Subject marking on non-subjects in Squliq Atayal[1]

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1 Today

- *Qu* optionally marks the clause-final subject position in Squliq Atayal and has been described as a nominative (or absolutive) case marker.
- In Fuhsing Squliq Atayal, ***qu* can optionally mark a specific, non-subject argument, when the subject is not in sentence-final position**.
- I propose that ***qu* is a topic-marker, not a subject- or case-marker**, licensed in a particular structural position (Spec,TopicP), regularly occupied by the subject.
- Evidence for this view from the **position of topics in questions**.

Data here is primarily from three speakers, roughly 50–60 years old. All grew up in and live near Fuhsing township, Taoyuan county, Taiwan.

2 "Subject" and voice in Atayal

Atayal has the familiar Austronesian voice system, where morphology on the verb tracks which argument is in the clause-final *subject* position.[2]

(1) **Actor Voice (AV):** S7/24, C7/30
Cyux m-aniq bukin (qu) Yuraw.
AUX AV-eat plum QU Yuraw
'Yuraw eats plums.'

(2) **Patient Voice (PV):** S8/7
Cyux niq-un na Yuraw (qu) sehuy.
AUX eat-PV GEN Yuraw QU taro
'Yuraw eats taro.'

Note: I use the term "subject" pre-theoretically to refer to the argument cross-referenced by the verb's voice morphology.

(3) **Nominative alignment terminology used here, for convenience:**[3]
   a. AV: Verb [ACC patient] [NOM actor]
   b. PV: Verb [GEN actor] [NOM patient]

ACC = ∅ in Squliq but is overt in other Atayalic languages. GEN = *na*.

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[2]There is also Locative Voice and Benefactive/Instrumental Voice, but I will limit discussion here to AV and PV.

2.1 *Qu* marks the subject

(4) a. Cyux m-aniq (*qu) sehuy qasa (✓qu) Yuraw.
AUX AV-eat QU taro that QU Yuraw
'Yuraw is eating that taro.' S7/24, C7/30

b. Cyux niq-un na/*qu Yuraw (✓qu) sehuy qasa.
AUX eat-PV GEN/QU Yuraw QU taro that
'Yuraw is eating that taro.' S8/7

At this point, **we could think of *qu* as a case marker**, NOM.

2.2 The subject as discourse topic

(5) Context: someone asks about what Yuraw is doing ⇒ AV: S8/7
a. ✓ AV (4a) without *qasa* 'that'
b. # PV (4b) without *qasa* 'that'

(6) Context: someone asks about the taro ⇒ PV: S8/7
a. # AV (4a)
b. ✓ PV (4b)

2.3 $\overline{\text{A}}$-extractions target the subject

(7) Actor extraction ⇒ AV: T7/13
a. ✓ Ima (qu) p-hapuy sehuy qani ____?
who QU AV.FUT-cook taro this
'Who will cook these taro?'
b. * Ima (qu) puy-un ____ (qu) sehuy
who QU cook-PV QU taro

(8) Patient extraction ⇒ PV: T7/30
a. ✓ Nanu (qu) wal niq-un (na) Yuraw ____?
what QU AUX eat-PV GEN Yuraw
'What did Yuraw eat?'
b. * Nanu (qu) m-aniq ____ (qu) Yuraw?
what QU AV-eat QU Yuraw

In addition to *wh*-movement, left topics, relative clause formation, and focus movement all target subject position.

[3]The case/voice alternation in Atayalic languages has been described as an ergative alignment system (Huang, 1994; Starosta, 1999; Aldridge, 2004) or a nominative alignment system (Egerod, 1966; Rau, 1992; Huang, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001). Here I abstract away from this issue and simply use nominative terminology descriptively.

3 Subject marking on non-subjects

In some situations, *qu* can mark an argument which is *not* the subject (as determined by the voice morphology). This can happen when the real subject is not in final position, either through extraction or cliticization.

3.1 Non-subject *qu* requires a specific non-subject

(9) ***Qu*-marking requires specificity:** C7/30

a. Nyux=saku m-aniq (**qu**) yutak qani.
AUX=NOM.1sg AV-eat QU orange this
'I am eating this orange.'

b. Nyux=saku m-aniq (*qu) yutak.
AUX=NOM.1sg AV-eat QU orange
'I am eating oranges.'

