Afterthoughts, Antitopics, and Emphasis: The Syntacticization of Postverbal Position in Tamil
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1 Introduction
1.1 Postposing in Verb-Final Languages
It is a well-known fact that even in the strictest of verb-final languages, elements occasionally appear to the right of the finite verb, as in 'A book (she-)wrote, Sita'. Functional treatments of this phenomenon tend to adopt one of two approaches. The first of these — what we might call the “unifunctional” approach — subsumes all rightward dislocation in a given language under a single functional label, with the meaning of the label so defined as to cover a broad assortment of phenomena. Examples of this approach include Kuno's (1978) use of the term “afterthoughts” to characterize right-dislocation in Japanese, and Erguvanli's (1984) analysis of all types of postverbal elements as “backgrounding” in Turkish. Alternatively, the “taxonomic” approach identifies a set of seemingly disparate functions associated with postverbal position, without however proposing a unifying relationship among them. Thus Kim and Shin (1992) state that the functions of postposing in Korean include “corrections”, “forced displacement”, and “emphasis/confirmation”, and Junghare's (1985) list of functions for Indo-Aryan includes “de-emphasis” and “emphasis”, both distinct from “afterthoughts”, which add on something that the speaker originally neglected to say. According to this latter analysis, a syntactic distinction comes into play as well: true afterthoughts are outside the clause, while pragmatically-motivated postposings (emphasis, de-
emphasis, etc.) are crucial components of the clause itself (Junghare 1985:250).

In this paper, I analyze the functions associated with the postverbal position in Tamil, an otherwise strict verb-final language. My analysis shows that postverbal position is multifunctional in ways that cannot be captured adequately by a global functional account. Rather, I identify three distinct functional types, each associated with a characteristic intonation pattern and characteristic syntactic behaviors. Further propose that each postverbal type occupies a different underlying postverbal position, depending on whether the relevant unit of analysis is taken to be the sentence, the utterance, or the extended utterance in natural speech production. Ultimately, despite the differences among them, the three postverbal types can be seen to be synchronically related along a continuum of syntacticization (Givón 1979) reflecting differing degrees of unity between the main proposition and the right-dislocated element. These claims, along with their implications for diachronic change, are developed with evidence from spoken and written narrative texts.

1.2 The Tamil Situation

As indicated above, Tamil (a Dravidian language with basic SOV word order) is, for all intents and purposes, strictly verb-final. Herring and Paolillo (in press) found that 94% of finite clauses in spoken Tamil, and 100% of finite clauses in normative, pedagogically-oriented written Tamil narrative texts, have the finite verb in absolute sentence-final position.1 Main clauses follow dependent clauses, and verb-finality is observed in dependent clauses as well, as illustrated in example (1).

(1) ammā nāykuṭiy-ai viṭu-kk-ulē koṇṭu
mother puppy-ACC house-DAT-inside take-CP
va-naṭa uṭanē, kumār at-aik koṇcam pāl
come-P:AJP as.soon.as Kumar it-ACC little milk
koṭu-ttān.
give-P:3SG:MASC
‘As soon as mother brought the puppy into the house, Kumar gave it a little milk’.

1 The oral narratives analyzed by Herring and Paolillo include personal narrative, folk tales, and performed epics. The written narrative sample includes first and second-grade level children’s stories, and classical narratives rewritten in simplified modern Tamil for adult non-native learners.

When and why is strict verb-finality in Tamil violated? In this paper, I suggest that postposings in Tamil are essentially of three functional types: afterthought, backgrounding, and emphatic. Afterthoughts are elements that end up in postverbal position not as the result of deliberate planning, but rather by default, as a consequence of the speaker having decided after uttering the main proposition that something more needs to be added. Postverbal elements of this type may be of any category or phrase type, and fulfill a variety of after-the-fact modification functions. Backgrounding postposings, in contrast, are conventionalized, and vary systematically in function according to the grammatical category of what is postposed. Thus antitopics signal the secondary or transitional discourse-pragmatic status of (typically) nominal referents, while the conventionalized postposing of adverbials and dependent clauses functions to signal their lesser importance relative to constituents in preverbal positions. Finally, emphatic postposings involve the rightward movement of nominal referents for increased emphasis or saliency.

These three postposing types not only have different pragmatic functions, but they differ intonationally and syntactically as well. As a consequence, any attempt to subsume them under a unifunctional characterization seems destined to overlook the essential multifunctionality of postverbal position in Tamil, and would thus fail to provide an adequate description. The question then arises as to what relationship, if any, obtains among the various postposing types. Are they unrelated strategies which happen to have in common the same marked result, viz./that something construable (loosely or otherwise) as part of the same sentence appears to the right of the finite verb? Or are they related functionally or (more likely) structurally, by virtue of the fact that all employ a common structural device?

