

The Word Order Phenomenon in Maithili Simple Sentences:

A TG Approach

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Introduction¹

The word order in Maithili² has generally been regarded as fairly 'free' (cf. Jha (1958)). In this article we, however, show that this assumption cannot be sustained in the light of the facts about the Maithili data. Instead, we argue that Maithili is a 'configurational' language with a fixed underlying structure and that the permutations of elements within a clause are generally taken care of by transformational rules.

In section 1 we examine the word order phenomenon in Maithili simple sentences. We demonstrate that the word order in the language, which seems to be fairly free at the surface, is in fact 'fixed' at the underlying level, and that the change in word order generally triggers a change in the role of the affected elements, making them either the topic or focus of a clause. (By 'topic' and 'focus' we roughly mean 'given' and 'new' information, respectively. See Firbas (1969) and Reinhart (1982) for their further discussion). In section 2 we propose a set of categorial rules to generate the underlying structures of Maithili simple sentences. In section 3 we assume that the role - oriented change in the underlying structures, which involves leftward movement, can be handled by postulating the rules of Focusing and Topicalization in the transformational component of the grammar. In section 4 we observe that the change in the underlying structures may not be sometimes role - oriented. For such cases, we postulate the rule of Scrambling, a reordering rule in the PF component. We conclude by summarizing the observations made in the various sections of this article.

The Word Order Phenomenon in Maithili: A Reappraisal. As pointed out above, the word order in Maithili is generally considered fairly 'free'. By 'free' we mean that the constituents of a sentence can occur in any order, without any semantic effects. For instance, a transitive construction like (1) can have any permutation of Subject (S), Object (O), and Verb (V):

(1)	a.	raam	kitaab	kinat	--	SOV
		Ram	book	will buy		
		'Ram will buy a book.'				
	b.	kitaab	raam	kinat.	--	OSV
	c.	Kitaab	kinat	raam.	--	OVS
	d.	kinat	raam	kitaab.	--	VSO
	e.	kinat	kitaab	raam.	--	VOS
	f.	raam	kinat	kitaab.	--	SVO

The freedom of word order also extends to Indirect Object and adverbials of various types. What is more striking about the word order in Maithili is that even elements like adjectives and modifiers within NP constructions (as in (2a)) and auxiliaries within verbal sequences (as in (3a)) can be permuted with the other elements of a sentence:

(2)	a.	Geetaa	[_{NP} [_A hariyar]	saari]	pahirne	achi
		Geeta	green	saree	wearing	is
		'Geeta is wearing a green saree'.				
	b.	geetaa	saari	hariyar	pahirne	achi.
	c.	geetaa	saari	pahirne	achi	hariyar.

(3)	a.	raam	khaait	achi.
		Ram	eating	is
		'Ram is eating'.		
	b.	khaait	achi	raam.
	c.	achi	raam	khaait.

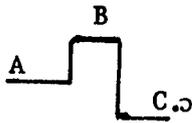
This does not mean that the word order in Maithili is absolutely free; it has certain restrictions. For instance, the permutation of adjective hariyar in (2) is permissible with the other elements of the sentence (as shown in (2 a - c)) but not with geetaa:

(4) * hariyar geetaa saari pahirne achi.

Jha (1958), who lists such restrictions, arrives at the conclusion that Maithili word order is free, subject to some restrictions.

In the following paragraphs we demonstrate, however, that the facts about the Maithili data do not support this conclusion. Instead of treating Maithili as a language with fairly free word order, we assume that Maithili, like English, is a language with a fixed underlying structure. What we expect from a language with genuinely free word order is that the various permutations of the elements of a sentence have the same meaning. Such an expectation is, however, not fulfilled in Maithili. A sentence in the language can be analyzed into constituents which have fixed positions, stress and intonation patterns as well as meanings. Consider the table in which the different permutations of S, O, and V in (5) result in the

change of their structural positions and also produce different phonological and semantic effects. (A, B, and C in the table indicate the intonation pattern of a sentence; i.e., A stands for middle pitch, B for high pitch, and C for low pitch, as shown in



	Phonological Change			Semantic Change
	A	B	C	
a. (i)			raam kitaab kinat	Ram will buy a book.
(ii)		raam	kitaab kinat	It is Ram who will buy a book.
(iii)		raam kitaab	kinat	It is Ram who will buy a book.
(iv)	raam	kitaab	kinat	As for Ram, it is a book that he will buy.
(v)	raam kitaab	kinat		What Ram will do is to buy a book.
b. (i)		kitaab	raam kinat	It is a book that Ram will buy.
(ii)		kitaab raam	kinat	It is a book that Ram will buy.
(iii)	kitaab	raam	kinat	As for the book, it is Ram who will buy it.
(iv)	kitaab raam	kinat		As for the book, Ram will buy (and not borrow) it.
c. (i)		kitaab	kinat raam	It is a book that Ram will buy.
(ii)		kitaab kinat	raam	It is a book that Ram will buy (and not borrow).
(iii)	kitaab	kinat	raam	As for the book, Ram will buy (and not borrow) it.
(iv)	kitaab kinat	raam		As for buying the book, it is Ram who will do it.

