

Biclausal multidominant syntax of right dislocation

Ka-Fai Yip

Yale University

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1 Introduction

Right dislocation (henceforth RD) refers to the phenomenon that some elements are displaced or “copied” to the right of a sentence, commonly found in colloquial speech.

- (1) a. He’s real smart, **John**.
b. He’s real smart, **John is**.

(Kayne 1994:78)

In Chinese (including **Cantonese** and **Mandarin**), when sentence-final particles (SFPs) are present, the displaced elements must follow the SFPs (Cheung 2009, 2015). The same goes for **Japanese** (Tanaka 2001) and **Korean** (Park and Kim 2009).

(2) $\left[\overbrace{\dots (XP_i) \dots \text{SFP}}^{\text{main chunk}} \overbrace{XP_i}^{\text{RD chunk}} \right]$

(3) Gapped right dislocation (GRD)

a. [_ heoi-zo Meigwok laa3] **Aaming.** [Cantonese, CC]

b. [_ qu-le Meiguo le] **Xiaoming.** [Mandarin, MC]

go-PFV US SFP Ming

‘Ming went to the US.’

RD may also be gapless. In this talk, I only focus on gapped RD.

← But see Yip (2025) for a unified analysis in Chinese.

← The proposal developed here applies to gapless RD as well.

Central question: What is the nature of silence in the RD chunk?

(5) [main chunk YP ZP] SFP [RD chunk XP ~~YP ZP~~]

- ALL major approaches posit there are some syntactic structure unpronounced in the RD chunk.
 - The monoclausal approach: *Movement/Copy Deletion* (Cheung 2009; Lee 2017, 2021; Yip 2020, *i.a.*)
 - The biclausal approach: *Ellipsis/Sluicing* (Cheung 2015; Tang 2015, 2018; Yip 2025)
 - Except rightward movement, which has been shown to be untenable empirically (e.g., Cheung 2009, cf. Tanaka 2001 for JP). (To be discussed at the end)

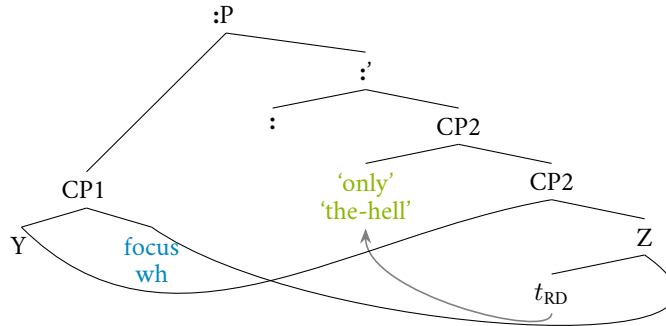
- Today, I will argue that the silence comes from *multidominance*.
- The core arguments come from RD of “only” and “the-hell” expressions:

- (6) [Aaming _ zungji *nibun syu*_F zaa3] **zinghai**. (Obj focus)
 Ming like this book SFP only
 ‘Ming only likes *this book*.’ [CC]
- (7) [_ *Shei* hui lai a] **daodi?** (Wh-Subj)
 who will come SFP the.hell
 ‘Who the hell will come?’ [MC]

Overview of the talk

- I show that focus/*wh*-association requires the RD elements to **c-command** the main chunk “leftward”
- I propose that only a **multidominant** structure of RD can generate this correct **structural relation**
 - The “non-pronunciation” in the RD chunk is a result of “node-sharing”/Parallel Merge (Wilder 1999; Citko 2005; Gračanin-Yuksek 2007, *i.a.*)
 - Movement and sluicing approaches fail to create this c-command relation

(8) A schematic multidominant structure of RD



- I demonstrate that focus/*wh*-association serves as reliable **diagnostic tests** for multidominant structures

2 Background on right dislocation

2.1 Basic properties

The range of RD elements

- Various types of elements can undergo RD, including subjects (3), objects, and adjuncts.

(9) RD of objects

[Keoi jau-mou maai _ aa3] **gaa ce?**

3SG have-not.have buy SFP CL car

‘Has s/he bought the car?’

S-Asp-V-SFP-O [CC]

(Lee 2017:60)

(10) RD of adjuncts

[Zoengsaam _ maai-zo bou soenggei aa3] **hai dinnouzit.**

Zoengsaam buy-PFV CL camera SFP at computer.festival

‘Zoengsaam bought a camera at the Computer Festival.’