☞ ***Qu* cannot simply be NOM.**

3.2 AV clauses: *qu* on accusative (bare) patients

(10) **Actor *wh* question, AV:** C7/23, T7/30, S8/7
Ima (qu) wal m-aniq (**qu**) sehuy qasa?
who QU AUX AV-eat QU taro that
'Who ate that taro?'

(11) **Actor cleft, AV:** T7/13, C8/6, S8/7
Iyat Yuraw (qu) m-aniq (**qu**) sehuy qani.
NEG Yuraw QU AV-eat QU taro this
'It's not Yuraw who ate this taro.'

(12) **Actor focus-movement, AV:** T7/30, C8/6, S8/7
Nanak Yuraw (qu) m-aniq (**qu**) yaqeh na qnaniq.
only Yuraw QU AV-eat QU bad GEN food
'Only Yuraw eats the bad food.'

The preverbal *qu* is expected in these constructions, but the *qu* on the object is unexpected. Ungrammatical to have both *qu*; see below.

Non-subject *qu* can also appear when the subject is cliticized to the verb:

(13) **AV clause with cliticized subject (actor):** T7/23
Cyux=sami m-ita (**qu**) Tali.
AUX=NOM.1plE AV-see QU Tali
'We see Tali'

3.3 PV clauses: *qu* on genitive actor with clitic doubling

In PV clauses, non-subject *qu* can appear on the actor which is normally genitive marked, with a matching genitive clitic.

(14) **Patient *wh* question, PV:** C7/23, T7/30, S8/7

a. Nanu (qu) cyux niq-un na/*qu Yuraw?
what QU AUX eat-PV GEN/*QU Yuraw
'What is Yuraw eating?'

b. Nanu (qu) cyux=*(**nya**) niq-un **qu**/*na Yuraw?
what QU AUX=GEN.3sg eat-PV QU/*GEN Yuraw
'What is Yuraw eating?'

(15) **Patient focus movement, PV:** C7/23, T8/6, S8/7

a. Ana knux na qnaniq (qu) niq-un na/*qu Yuraw.
even smelly GEN food QU eat-PV GEN/*QU Yuraw
'Yuraw eats even smelly food.'

b. Ana knux na qnaniq (qu) niq-un=*(**nya**) **qu**/*na Yuraw.
even smelly GEN food QU eat-PV=GEN.3sg QU/*GEN Yuraw
'Yuraw eats even smelly food.'

(16) **PV clause with cliticized subject (patient):** T7/23, C8/6, S8/7

a. Wal=sami kt-an na Tali.
AUX=NOM.1plE see-PV GEN Tali
'Tali saw us (exclusive).'

b. Wal=sami=*(**nya**) kt-an **qu**/*na Tali.
AUX=NOM.1plE=GEN.3sg see-PV QU/GEN Tali
'Tali saw us (exclusive).'

3.4 Summary

- Subjects (sentence-final nominative arguments) are *qu* marked. This is expected and well-documented.
- Other arguments can exceptionally be *qu*-marked, if:
  - the argument is specific, and
  - the actual subject has "moved out of the way."
- When a non-AV actor is exceptionally *qu*-marked, a corresponding genitive clitic must be used.

4 Proposal

> ***Qu* is a marker of *topic* licensed in Spec,TopicP position.** When Spec,TopicP is not occupied by a subject, it can host a specific DP via clitic left dislocation. *Qu*-marked non-subjects are therefore in a higher position in the clause than regular internal arguments.

Clitic left dislocation (CLLD) is a construction where a clitic cooccurs with an antecedent DP in a higher position. The antecedent DP is base-generated in its clause-peripheral position (Cinque, 1990; Iatridou, 1995; Anagnostopoulou, 1994).