In what follows, I adduce evidence for a logical continuum of relatedness among the three postposing types with respect to degree of syntactization, or bondedness of postposing to main clause. Afterthoughts are characterized by a loose, communicatively-based association between original utterances and after-the-fact modification. For antitopics, the association is conventionalized via the pragmatic bond between the two components of the utterance. Emphatic postposing represents the most bonded or “syntactized” postposing type, in that the postposed nominal is an argument of the main clause itself. In support of the continuum-like nature of this relationship, I present evidence that native speakers blur the boundaries between the individual types by mixing functional and intonational features to represent intermediate degrees of bondedness.
2 The Investigation

2.1 The Tamil Corpus

Postverbal constituents were analyzed in 3,773 finite clauses of spoken and written Tamil narrative text. The spoken corpus, made up of 19 oral narratives representing both traditional and contemporary storytelling genres, contains postposings in 144 out of 1787 finite clauses (8.1%). The written corpus, consisting of seven published short stories by well-known 20th century Tamil authors and one fifth-grade level children's story, has postverbal elements in 141 out of 1986 (7.1%) of its finite clauses. Each finite clause containing one or more postposed elements was identified, and postposings classified by grammatical category. The following information about each postposing in the context of the overall utterance was also noted:

Intonation, i.e., 1) whether the postposed element is part of the intonation contour of the main clause, or separate; 2) whether the postposed element is preceded by a pause (or in written texts, by a comma or elipses); and 3) the degree of stress, if any, accorded the postposed element.

Discourse-pragmatic status, i.e., 1) importance (could the postposed element have been omitted without sacrificing comprehensibility?); and, for nominal referents, 2) information status, i.e., whether the information expressed by the referent is given, accessible, or new; 3) subject/topic continuation, i.e., whether the referent is continued over from the immediate previous discourse context; and 4) persistence, i.e., whether the referent persists as subject/topic in the immediate following discourse context (cf. Givón, 1983).

The results of this analysis are discussed and illustrated below.

2.2 Grammatical Postposing Types

The overwhelming majority of all postposed constituents in Tamil are NPs in the role of grammatical subject (63%). These include NPs marked for dative (i.e., in dative experiencer constructions; 9%) as well as nominative case (54%). Other phrasal types that appear in postverbal position include NPs in other case roles (15%), adverbs (9%), conjunctive participals (including direct quotes embedded by the quotative particle enru; 9%), and dependent (e.g., nominalized and infinitival clauses) (4%). Postverbal elements in Tamil invariably stand in the same case-marked relationship with respect to the verb as if they had appeared in their unmarked, preverbal position. Further, the main clause may, but need not, contain an element that is coreferential with the postverbal constituent, such as a pronoun or agreement marking on the verb. However, since Tamil is a zero anaphora language, it is not always apparent on the basis of sentences in isolation whether a postposed element is coreferential with a preverbal zero, or whether the postposed element is the argument itself, displaced over the finite verb (but cf. Section 2.3.3.)

An example of a postverbal subject (nominative) NP, a postverbal object (accusative) NP, a postverbal NP (locative) functioning as an adverbial, and a complex postverbal adverbial expression made up of a conjunctive participial and an adverb are given in (2)–(5) below

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3The short stories analyzed are “Katavulum Kantaani Pillaiyum” and “Povukalam”, by Pudumai Pittan; “Guru Pitam” and “Enko, Yaro, Yaarukkakav”, by Jeyakandam; “Marumakal Vakkku”, by Krisnan Nambi; “Ammu Mandapam”, by Sujata; and “Kalifornia Kaatuk Kuttuvilaaku”, by Indira Partasaraati. The children’s story, by V. Govindan, is entitled Pillaiyar Kovilil Piccaikkara.

4The frequent frequency of postposing here than that reported in Herring and Paolillo is due to two factors. First, with the exception of the children’s story, the written texts analyzed in the present study are literary, rather than pedagogical. Erguvali’s (1984: 67) observation that sentences with post-predicate elements in Turkish are “extremely rare ... in the more traditional or formal styles of writing”, but “far more frequent” in the language of written literature is true for Tamil as well. Second, finite clauses in quoted dialogue were included in the present study, but not in that of Herring and Paolillo. Quoted dialogue often attempts to represent colloquial speech, and thus contains a higher concentration of postpossing.

5The terms “given”, “accessible”, and “new” refer to the speaker’s assessment of what is in the hearer’s consciousness at a particular point in the discourse (Chafe 1976; 1987; ms.). “Given” information is that which has been recently mentioned, or which is “externally evoked” (Prince 1981) by some feature of the physical or psychological context, and is thus actively present in the hearer’s consciousness. “Accessible” information is that which the speaker assumes the hearer is able to access (from a previous mention, experience, context, or shared knowledge), even if it is not currently uppermost in the hearer’s thoughts. Finally, “new” information is that which is introduced for the first time, and thus not accessible from any previous source.