S-V-O-SFP-PP_{adjunct} [CC]

(Lee 2022:62)

Movement properties

- First, the gap can be embedded (Lee 2017):

(12) [ngo zi [CP ZS _ maai-zo bou soenggei] aa3] **hai dinnouzit.** (GRD) [CC]
1sg know ZS buy-PFV CL camera SFP at computer.festival
'I know ZS bought a/the camera at the Computer Festival.' (Lee 2017:64)

- Nonetheless, the gap cannot be contained in an island, as schematized in (13):

(13) * $[_{\text{main}} \dots [\text{island} \dots \{ _i \} \dots] \dots \text{SFP}] [_{\text{RD}} \text{XP}_i]$

- ➔ General to all kinds of islands, including complex NP islands, adjunct islands, subject islands, coordinated structures, etc. (Cheung 2015; Y. Chen 2016; Chiang 2017; Lee 2017; Yip 2025).

(14) The gap/correlate of RD chunks cannot be in an island

*[ZS [CP janwai _ maai-zo dinnou] soji mou cin sikfaan lo1] **jung jingam.**

ZS because buy-PFV computer so no money eat SFP with cash

Int.: 'Because ZS bought a computer with cash, he has no money for meal.'

(GRD, Adjunct island; Lee 2017:65) [CC]

→ There are **silent syntactic structures** in the RD chunks!

- Cf. Cheung (2009) and Lee (2017) for more evidence from reconstruction and crossover effects.

2.2 Previous approaches

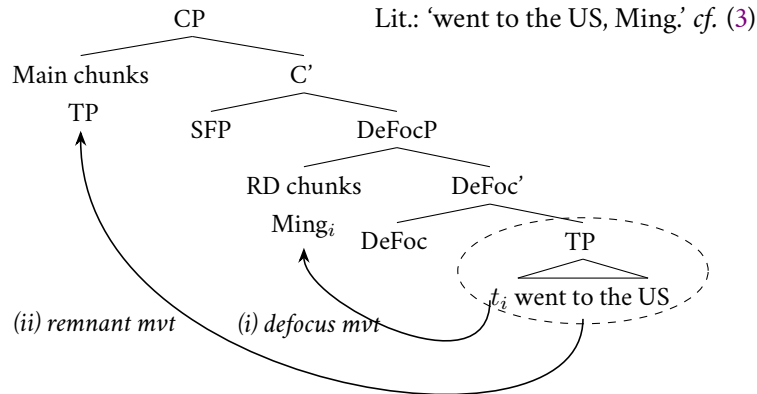
- Previous proposals of Chinese RD disagree on the assumed clausal structure: *monoclausal vs. biclausal*
- ➔ The **derivation relationship** between main & RD chunks (*movement vs. juxtaposition/coordination*)
- ➔ The **nature of the non-pronunciation** in RD chunks (*trace/Copy Deletion vs. ellipsis*)

Monoclausal approach: Silence = trace

(Packard 1986; Siu 1986; Cheung 1997, 2005, 2009; Law 2003; Chiang 2017, 2022; Lee 2017, 2021, 2023; Wei and Li 2018; Yip 2020)

- RD consists of **one** clause
- The two chunks are *derivationally related*:
Either main chunks are moved out from RD chunks, or both chunks involve movement
- Head-initial SFP (Simpson and Wu 2002; Paul 2014; Pan 2022) + **leftward** movement

(15) The monoclausal + movement approach to RD (adopted from Lee 2017)

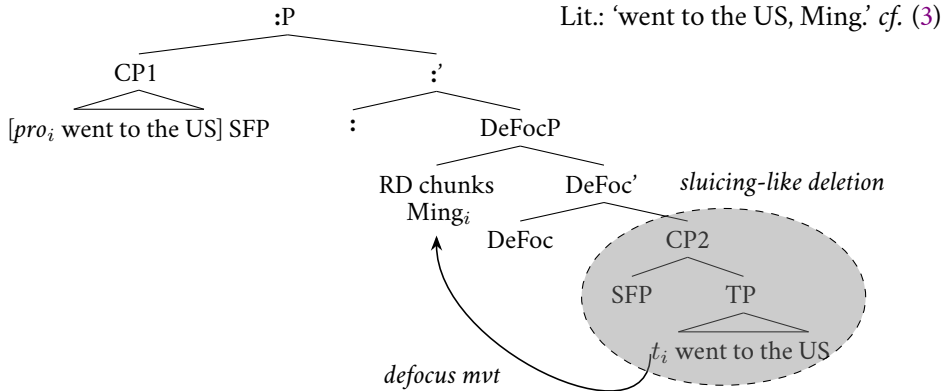


Biclausal approach: Silence = ellipsis/sludging

(Cheung 2015; Tang 2015, 2018; Chan 2016; Y. Chen 2016; Dong 2018; Yip 2025)