d. (i)		kinat	raam kitaab	Ram will buy (and not borrow) a book.
(ii)		kinat raam	kitaab	It is Ram who will buy (and not borrow) a book.
(iii)	kinat	raam	kitaab	It is Ram who will buy a book.
(iv)	kinat raam	kitaab		What Ram will buy is a book (and not a pen).
e. (i)		kinat	kitaab raam	Ram will buy (and not borrow) a book.
(ii)		kinat kitaab	raam	It is a book that Ram will buy (and borrow).
(iii)	kinat	kitaab	raam	As for buying, it is a book that Ram will buy.
(iv)	kinat kitaab	raam		As for buying a book, it is Ram who will do it.
f. (i)		raam	kinat kitaab	It is Ram who will buy a book.
(ii)		raam kinat	kitaab	It is Ram who will buy (and not borrow) a book.
(iii)	raam	kinat	kitaab	As for Ram, he will buy (and not borrow) a book.
(iv)	raam kinat	kitaab		What Ram will buy is a book (and not a pen).

Different permutations of S, O, and V in Maithili and their phonological and semantic equivalents.

A comparison of the positions A, B, and C mentioned under the phonological change and their semantic equivalents reveals the following facts:

- (i) Position A can be occupied by null to any number of elements from a sentence. As indicated, the elements within this position are pronounced at an even middle pitch and are (normally) followed by a slight pause. They are interpreted as topicalized elements; i.e., paraphrased as: 'As for..', 'About..', etc.

- (ii) Like position A, position B can also contain more than one element in all these cases (though less frequently than position A). It carries the sentence (i.e., nuclear) stress and is followed by a high fall. It functions as 'focus', which can be paraphrased as: 'It is ... (and not something else) that ...'
- (iii) Similarly, position C can contain elements ranging from null to any number. These elements are pronounced at a low pitch and serve no significant functional roles like topicalization and focusing.

These observations lead us to make the following generalizations about the Maithili word order:

- (i) The only word order which may remain neutral to phonological changes and their subsequent semantic effects (viz, topicalization and focusing) is SOV, as in (5a1).
- (ii) A change in SOV order generally triggers a change in the phonological pattern and the meaning.
- (iii) Elements contained in A, B, and C positions are free in order within their respective domains and their freedom does not affect the phonological pattern and the meaning.

On the basis of this analysis, we assume that SOV is the underlying structure for Maithili transitive constructions, generated by categorial rules. Besides, the grammar has transformations like Focusing and Topicalization, which move elements from an SOV structure to the focused and topicalized positions (viz., B and A positions in (5), respectively). (Note that SOV order can also undergo change in meaning and phonological pattern, as shown in (5a ii-v). We discuss this issue in subsection 3.2.). Finally, the freedom of word order within the various positions is taken care of by the rule of Scrabbing in the PF component. Thus, a grammar with these mechanisms can accommodate all the properties of the Maithili word order, listed above. We discuss each of these mechanisms in the sections that follow.

Categorial Rules

To generate the simple sentences of Maithili we propose the following (preliminary) set of categorial rules:

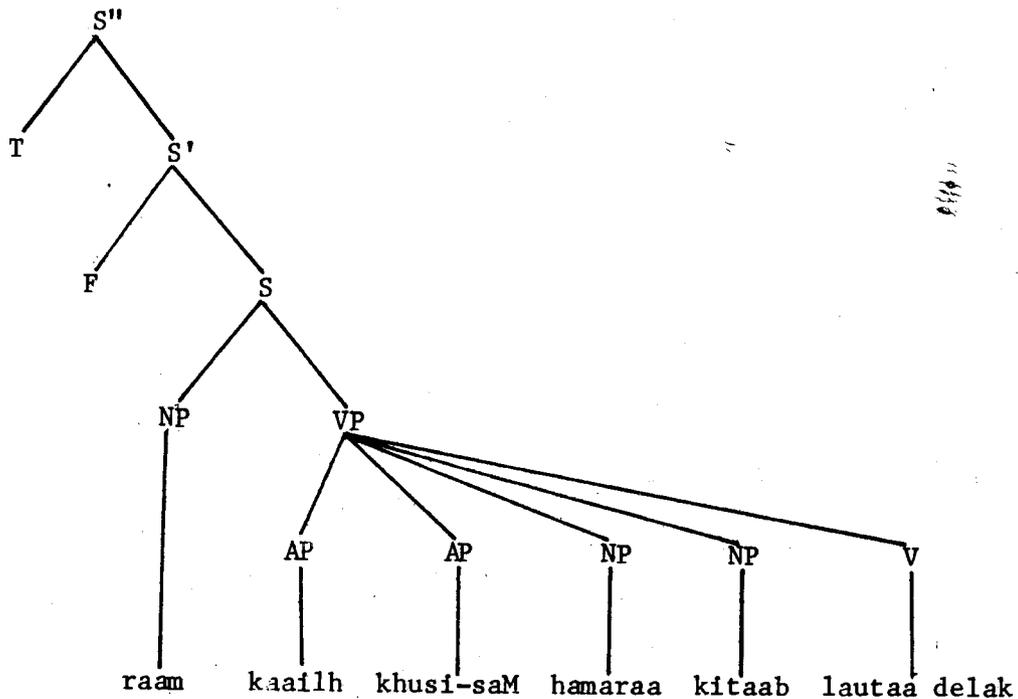
- (6) a. $S'' \longrightarrow T \quad S'$
 b. $S' \longrightarrow F \quad S$
 c. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} T \\ F \end{array} \right\} \longrightarrow X^{n*}$
 d. $S \longrightarrow NP \quad VP^3$
 e. $VP \longrightarrow (AP^*) \quad (NP) \quad (NP) \quad V$

(By X^{n*} in (6c) we mean any number of categories (i.e., lexical categories or their projections)). For illustration, the categorial rules in (6) will generate the tree in (7b) for the sentence in (7a):

- (7) a. raam kaailh khusi-saM hamaraa kitaab
 Ram yesterday happily to me book
 lautaa delak.
 returned

'Ram happily returned the book to me yesterday'.

b.



The tree diagram for (7a).

In the tree diagram for (7a) T immediately dominated by s'' functions as Topic, while F immediately dominated by S' functions as Focus. Kiss (1981 a, 1981 b, 1981 c) also uses T and F nodes in her analysis of Hungarian and Japanese. But the stipulation of these nodes faces a conceptual difficulty noted by Alec Marantz (personal communication to Probal Dasgupta), who argues that Topic and Focus, which are functional notions, should not, strictly speaking, be permitted to appear as nodes in a categorial tree. However, we, like Kiss, treat T and F as syntactic (not functional) nodes for expository purposes and X^{n*} as any number of elements inside the T and F positions.

b. $[S'' [T \text{ raam}_j \text{ e}] [S' [F \text{ aai-etaai}] [S \text{ t}_j \text{ t}_i \text{ ghar jaet}]]]$
 'As for Ram, it is only for today that he will go home.'

c. $[S'' [T \text{ raam}_j \text{ ghar}_k \text{ e}] [S' [F \text{ aai-ettaai}] [S \text{ t}_j \text{ t}_i \text{ t}_k \text{ jaet}]]]$
 (same as in b.)

d. $[S'' [T \text{ raam}_j \text{ ghar}_k \text{ jaet}_1] [S' [F \text{ aai-etaai}] [S \text{ t}_j \text{ t}_i \text{ t}_k \text{ t}_1]]]$
 'As for Ram's going home, it is only for today.'

Finally, similar to the elements which are obligatorily focused, there are a few elements which undergo obligatory topicalization. One of them is an NP postmodified by the morpheme -ta, where NP -ta can be paraphrased as: 'So far as NP is concerned, ...'. Consider the examples in (17):

(17) a. $[S'' [T \text{ e}] [S' [F \text{ aai--e}_i] [S \text{ raam-ta t}_i \text{ gel}]]]$
 today-[+F] Ram-[+T] went

b. $[S'' [T \text{ raam-ta}_j] [S' [F \text{ aai-e}_i] [S \text{ t}_j \text{ t}_i \text{ gel}]]]$
 'So far as Ram is concerned, he went today.'

To make Topicalization obligatory in such cases, let us say that elements modified by -ta and other topicalizing markers (if any) have the features $[+T]$ (=topicalization) specified in the lexicon, and that a grammar of Maithili has the surface filter in (18), which blocks the configuration given in (18):

(18) $[S'' \text{ x}^{n*} \dots [S \dots \text{ x} \dots]]] 5$
 $[+T]$

As it is obvious from the foregoing analysis, Topicalization is identical with Focusing except that elements are moved to the T position instead of the F position, and also that two processes vary in their lists of elements which are obligatorily moved. We assume that they are the only transformations which can apply in simple Maithili sentences.