6Tamil distinguishes eight morphological cases: nominative (zero), accusative, dative, genitive, nominative, instrumental, locative, and ablative.

7Lambrecht (1981:79), noting a similar tendency with respect to antitopics in Spoken French, proposes an explanation grounded in linear processing:

At the time the verb is uttered, the case roles of all following NPs are already determined by the preverbal agreement markers, so that not marking the antitopic for its case would amount to ignoring syntactic information encoded more or less immediately before.

That is, since case information is derived from the verb, it is easily accessed after the main proposition has been uttered. In this respect, right-dislocations differ from left-dislocations or “fronting” operations, which do not preserve case distinctions in a number of languages.
order change in Niger-Congo languages, describes the motivation for afterthought “postposing” as follows:

Once the speaker has put the verb down (in a strict SOV language), it is no longer possible to add anything. However the speaker may forget to say something in the course of an utterance; or he may find that it is necessary to add something, because his interlocutor has not understood; or he may realize that the sentence he just uttered is unclear or ambiguous. In all of these cases (and doubtless others), he may wish to add something after the verb-final utterance. (Hyma 1975:119–120).

The Tamil postverbal “afterthought” type fits this characterization well. Afterthoughts in the Tamil corpus function as additions, corrections, reformulations, and explanations, as illustrated in (6)–(8) below.

(6) t̪uŋ oluː pr̥i tuition, alaːk funnel t̪uŋ.
     pillar one be-PR-3SG:NEUT beautiful pillar
     ‘There’s a pillar (there), a beautiful pillar’.

(7) enk̪a father.. av- avar at-ile member, theosophical
     our father h- he that-LOC member theosophical
     society-loc
     ‘My father, h- he was a member of that, of the theosophical society.’

(8) anta viːɾaŋ .. ina c̪aːtti ga-ccc, oru iːṭt̪-uuku
     that soldier this whip put-CP one place-DAT
     kūtu t̪tu va-rəru, ați k̪kir-atu-kku .. ați
     come-CP come-PR-3RESP beat-PR-VN-DAT blow
     vaŋk-a ați k̪kir-atu-kku.
     receive-INF beat-PR-VN-DAT
     ‘The soldier takes this whip, and brings [Tenaliraman] to
     a place, for the beating .. in order [for Tenaliraman] to
     receive the blows- for the beating.’

In example (6), the speaker adds the supplementary information that the pillar is ‘beautiful’ after the first part of the utterance is already complete. The speaker in example (7) — an elderly man — appears momentarily unable to recall the term ‘theosophical society’; he marks its position and case role in the clause with the pronoun at-ile ‘that
     (thing)-LOC and later appends the full NP, also marked for locative

For the purposes of this paper, I have elected to translate Tamil postposed

Note that this sentence, which is equational, does not contain an overt copular

In such constructions, the predicate nominal normally occupies the position of

2.3 Functional Postposing Types

2.3.1 Afterthoughts

The first and most basic motivation for placing an element after the

finite verb in Tamil is as an afterthought in unplanned speech. True

afterthoughts function as modifications, i.e., to clarify or add to information that

the speaker assesses to be insufficient as uttered. Hyma (1975), who claims that afterthoughts play an important role in word

A disadvantage of this method of translation is that the meaning of the Tamil sentences can only be fully appreciated through the accompanying discussion; the advantage, however, is that no additional complexities of interpretation inhering in the English structures are introduced.
case, as a correction of sorts. Finally, in explicating the purpose of the action of the main clause postverbally in (8), the speaker appears concerned to avoid any possible vagueness or confusion. Presumably, these and similar modifications appear after the finite verb because the speaker had not thought to include them when he formulated his original utterance.

True afterthoughts are typically associated with a prosodic contour which signals their after-the-fact nature. In (6)-(8), the postverbal material is set off from the main utterance by a pause, represented in the transcription system by a comma. In even more clear-cut cases, the speaker comes to a full stop before appending the afterthought material in an interonationally-separate utterance, as in (9) below.

(9) Appuṟam vantu, oru letter pōṭ-t-ā. Anke then TOP one letter send-P-3SG:FEM there yār-ukkum pāṭi-kka teriy-ātu. Anta no-one-DAT read-INF know-NP:NEG:3SG:NEUT that letter-ai. letter-ACC 'And then, she sent a letter. No one there knew how to read (it). The letter.'

In this example, after completing her second utterance, the speaker apparently realizes that it is potentially ambiguous (taken out of context, the utterance can mean either ‘No one there knows how to read’ or ‘No one there knows how to read (it)’). She then goes on to restrict the interpretation by adding the direct object ‘the letter’, marked for accusative case, in an interonationally separate unit. In all instances, the clause preceding the afterthought could stand alone; that is, it is interonationally independent, having fallen, falling interonation, a fact which further suggests that the afterthoughts in these examples were generated by the speaker after the clause was already complete.