- The two chunks are **two** clauses, which are *base-generated* on their own
- SFPs can underlyingly be either head-initial or head-final
- There is no “cross-chunk” movement, though the RD chunk may involve movement internally

(16) The biclausal + sluicing approach to RD (Yip 2025, inspired by Cheung 2015; Ott and de Vries 2016)



3 Focus/*wh*-association in RD

3.1 The puzzle of focus/*wh*-association

First, as we will establish, ‘only/the-hell’ expressions have a peculiar *c*-command requirement:

(17) The focus/*wh*-association constraint:

‘Only/the-hell’ expressions must *c-command* the **pronounced** copy of their focus/*wh*-associate.

- See Jackendoff (1972), Tancredi (1990), Beaver and Clark (2008), and Erlewine (2014, 2017) for “only”
- See Huang and Ochi (2004) for “the-hell” in Mandarin and Japanese

'Only/the-hell' however can be right-dislocated and associate "leftward" with the focus/*wh* in the main chunk.

- As observed the earliest in Cheung (1997), cf. Cheung (2005, 2009, 2015) and Yip (2020, 2025)

(18) Focus association with Cantonese *zinghai* 'only' right-dislocated [CC]

a. [_ Aaming_[F] wui lai zaa3] **zinghai**. (Subj focus)

Ming will come SFP only

'(Only) *Ming* will come, only'

b. [Aaming _ zungji [nibun syu]_[F] zaa3] **zinghai**. (Obj focus)

Ming like this book SFP only

'Ming (only) likes *this book*, only'

(19) Wh association with *doudai/daodi* right-dislocated

- a. [_ shui hui lai a] **daodi**? (Wh-Subj) [MC]
who will come SFP the.hell
'Who the hell will come?'
- b. [Aaming _ zungji [binbun syu]_[F] aa3] **doudai**? (Wh-Obj) [CC]
Ming like which book SFP the.hell
'After all, which book does Ming like?'

Also true in Japanese [JP] and Korean [KR]!

(20) [_ *Dare*-ga ki-ta n-da], **ittai?** [JP]

who-NOM come-PST NMLZ-COP the.hell

‘Who the hell came?’

(Yusuke Yagi, p.c.)

(21) [Ku salam-i _ *nwukwu*-ya] **totaychey?** [KR]

that person-NOM who-INT the.hell

‘Who the hell is that person?’

(Florence Zhang, Yumin Ji, p.c.)

(22) [Minswu-nun _ *Chelswu*_[F]-man(-ul) manna-ss-eyo], **oloci.** [KR]

Minsu-TOP Cheolsu-only-ACC meet-PST-HON only

‘Minsu only met Cheolsu.’

(Florence Zhang, Yumin Ji, p.c.)

- The puzzle: how the hell can 'only/the hell' c-command the focus/*wh* in the main chunk?

(23) The required licensing configuration in RD

[_{main} ... focus/*wh* ...] SFP [RD 'only'/'the hell']
 ↑ *c-command*

➔ Both monoclausal movement and biclausal sluicing approaches fail to create this c-command relation.

3.2 Movement of the associates fails

- As a cross-linguistically robust phenomenon, ‘only’ must c-command its focus associates (Jackendoff 1972; Tancredi 1990; Aoun and Li 1993; Beaver and Clark 2008; Erlewine 2014).
- When the focused element moves out, ‘only’ cannot associate with it.
- The pattern holds for all kinds of movement: A-movement like raising and passivization; A'-movement like topicalization and relativization

(24) Focus association fails with movement

[CC]

- a. *[ni zek gau]_[F], Aaming zinghai m-zungji __. (Topicalization)
this CL dog Ming only not-like __
Int.: ‘Ming only doesn’t like this dog.’ (ONLY: ‘This dog, Ming only doesn’t like.’)
- b. *[Aaming_k zinghai m-zungji __ ge] [ni zek gau]_[F] (Relativization)
Ming only not-like __ GE this CL dog
Int.: ‘The dog x such that Ming only doesn’t like x’ (ONLY: ‘The dog that Ming only doesn’t like’)

- Moving out the *wh*-associate of ‘the-hell’ yields ungrammaticality (Huang and Ochi 2004; Cheung 2009).