Before we conclude this subsection, let us turn to the unexplained issue mentioned in section. We observed that the surface word order in all the sentences in (5ai-v) remains the same, viz., SOV, and yet they vary in their intonation patterns.

and semantic interpretations. Given the two transformations Focusing and Topicalization, it is not difficult to account for such variations.

Following the categorial rules proposed in (6), we can have (19) as the common underlying structure for all the five structures in (5ai-v):

(19) $[_{S''} [_{T^e}] [_{S'} [_{F^e}] [_{S'} \text{ raam kitaab kinat }]]]$

When no rule applies, (5ai) is derived. To get (5aif), Focusing operates on (19), moving raam to the F position, as shown in (20):

(20) $[_{S''} [_{T^e}] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ raam}_i] [_{S'} t_i \text{ kitaab kinat }]]]$

In the derivation of (5aiii), Focusing applies twice to move raam and kitaab separately to the F position, yielding the structure in (21):

(21) $[_{S''} [_{T^e}] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ raam}_i \text{ kitaab}_j] [_{S'} t_i t_j \text{ kinat }]]]$

In the case of (5aiv), Focusing moves kitaab to the F position, as in (21 a), and then Topicalization moves raam to the T position, as in (21 b):

(21) a. $[_{S''} [_{T^e}] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ kitaab}_j] [_{S'} \text{ raam } t_i \text{ kinat }]]]$

b. $[_{S''} [_{T'} \text{ raam}_j] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ kitaab}_i] [_{S'} t_j t_i \text{ kinat }]]]$

Finally, the derivation of (5av) requires three steps: first kinat is moved to the F position by Focusing (as in (22 a)); secondly, Topicalization moves raam to the T position (as in (22 b)); and finally, Topicalization again applies, moving kitaab to the T position (as in (22 c)):

(22) a. $[_{S''} [_{T^e}] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ kinat}_i] [_{S'} \text{ raam kitaab } t_i]]]$

b. $[_{S''} [_{T'} \text{ raam}_j \text{ e}] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ kinat}_i] [_{S'} t_j \text{ kitaab } t_i]]]$

c. $[_{S''} [_{T'} \text{ raam}_j \text{ kitaab}_k] [_{S'} [_{F'} \text{ kinat}_i] [_{S'} t_j t_k t_i]]]$

Assuming this analysis, we may justify the variations (semantic and phonological) existing in (5ai-v) on the ground that these structures involve different syntactic processes and do not have a common derivation.

Scrambling

As noted in section 1, elements within the T, F, and S positions can be freely permuted among themselves within their respective domains. Unlike the preposing of elements by Topicalization and Focusing, these permutations have no semantic bearings at all and are, therefore, not relevant for the representations at L F. Within the E S T framework, the rule of Scrambling seems to be an appropriate candidate for dealing with such permutations. When the rule applies, it reorders elements within a given domain (namely, T, F, or S). It is a rule in the PF component of grammar and operates on S-structure, an output of transformational rules.

Conclusion

In the preceding sections we have presented a transformational account of the word order phenomenon in Maithili simple sentences. We have first demonstrated that the word order in the language, which appears to be fairly free, is in fact fixed at the base, viz., SOV and that a change in the SOV pattern is due to the change in the functional roles of elements within S, viz., topicalization and focusing. Such a functional change has been accounted for by proposing two transformational rules—Topicalization and Focusing. There are, however, some exceptions to this generalization, in that certain movements do not involve any functional roles like topicalization and focusing. For such cases, we have suggested the rule of Scrambling, which applies in the PF component and whose output is not relevant to the LF component. In this regard, it is worth exploring other Indo-Aryan Languages to see whether the analysis presented for Maithili simple sentences holds true to them also.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank K. A. Jayaseelan, P. Dasgupta, and K. S. Yadurjan for their comments.

The following abbreviations are used in this paper:
 PF = Phonological Form; LF = Logical Form; N = nasalization; and
 EST = Extended Standard Theory.

2. Maithili is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the northeastern part of Bihar (India) and the south-eastern part of Nepal.
3. See Hasegawa (1980) and Yadava (1983; to appear) for the arguments supporting the VP constituency in Japanese and Maithili, respectively.
4. This filter is problematic, assuming that the elements involved in a filter must be 'local'. See Chomsky and Lasnik (1977) for a discussion of this constraint on filters.
5. Like (13), this filter is also problematic for the same reason.

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