Lambrecht (1981), following Hyman (1975), claims that true afterthoughts tend to receive prosodic stress. Most postverbal elements that serve a repair function and follow a break in timing in the Tamil corpus, however, show only very slight stress. This raises the question often discussed in connection with right-dislocation of the ‘importance’ of what appears after the finite verb. In principle, true afterthoughts could contain information that is essential for the overall communication, as in (7) above. Typically, however, competent speakers do not “forget” essential information very often. Rather, most of the afterthoughts in the Tamil corpus appear to have been added on “just in case” the speaker’s intended meaning was not clear; they could have been left off without seriously compromising the success of the communication. The tendency to stress afterthought material only slightly, if at all, is in keeping with this observation. Further, afterthoughts in the corpus tend to favor given or accessible, rather than new information, and thus rarely modify the clause in a way that is surprising or unpredictable. It is important to note, however, that these observations are tendencies, rather than structural or pragmatic constraints on afterthoughts, the production of which is in an important sense outside the conscious control of the speaker.

2.3.2 Conventionalized Postposing: Backgrounding

Not all elements that appear after the finite verb in Tamil are afterthoughts or post facto repairs; some, indeed the majority, are deliberate postposings. If nothing else, the fact that 141 orthographical sentences in the published written texts have postverbal elements provides evidence for this claim; given the editorial process, we would expect such elements, if indeed they were true afterthoughts, to have been edited out. What we find in written Tamil texts and in much of the spoken language as well are what have been referred to by Erguvanî (1984) for Turkish as “backgrounding” postposings. Moving constituents to the right of the finite verb in a verb-final language such as Turkish or Tamil serves the pragmatic function of assigning to such constituents a de-emphasized status in the discourse. The term “backgrounding” is somewhat problematic, however, in that in Tamil, a speaker/writer also has the option of “backgrounding” a referent by leaving out mention of it altogether, i.e., as a zero anaphor. More accurately, then, we might say that Tamil distinguishes three degrees of “ground”: a salient “foreground” (associated with preverbal positions, especially sentence-initial and immediate preverbal positions); a “background” (associated with zero anaphora); and an “intermediate ground” (associated with postverbal position).

The notion of “intermediate ground” derives via implication from the normal associations of true afterthoughts. As noted above, afterthoughts typically do not contain essential information, or they would not have been left out in the first place. Nor are they trivial, or the speaker would not have bothered to append them as afterthoughts. Their importance is intermediate between information uttered preverbally, and information left unsaid. “Intermediate ground” postposings, in their most general sense, can be seen to represent a conventional-
Antitopics (cf. Chafe 1976) are otherwise topical NPs that the speaker elects for discourse-pragmatic reasons to situate postverbally. Like preverbal topics, they tend to encode thematically important referents which are given, or at least potentially accessible, information prior to being antitopicalized, and which stand in a general “aboutness” relationship to the predicate of the main clause. Generally speaking, antitopicalization indicates that a referent has either been promoted or demoted to intermediate ground. According to the promotion strategy, postposing reactivates referents that were previously mentioned but which have since lapsed into accessible (i.e., background) information status. The demotion strategy, in contrast, deactivates referents that are currently given (active, i.e., foreground) information.

The first strategy is found in all of the written narratives, and in many oral narratives as well. Its primary function is to reintroduce thematic referents that were previously active but have since lapsed into semi-active or accessible information status (Chafe 1987, ms.), typically because another referent has taken over as topic in the interim. In the short story from which the following passage was excerpted, Murugesan’s wife Ammalu has been introduced and described ten sentences earlier.


In this example, the status of Ammalu as active, “given” information has lapsed in the 18 sentences since she was first mentioned, and hence, she must be reactivated. Her role in this mention is not foregrounded — indeed the sequence as a whole is about Murugesan —; rather, she is represented as an antitopic, on intermediate ground. To borrow a theatrical metaphor, she emerges from the wings for a brief appearance, but not to occupy center stage.

While far from categorical in the corpus overall, the strategy of postposing to reactivate previously-mentioned referents is highly systematic in a number of the written short stories. In the story from which the following excerpt was taken,11 referents tend to appear postverbally whenever the subject has switched from that of the previous sentence. Antitopicalization here functions as a device for referent tracking, akin to retrospective or “backward-looking” switch reference systems in other languages.