(25) Wh-association fails with movement (Topicalization) [CC]

*[Bin zek gau]_[F], Aaming doudai m-zungji __?

which CL dog Ming the.hell not-like _

Int.: ‘Which dog does Ming not like?’

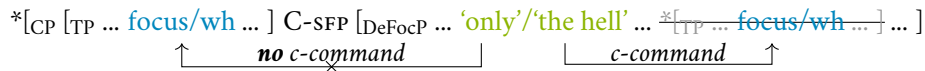
Since movement of focus/*wh*-associate fails independently ...

- The silence in RD chunks **cannot** be due to movement/Copy Deletion!
- **No correct c-command relation** can be created for focus/*wh*-association

(33) Monoclausal movement (RD-mvt + TP mvt)



(34) The illicit configuration created by monoclausal movement approaches



but fails to associate w/ traces

- NB: I do **not** assume the Rmerge theory of movement, because there is ample evidence for the Copy Theory of Movement from partial CD (Bošković and Nunes 2007; van Urk 2018; Yip and Ahenkorah 2023; Lee and Yip 2025)
- Rmerge also does not work for focus/*wh*-association in RD anyway (ask me in Q&A)

3.3 Ellipsis/slucing of the associates fails

The biclausal + sluicing approach is no better than the monoclausal + movement approach.

- The focus association fails in VP ellipsis with the associate elided, as already noted in Cheung (2009)
- Only when ‘only’ is pronounced - fine if ‘only’ is elided all together!

(35) Focus association fails in VP ellipsis

[CC]

- a. Aaming **zinghai** wui maai siusyut_[F]. *Aafan dou **zinghai** wui [_{VP} maai siusyut_[F]]
Ming only will buy novel Fan also only will
Int.: ‘Ming will only buy novels. Fan as well.’
- b. Aaming wui **zinghai** maai siusyut_[F]. Aafan dou wui [_{VP} zinghai maai siusyut_[F]]
Ming will only buy novel Fan also will
‘Ming will only buy novels. Fan as well.’

PF sluicing?

- Cheung (2015) suggests that the focus and *wh* association in RD is exceptionally licensed by “PF sluicing” (as opposed to ellipsis)
- Interrogative *wh*-words can be elided in fragment questions (*cf.* H. Li 2015 for Mandarin)
- The fragment consists of a contrastive topic, and optionally an adverbial

(36) Interrogative *wh*-words elided in fragment questions

[CC]


Q1. Aaming tingjat wui heoi bindou ? Ming tomorrow will go where 'Where will Ming go tomorrow?'	A1. Tousyugun. library 'Library.'
Q2. Gam Aafan (tingjat) ne? then Fan tomorrow TOP 'What about Fan (tomorrow)?' (i.e. Where will Fan go tomorrow?)	A2. Hokhaau. school 'School.'


- Wei (2018): fragment questions in Chinese are derived by movement + deletion (=sluicing)
- Importantly, fragment questions, unlike regular movement, have selective island repair effects, supporting the sluicing approach (see Wei 2018 for a pied-piping explanation on the island repair effects)

(37) Sluicing in question fragments repairs islands selectively

a. [CP Question fragment [TP [Left-branch/Sent.-Subj.  ...]]]]



b. * [CP Question fragment [TP [CNPI/Adjunct  ...]]]]



- Now, we have a construction comparable to the biclausal+sluicing approach of RD to test whether the focus and *wh* association survives in sluicing - and the answer is no.

(38) Wh association fails in fragment questions

[CC]

Q1. Aaming **doudai** wui heoi **bindou**?

Ming the.hell will go where

'Where the hell will Ming go?'

A1. Tousyugun.

library

'Library.'

Q2.*Gam Aafan **doudai** ne?

then Fan the.hell TOP

Int.: 'What about Fan?'

