjects in SLQZ are focused, and represent subjects of categorical judgments. Second, I showed that verbs with Definite aspect raise to Focus themselves, which accounts for their emphatic readings and incompatibility with preverbal subjects. Finally, I showed that sentences with matrix verbs in Definite aspect necessarily express thetic judgments, and verbal focus provides another mechanism for deriving thetic judgments in grammar: by focusing the predicate, attention is drawn to the predicate, and the event it describes, rather than to the subject.

[1] SLQZ aspect markers often have more than allomorph: Irrealis aspect can be marked by *i-*, *ch-*, *l-*, or *gu-* prefixes; Definite aspect appears as either *z-* or *s-*. SLQZ, like other Zapotecan languages, overtly reflects aspect, rather than tense, in its verbal morphology (although certain aspect markers also encode tense features).

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