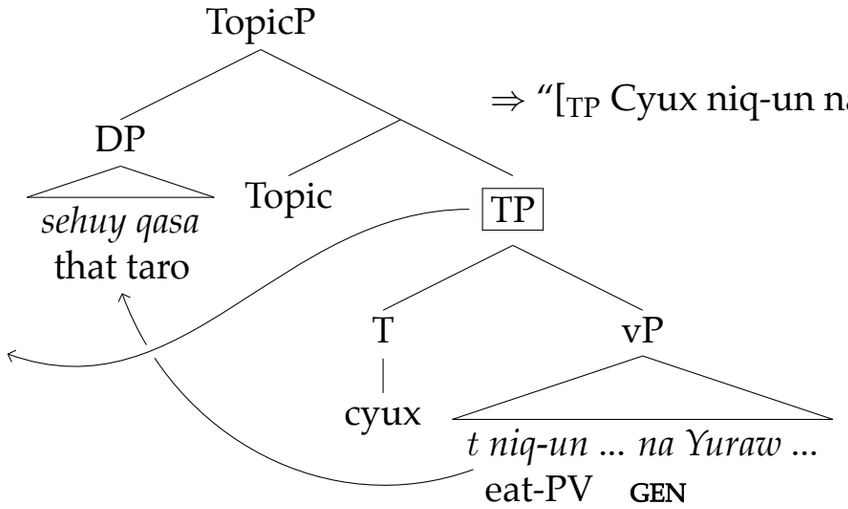
4.1 The clausal syntax of Squliq

I follow much of Aldridge's (2004) system for Seediq (also Atayalic):

- Verb-initial order is derived by obligatory TP-fronting.
- Only the subject (absolutive in Aldridge terms) is able to move out.
- Full DP subjects must move to the clause-peripheral topic position.

(17) Cyux niq-un na Yuraw (qu) sehuy qasa.
AUX eat-PV GEN Yuraw QU taro that
'Yuraw eats that taro.' (4b)

(18)



⇒ "[$_{TP}$ Cyux niq-un na Yuraw] qu sehuy qasa"

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☞ **The DP in Spec,TopicP gets *qu*-marked.**

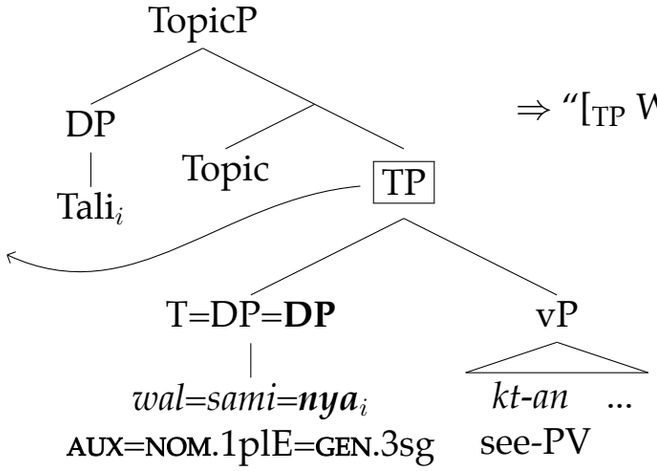
4.2 Non-subject *qu* in PV clauses

Subject cliticization:

Because the subject does not move to Spec,TopicP, it can host a topic with CLLD.

(19) Wal=sami=**nya** kt-an **qu** Tali.
AUX=NOM.1plE=GEN.3sg see-PV QU/GEN Tali
'Tali saw us (exclusive).' (=16b)

(20)



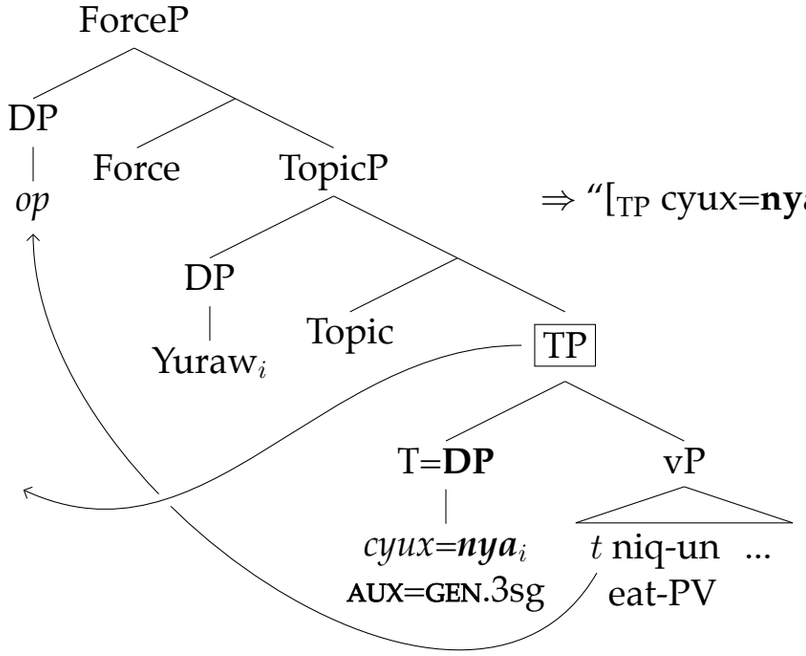
⇒ "[$_{TP}$ Wal=sami=**nya**$_i$ kt-an] **qu Tali**$_i$"

$\overline{\text{A}}$-movement of the subject

I adopt a Rizzian split CP. In particular, abstraction-operators (as in *wh*-question formation) do not move through Spec,TopicP, leaving Spec,TopicP open for the generation of a topic with CLLD.