Since ellipsis/slucing of focus/*wh*-associate fails independently ...

- The silence in RD chunks **cannot** be due to ellipsis/slucing!
- **No correct c-command relation** can be created for focus/*wh*-association

(45) Biclausal sluicing (RD-mvt + TP sluicing (shaded))

[CP₁ ... focus/*wh*...SFP][CP₂ Δ ['only/the-hell'... focus/*wh*]]

(46) The illicit configuration created by biclausal sluicing approaches

*[CP₁ [... focus/*wh* ...] SFP] [CP₂ ... 'only'/'the hell' ... <focus/*wh*> ... SFP]

but fails to associate w/ elided materials

4 Right dislocation as multidominance

I propose that RD consists of a (i) biclausal (ii) *multidominant* structure. The required c-command configuration directly follows from a “non-bulk sharing” analysis of RD.

(47) Multidominance in right dislocation

CP2 shares every (non-branching) node with CP1 except for the defocused element(s) that undergo(es) movement.

- “Node sharing”/Parallel Merge in a coordinated structure:
 - Right Node Raising (Wilder 1999; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023, *i.a.*)
 - ATB *wh*-movement (Citko 2005; de Vries 2009, *i.a.*)
 - Conjoined *wh*-question (Gračanin-Yuksek 2007; Citko and Gračanin-Yuksek 2013, *i.a.*)
 E.g., *What and where did Kelly drink?* → also requires *non-bulk sharing*
 - Cf. Hewett’s (2025 Apr 25) WCCFL talk on Parallel Merge in adjunction cases with parasitic gaps!
- *Linearization*: non-trivial! For now, let’s assume all the shared nodes linearized/ordered before the non-shared ones in RD (i.e., the opposite of conjoined *wh*-questions)
 - Let’s focus on the **structural** relations that are uniquely created by multidominance

(48) [Aaming _ zungji [nibun syu]_[F] zaa3] **zinghai**.

(Obj focus)

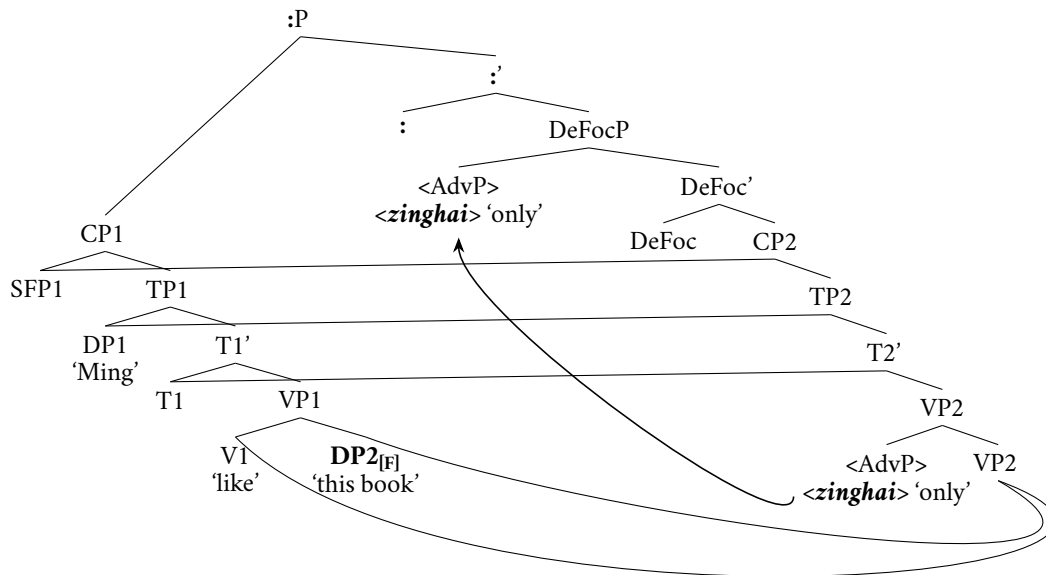
Ming like this book SFP only

'Ming (only) likes *this book*, only'

(Reproduced from (6))

(49) A slightly simplified derivation of right dislocation of adverb 'only'

Lit.: 'Ming likes *this book*, only.'