(11) nāṟṟam avar-įṭam aintu pattu rūpāy Norman he-LOC five ten rupee nōṭtu-kkalai eṅn-ik koṟu-tt-ān. “itu bill-PL-ACC count-CP give-P-3SG:MASC this

11 “Kaliforniyā Kaṇṭa Kuttuvilakku”, by Indira Parttasarati.
etu-kku?” enru kēt-t-ār pafftu.
what-DAT QUOT ask-P-3RESP Pattu
avar-ukku nārmān mitu ciṟitu kōpam
he-DAT Norman on little anger
dēpāt-t-atu. “ūnkaḷ kamīsan...”
experience-P-3SG:NEUT your commission
ej-t-ān nārmān. “nalla kamīsan...”
say-P-3SG:MASC Norman good commission
eŋru coll-kko-ŋ-ē paṇṭṭ-ai vāṅk-i
QUOT say-hold-CP-EMPH money-ACC receive-CP
itupp-il ceruki-kko-ŋ-ār pafftu.
waist-LOC insert-BEN-P-3SG:RESP Pattu
“cāppāt-ukku enña ēpātū ndata kēl-unkō...”
food-DAT what plan QUOT ask-IMP:PL
en-t-ān raṅku.
say-P-3SG:MASC Rangi
‘Norman counted out five ten rupee bills and gave (them) to him. “What’s this for?” asked Pattu.
He felt a twinge of anger at Norman.
Your commission, said Norman.
Saying “Nice commission, took the money and tucked it into (the pouch at) his waist Pattu.
“Ask him what he plans to do for meals,” said Rangi.’

In written narrative, “switch reference” postposing is especially common in reported dialogue to signal a change of speaker, as in the example above: fully 81% of postposed NPs follow a quote and a verb of saying, as compared with only 11% which follow a quote in the oral narratives.12

Further evidence for the switch-reference function of postposing is found in contexts where the postposed NP is ambiguous (i.e., could refer to more than one locally-accessible referent). In such instances, the fact of postposing alone may signal that a switch in topic/subject has taken place. This is illustrated in the oral example in (12).

(12) avan-utaiya māmān cakuṇi anku varu-kiṟ-āŋ.
he-GEN uncle Cakuṇi there come-PR-3SG:MASC
(...) appaṭi kaivy-ai va-cc-āṅ. tirumpi
thus hand-ACC place-P-3SG:MASC turn-CP
pār-kiṟ-āṅ avan.
look-PR-3SG:MASC he
‘His uncle Cakuṇi comes there. (...) (He) placed his hand (on his shoulder). Turns around and looks he.’

In this passage, both uncle Cakuṇi and his nephew are third person singular masculine referents, as indicated by the agreement marker -āṅ on the finite verbs. Although the personal subject pronoun avan he could refer equally well to either, the fact that it is postposed in the final utterance effectively shifts the reference from the subject of the previous utterance (Cakuṇi) to the other participant; that is, it is the nephew who turns around and looks.

Antitopics where the subject/topic switches from that of the immediately preceding utterance account for 78% of all antitopics in the written narratives, and 60% of those in the oral narratives. Of these, those in the oral texts continue as topical in the subsequent discourse in a slight majority (59%) of uses, while those in written texts are followed by another shift in topic 79% of the time that is, they typically represent an entity that is only topical for the duration of one sentence.13

The second antitopicalization strategy, which is in some respects the mirror image of that described above, is attested exclusively in oral narration. According to this strategy, a topic/subject in active “given” status is demoted or deactivated to intermediate status via postposing (that is, it is moved from center stage to a less prominent position on the stage). No switch from the previous subject/topic is involved; rather the topical status of a continuous referent is modified. Examples of this type are given in (13)-(15) below.

(13) rājāv-ai pākk-aiy-ile kāvalar-kaḷ varicaiy-ā
king-ACC see-VN-LOC guard-PL row-ADV
ni-p-āṅka. rājā anke iru-nt-ār nāā...
stand-F-3PL king there be-P-3RESP COND

12These and related correlations are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 at the end of this section.
mūṟu vēcār-le kāvalar-kāl ni-pp-ānka. reṇtu
three gate-LOC guard-PL stand-3PL two
reṇtu pēr-ā reṇtu reṇtu pēr-ā.
two people-ADV two two people-ADV
appa uḷḷa vita-māṭ-ēṅ-t-ānka kāvalar-kāl.
then inside let-F:NEG-1SG-(say)-PFV:P-3PL guard-PL
appa tāṅ tenāllirāmān colliy-iru-kk-āṅ.
then EMPH Tenāllirāmān say-PERF-PR-3SG:MASC
‘When (he goes) to see the king, guards are standing in rows.
If the king was there, guards would stand at the three gates.
Two by two. And wouldn’t let (him) inside the guards
(i.e., the guards wouldn’t let him inside).
So then Tenālliraman speaks, it seems.’

(14) Avaṇ kācā vēra anvaiikki
he ganja moreover that day
kutīc-iru-kk-āṅ. Kačā ellām
smoke-PERF-PR-3SG:MASC ganja all
pōtu-v-āṅ avaṇ. appuram vanu, anta
put-F-3SG:MASC he afterwards TOP that
kutirai mēle ēt-i,
horse top climb-CP
‘He’d smoked ganja too that day. Did ganja and
everything he. Afterwards, (he) climbed on the horse, and ...’