(21) Nanu (qu) cyux=**nya** niq-un **qu** Yuraw?
what QU AUX=GEN.3sg eat-PV QU Yuraw
'What is Yuraw eating?' (14b)

(22)



⇒ "[$_{TP}$ cyux=**nya**$_i$ niq-un] **qu Yuraw**$_i$"

4.3 Non-subject *qu* in AV clauses

Squliq has nominative and genitive clitic series, but no accusative clitic series.

☞ **I propose that the lack of overt accusative clitics is a morphological gap.**[4] Squliq has null accusative clitics, allowing for the exact same process of CLLD.

4.4 Evidence for the high position of *qu*-marked arguments

Polar questions can be formed in Squliq Atayal by adding a question marker *ga* before the subject or sentence-finally:[5,6]

(23) **Question marker *ga* before the subject:** C7/23,S8/18
M-wah **ga** (qu) Yuraw?
AV-come GA QU Yuraw
'Will Yuraw come?'

Ga also occurs on embedded questions. The verb 'ask' requires that its embedding be of question type:

(24) **Question marker *ga* in embedded question:** C7/23, T7/30
Pqut-an=maku Tali [m-wah *(**ga**) Yuraw].
ask-PV=GEN.1sg Tali AV-come GA Yuraw
'I asked Tali [whether Yuraw will come].'

☞ *Ga* is a question clause-typing head in the CP domain.

(25) ***Ga* can come before an internal argument if it can be *qu* marked:** S8/18
a. Nyux=su m-aniq (*ga) yutak (✓ga)?
AUX=NOM.2sg AV-eat GA taro GA
'Do you eat/are you eating taro?'
b. Nyux=su m-aniq (✓**ga**) **qu** yutak qani (✓ga)?
AUX=NOM.2sg AV-eat GA QU taro this GA
'Are you eating this taro?'

☞ **Exceptionally *qu*-marked non-subjects are in a higher position than regular internal arguments.**

[4]There is another "gap" as well: the third-person nominative clitic form is also null across Atayal (Huang, 2006).

[5]The sentence-final option is well documented across Atayal (Huang, 1996), but the pre-subject option does not seem to be discussed in the literature.

[6]Question markers in pre-subject position are observed in other Austronesian languages as well:

(1) **Malagasy polar question marker *ve*:** (Pearson, 2005) *Malagasy*
Mamono ny akoho amin'ny antsy **ve** ny mpamboly?
AT.kill Det chicken with-Det knife Q Det farmer
'Is the farmer killing the chickens with the knife?'

5 Non-subject *qu* does not feed extraction

Recall the generalization that only subjects can be $\overline{\text{A}}$-extracted in Atayal.

Q: Now that non-subjects can be exceptionally *qu*-marked, does that mean they then be extracted?

A: No.

(26) a. AV baseline: exceptionally *qu*-marked patient C7/30, S8/7

Nyux=saku m-aniq (**qu**) yutak qani.
AUX=NOM.1sg AV-eat QU orange this

'I am eating this orange.'

b. Patient extraction from AV: C7/30, S8/7, T8/6

* Nanu (qu) cyux=su m-aniq?
what QU AUX=NOM.2sg AV-eat

Intended: 'What are you eating?'

(27) a. PV baseline: exceptionally *qu*-marked actor with clitic C7/30, T8/6, S8/7

Wal=saku=nya kt-an (**qu**) Tali.
AUX=NOM.1sg=GEN.3sg see-PV QU Tali

'Tali saw me.'

b. Actor extraction from PV: T8/6, S8/7

%* Ima qu wal=saku=nya kt-an?
who QU AUX=NOM.1sg=GEN.3sg see-PV

Intended: 'Who saw me?' (C7/30 ok)

☞ This is expected under my proposal: exceptionally *qu*-marked non-subjects are generated high in Spec,TopicP, not moved there. The generalization that only subjects can be moved out of vP/TP still holds.