- Under Wilder (1999)'s definition of c-command, the pronounced copy of *zinghai* c-commands DP2
- Delivers the required licensing configuration

Wilder (1999, ex. 18-21)'s definition of c-command:

- (50) a. Sharing: α is shared by X and Y iff (i) neither of X and Y dominates the other, and (ii) both X and Y dominate α
- b. Full dominance: X fully dominates α iff X dominates α and X does not share α
- c. Wilder's version of c-command: X c-commands α iff (i) $X \neq \alpha$, (ii) X does not *fully* dominate α , (iii) α does not dominate X, and (iv) all categories that dominate X dominate α

(51) Multidominance creates the required c-command relation in RD

[_{main} ... focus/wh ...] SFP [_{RD} 'only'/'the hell']
 ↑ c-command

5 Against rightward movement

Another straightforward way to get the c-command relation right—rightward movement

- *What you see is what you get*: SFPs are head-final, and RD is rightward movement
- E.g., Bhatt and Dayal (2007) on Hindi-Urdu/Bangla (but see Simpson and Choudhury 2015), or Simon (1989) on Japanese (but see Tanaka 2001 and many others), etc.

(52) Monoclausal + rightward movement of RD

to be rejected

[_{CP} [_C [_{TP} *t* focus/*wh*] SFP] 'only/the.hell']
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—except that rightward movement analysis is empirically wrong in RD!

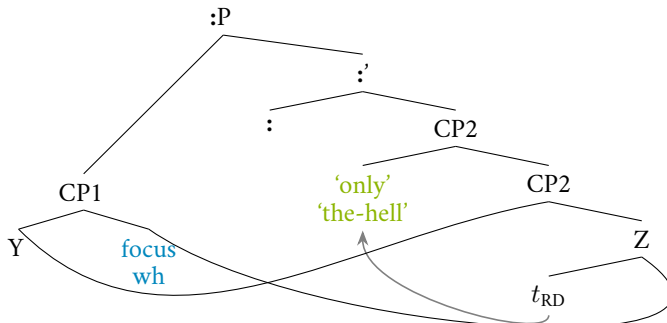
- ← Theory-internal consideration: LCA (Kayne 1994)
- ← Analytically: RD does not obey constraints found in other rightward movement, e.g., **no Right Roof Constraint** (cf. long-distance cases in (12))
- ← Empirically: RD involves a **biclausal** structure, not a monoclausal one
 - (i) Strong typological correlation between inventory of *empty categories* and availability of *gapped RD*
 - (ii) *Five* arguments with *eight* case studies in Chinese by Yip (2025) (one is reproduced below)
- ← Language-internal concerns: Treating Chinese SFPs as head-final would also violate the **Final-over-Final Condition**, since Chinese verbal domains are head-initial (see also Simpson and Wu 2002 for empirical evidence that SFPs are head-initial)

6 Conclusion

Summary of the talk

- I showed that focus/wh-association requires the RD elements to **c-command** the main chunk “leftward”
- I proposed that only a **multidominant** structure of RD can generate this correct **structural relation**
 - The “non-pronunciation” in the RD chunk is a result of “node-sharing”/Parallel Merge (Wilder 1999; Citko 2005; Gračanin-Yuksek 2007, *i.a.*)
 - (Leftward) movement and sluicing approaches fail to create this c-command relation
 - Rightward movement is empirically untenable

(63) A schematic multidominant structure of RD



→ **Upshot:** focus/wh-association serves as reliable **diagnostic tests** for multidominant structures

- Focus association of ‘only’ corroborates the multidominant analysis of:

(64) Right-Node Raising (cf. Wilder 1999; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023, *i.a.*)

- a. John likes __, and Mary also likes, this book.
- b. John **only** likes __, and Mary also (**only**) likes, **THIS BOOK_F**.

(65) Transparent free relative (cf. van Riemsdijk 1998, *i.a.*)

- a. They served me (what they euphemistically referred to as) a steak.
- b. They served me (what they could **only** referred to as) a *steak*.

→ New **diagnostic tests** that capitalize the *structural* relations created by multidominance

→ See Yip & Tamar-Mattis’s (2025 April 25-27th) WCCFL talk!

(66) Further issues to explore

- a. How to linearize the RD multidominant structure?
- b. Does RD in other languages also have a multidominant structure? If not, what is the explanation of the variation?
- c. How to derive the c-command requirement of focus/*wh*-association?
- d. ...