(15) nāṅ tāṅ, āmā, anta patil-ellām nāṅ tāṅ
I EMPH yes that answer-all I EMPH
write-P-1SG one-four-five letter write-P-1SG I
at-ile mu-kkāl vāci ena eḷutu-v-ūm?
that-LOC three-quarter time what write-F-1PL
‘I, yeah, I wrote all the replies. Wrote about four or five
letters I. (You know) what we wrote most of the time? ...’

A question which immediately arises regarding examples of this type
is the following: if the function of postposing a same subject/topic refer-
ent is to demote it to a lesser status, and if there is no competing
intervening subject/topic with which it could be confused, why men-
tion it at all? Why not simply “background” it by encoding it as an
anaphoric zero?

The key to understanding the presence of such mentions can be
found in the utterances which immediately follow antitopics of this
type. In each case, there is a shift to a new topic after the clause
containing the postposing: in (13), from the guards to Tenālliraman;
in (14), from the ganja-smoking of the protagonist to his accident on
horseback (not directly related to smoking ganja, but rather to the
wildness of the horse); and in (15), from the speakers agency in letter-
writing, to the content of the letters themselves. In the switch-reference
examples considered previously, different-subject antitopics retrospec-
tively mark a shift from one topical entity to the next. Same-subject
antitopics, in contrast, mark a topic shift prospectively (i.e., they signal
that a shift is about to occur).

Further compelling evidence of the prospective-switching function
is found in examples such as the following, where a zeroed topic is
re-introduced as an antitopic immediately prior to a switch to a new
topic, for no apparent reason other than to highlight the switch. In
the text preceding example (16), Kovalan — the errant husband of the
faithful Kannaki — has been the topic of four consecutive utterances,
in the first of which he is referred to by a full NP, in the second and
third by a pronoun avaṇ ‘he’, and in the last utterance, by an anaphoric
zero (i.e., only via subject agreement on the finite verb). He is thus a
well-established thematic referent at this point in the narration.

(16) anta vēcī-in-utaiya viṭ-ley-ē
that prostitute-INC-GEN house-LOC-EMPH
iru-kk-āṅ. [zero]
be-PR-3SG:MASC
māṭavī viṭ-ley-ē iru-kk-āṅ avaṇ.
Matavi house-LOC-EMPH be-PR-3SG:MASC he
[postposed pronoun]
kaṇṇaki .. aval viṭ-le iru-kk-ā.
Kannaki her house-LOC be-PR-3SG:FEM
[preverbal NP — new topic]
‘(He)’s staying only at the prostitute’s house.
(He)’s staying only at Madavi’s house he.
Kannaki .. is at her (own) house.’

The pronoun avaṇ is reintroduced in postverbal position in the clause
immediately preceding the shift in topic to Kannaki. As such, it both
closes off the topic of the husband and signals that a different topic is
to follow.

Finally, the prospective-switching function also accounts for some
otherwise anomalous instances in colloquial speech where an NP —
typically a pronoun — is mentioned both preverbally and postverbally
in the same utterance. In such cases, the speaker apparently decides to
change topic in the following utterance after having already encoded an overt subject in clause-initial subject position. He modifies his utterance to signal the upcoming topic shift by (redundantly) postposing a subject pronoun, as in (17).

(17) utāqē avan caṭṭai-ai ētu-ttu āti ētu āti
then he whip-ACC take-CP blow eight blow
aticc-ī-t-ān avan. tiruppi-1 atutta itu-kku
hit-PFV-P-3SG:MASC he turn-CP next thing-DAT
vā-t-ār.
come-PR-3RESP
’Then he [the soldier] took the whip
and struck eight blows he. He [Tenaliraman] turns and comes
to the next thing.’

There is a correlation between antitopics that continue the same
topic as that of the previous clause, and an immediately following shift
in topic: 69% of all instances of the phenomenon are followed by a
topic shift. In the spoken language, the two antitopicalization strate-
gies are complementary in distribution and function, with different-
subject antitopics typically continuing as topics in what follows, and
same-subject antitopics followed by an immediate shift in topic. In the
written texts, in contrast, both same-subject and different-subject antitopics are followed by a shift in topic the majority of the time (77%).

The correlation between antitopicalization, previous topic, and follow-
ing topic is summarized in Table 1 (for written Tamil) and Table 2 (for
spoken Tamil).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>following topic same</th>
<th>following topic different</th>
<th>Total:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>previous topic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>same</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td>N=28 (22%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>different</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>N=21</td>
<td>N=81</td>
<td>N=102 (78%)</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>N=30</td>
<td>N=100</td>
<td>N=130 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Antitopicalization and topic continuity in Written Tamil

In all, 93% (N=121) of antitopics in the written texts and 88% (N=71) of antitopics in the spoken texts correspond to a topic switch in one
direction or the other, as compared with only 6% (N=9) of the written
texts and 12% (N=10) of the spoken texts where the topic remains
the same throughout. Antitopicalization in Tamil thus generally functions
to indicate topics that are transitional in the discourse.