It has been proposed for some languages that Voice should be thought of as a form of agreement with the DP which is moved to topic position (Richards, 2000; Pearson, 2005). Higher $\overline{\text{A}}$-extraction must go through this position first.

☞ **Such agreement-based approaches cannot be extended to Squliq Atayal.** The evidence above shows that (a) *qu*-marking and being in a topic position and (b) the ability to be $\overline{\text{A}}$-extracted are *not* one-to-one in Squliq Atayal.

6 Conclusion

- In Fuhsing Squliq Atayal, the marker associated with subject position, ***qu*, can exceptionally mark specific non-subjects when the subject has "moved out of the way."**
- I propose that ***qu* is a topic-marker, licensed in a particular structural position (Spec,TopicP)**, regularly occupied by the subject.
  - In derivations where the subject will not occupy Spec,TopicP, a specific DP can be base-generated there as a **topic with CLLD**, binding an internal argument clitic below.
  - Evidence from ***qu*-marking in polar questions** shows that non-subjects are in a higher position in the clause when *qu*-marked.
- $\overline{\text{A}}$-extraction is limited to the subject, as determined by voice morphology.
  - **My proposal preserves this generalization**: the high position of *qu*-marked non-subjects is not due to movement, but instead due to topicalization with CLLD.
  - The data presented here is **incompatible with an agreement-based view of the voice system**.

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7 Appendix: specificity-marking across Atayal

Mayrinax, a more conservative variety of Atayal, has a rich system of nominal marking morphology which distinguishes proper names, specific, and non-specific nominals. (Note also that Mayrinax has overt accusative marking, which does not exist in Squliq.)

(28) **Case markers in Mayrinax Atayal (Huang, 1995), from Huang (2006):**

Noun \ Case		Nom	Acc	Dat	Loc	Gen	Ben	Ins	Com	Neu
Proper		ʔiʔ	ʔiʔ	ʔiʔ	kiʔ	niʔ	niʔ	---	kiʔ	ʔiʔ
Common	Non-referential	aʔ	cuʔ	---	iʔ	naʔ	---	naʔ	---	---
	Referential	kuʔ	ckuʔ	ckuʔ	ckuʔ	nkuʔ	nkuʔ	nkuʔ	---	---

Note the phonological similarity of the topic marker *qu* studied here and the "referential" series in Mayrinax (*ku', cku', nku'*), as well as the Seediq topic marker *ka*.

☞ In some situations, I did elicit *nqu* for what could be specific genitives and *squ* for specific datives (regular *sa*/*s*-) in Fuhsing Squliq.

(29) ***Nqu* on a specific genitive?** S7/24, S8/7, C8/6
Niq-un na/nqu Tali qu sehuy.
eat-PV GEN/NQU Tali QU taro
'Tali eats taro'

(30) ***Squ* on a specific dative?** T7/30
Sehuy qani ga, b<n>iq ni Tali ʔsa/squ/*qu Yuraw.
taro that TOP, <Perf>give GEN Tali DAT/SQU/QU Yuraw
'That taro, Tali gave to Yuraw.'

Because these *nqu* and *squ* forms were quite rare, I cannot speculate on their distribution.

8 Appendix: Topics with clitic left dislocation across Atayalic

Topics with CLLD occur more freely in Seediq (also Atayalic):

(31) **Seediq non-subject topic with CLLD, with the subject:** (Aldridge, 2004)

a. Wada bube-un na Pawan ka dangi=na.
AUX hit-PV GEN Pawan QU friend=GEN.3sg
'Pawan hit his friend.'

b. Wada=**na** bube-un ka dangi=na **ka Pawan-ni**.
AUX=GEN.3sg hit-PV QU friend=GEN.3sg QU Pawan-DEF
'Pawan hit his friend.'

In contrast, in Squliq, non-subject *qu*-marking (topicalization with CLLD) cannot cooccur with a clause-final subject:

(32) **Squliq non-subject *qu* requires the subject to have moved:** C8/6, S8/7

a. Niq-un na Yuraw qu sehuy qani
eat-PV GEN Yuraw QU taro this
'Yuraw is eating this taro.'

b. %* Niq-un=nya (qu) sehuy (qani) **qu** Yuraw
eat-PV-GEN.3sg QU taro this QU Yuraw
Intended: 'Yuraw is eating this taro.' (cf 31b) (T8/6 ok)

☞ **Seediq allows multiple Spec,TopicP positions, but Squliq allows only one.**