In addition to their discourse-pragmatic characteristics, antitopic
constructions have prosodic characteristics that further distinguish
them from true afterthoughts. While true afterthoughts are typically
separated from the finite verb by a break in timing, antitopics are incor-
porated along with the finite verb as part of a unified intonation
contour.14 Moreover, while the postverbal element in an afterthought
construction may receive some degree of stress, antitopics are invari-
ably unstressed, that is, uttered with lowered pitch and volume, and
often with increased tempo. In both constructions, the main stress
in the utterance, if there is one, falls on or before the finite verb.15

The two resulting prosodic contours are illustrated for the minimal pair in (18), based on the sequence veliyē pongān kāñ̄an, lit. ‘outside
go-P-3SG:MASC Kān’ān’.

(18) a. veliyē pongān, kāñ̄an. Went outside, Kān’ān. (i.e., He
went
[Kān’ān’ is an afterthought]

b. veliyē pongān kāñ̄an. Went outside Kān’ān.
[Kān’ān’ is an antitopic]

14Correspondingly, in the written examples, no comma appears between an antitopic and its main clause (see examples (10) and (11)).
15The issue of whether Tamil has predictable stress (or “accent”) has been the subject of some debate (Andronov 1975; Asher 1985; Christdas 1988). In the
present corpus, stress appears to be primarily emphatic, and hence variable from utterance to utterance.
The existence of prosodic differences of this sort suggests that there is a closer unity between antitopics and their immediately preceding clauses than between afterthoughts and the clauses they follow.

**Adverbal and dependent clause postposing**

The second major sub-type of intermediate ground postposing involves adverbials and dependent clause constructions. Such postposings specify additional modification (manner, time, location, purpose, etc.) to the main predicate of the utterance, and as such would appear to be of secondary or intermediate importance by definition, even though the information they contain is often strictly speaking not recoverable from context. In general, postposed adverbials and clauses are best analyzed as conventionalized afterthoughts, without further pragmatic specialization. One possible motive for appending them after the finite verb, especially in unplanned speech, is as a means of stating the important information (i.e., subject and predicate) first, without the clutter of adverbial detail, a strategy which Aske (1991), following Dik (1989), calls “uncluttering the pre-field”, and which Kim and Shin (1992) characterize as “forced displacement”. A motive of this sort may be discerned in examples such as the following.

(19) aapuṟam rompa nāḷ kāli-ccu, letter then many day pass-CP letter
vant-iru-ccu, anta pongu kkiṭṭa iruntu.
come-PERF-P-3SG:NEUT that girl-ABL
‘Then many days later, the letter arrived, from the girl.’

(20) vāḷ-aī etu-kkuṟ-āṅ vēṭ-r-atu-kkāka vēṇṭi.
sword-ACC take-PR-3SG:MASC cut-PR-VN-BEN PURP
‘He takes up the sword in order to cut.’

In these examples, the speakers state the information that advances the narrative story line first (the letter arrived; he takes up the sword), followed by adverbial modification (source; purpose) in postverbal position. The principle of reserving preverbal positions for important information could also account for the tendency for subject NPs to be postposed after quotes.16

**Evidence of the status of postposed adverbials relative to other**

16A more marked variant of the “most important information first” strategy allows the finite verb to appear in sentence-initial position, followed by its arguments and modifiers. This is illustrated in the following dialogue, from the short story “Ammā Mandapam”.

A: “vint-i vint-i naṭa-nṭ-āṅ-ṭ?”
limp-CP limp-CP walk-P-3SG:MASC-Q

B: “ōt-in-aṅ rompa vēkkamā ... pora-nṭu kont-e.”
run-P-3SG:MASC very fast fear-CP hold-CP-EMPH

A: “Did (he) walk with a limp?”
B: “(He) run, really fast ... (like he) was scared.”

What appears to motivate this example is not so much a need to postpone the adverbials, as it is to prepose the verb, i.e., to emphasize the verbal action and contrast it with the verb of the preceding utterance.

The other combinations attested are antitopic + afterthought (26%), afterthought + afterthought (22%), adverbial + adverbial (9%), and antitopic + antitopic (4%). No combinations of three or more postverbal elements were found in the corpus.
afterthought or backgrounding functions described above,\textsuperscript{18} appearing primarily in traditional oral narrative genres such as Villu Pațṭu (‘Bow Song’) or Kathākālakāśēpam performances. Postposings of this type involve the presentation of new and/or emphasized nominal referents. Unlike the other postverbal types, emphatic postposed referents are intonationally highly stressed. Moreover, each is the unique focus of assertion of the sentence in which it appears, and thus must be considered to occupy a position within, rather than outside, the clause.

The principal pragmatic function of emphatic postposing is the presentation of new referents into the discourse; the referent is then treated as given information and elaborated upon in the clauses that follow. Examples of new referent presentation are given in (27) and (28).\textsuperscript{19,20}

(27) ēḻu pēr-un tān mūgikī mūgikī 7 people-and EMPH immerse:CP immerse:CP nīr-āṭa-r-āḷ-e ... Uṭaṅe pār-tt-āḷ water-play-PR-3SG:FEM-TAG suddenly see-3SG:FEM at-āḷ eṟuṭṭi! “atiyē! nāṁ vantu that-LOC one:female FEM-VOC TOP evravu nērām ā-kiṟ-āṭu” how.much.time become-PR-3SG:NEUT
‘All seven of them are immersing themselves and playing in the water, right? Suddenly looked up one of them! (i.e., one of them looked up!) “Hey! It’s getting late!” (she said)’

(28) Nappācāi unṭ-ākki-n-āṇ. It-aik false.desire exist.cause to be-P-3SG:MASC This-ACC kēṭ-ṭ-āṇ viṟurum. avaṇ nallavaṇ cittappā hear-P-3SG:MASC Viduran he good-MASC uncle ēṇa, nāṭṭ-ai vaiṭtu āṭu-v-āṭ-ā? vēnt-ām, what country-ACC place-CP play-F-VN-Q must.neg

\textsuperscript{18} Just under 10\% of the postposings in the oral corpus are of this type, including hybrid uses such as that illustrated in example (35).
\textsuperscript{19} Both of these examples are from performances in the Villu Paṭṭu tradition.
\textsuperscript{20} Note that (28) contains, in addition to the emphatic postposing viṟurun, an antitopic avasē ‘he’ (here signaling a prospective topic switch) and an afterthought elaboration, cittappā ‘uncle’.

2.3.3 Emphatic Postposing
We come now to the third function of postposing in Tamil: emphasis. This type is considerably more restricted in occurrence than the
the verb falls, rather than rises, and the postposed constituent receives little or no stress. Applying this intonation pattern to the sample sentence in (18a–b) produces the following utterance, in which the postposed NP ‘Kaṇṇan’ is emphasized, i.e., as a focus of immediate subsequent interest in the discourse.

(18) c.
veliyē pōṇaṅ kaṇṇaṅ! Went outside Kaṇṇan!
[‘Kaṇṇan’ is emphasized]

The fact that the heaviest stress falls not on the verb but rather on the postverbal NP provides strong evidence that postverbal position in emphatic constructions of this type is clause-internal.

There is independent syntactic evidence for this view as well. To begin with, an overt subject pronoun cannot be added to the beginning of (18c) above, a fact which suggests that the postposed NP is itself the subject of the clause, rather than a co-referential copy of an anaphoric zero in preverbal position.

(18) c’.
*avan veliyē pōṇaṅ kaṇṇaṅ! He went outside Kaṇṇan!
[‘Kaṇṇan’ is emphasized]

In contrast, the same sentence with Kaṇṇan as an antitopic is acceptable (although somewhat odd pragmatically; cf. example (17) above), and with Kaṇṇan as an afterthought, is both acceptable and perfectly normal.

(18) b’.
?avan veliyē pōṇaṅ kaṇṇaṅ. He went outside Kaṇṇan.
[‘Kaṇṇan’ is an antitopic]

a’.
avan veliyē pōṇaṅ, kaṇṇaṅ. He went outside, Kaṇṇan
(that is).
[‘Kaṇṇan’ is an afterthought]

Second, while it is marginally possible to follow an emphatic postposing with an antitopic, the reverse order is not possible (at least, not if emphatic intonation and function is intended).

This observation is based on elicited data. The constraint against sequences of emphatic postposing + antitopic appears to be pragmatic, rather than syntactic. It is somehow odd to focus one referent and antitopicalize another (e.g., for purposes of switch reference) in the same utterance; presentational focus, when it occurs, appears to take precedence over all other word-order related pragmatic operations. It follows from this that sequences of emphatic + antitopic + afterthought are also odd, although the combined relative ordering of emphatic + antitopic and antitopic + afterthought leads us to expect that if the three postposing types did co-occur, they would occur in this order.
(30) Utañē pār-ṭāḷ at-ilē orutti!
suddenly see-P-3SG:FEM that-LOC one:female
anta paittīyakkāraṁ-aī.
that crazy-MASC-ACC
‘Suddenly looked up one of them, at the crazy man.’
(i.e., ‘Suddenly one of them looked up at the crazy man.’)

(31) * Utañē pār-ṭāḷ anta paittīyakkāraṁ-aī
suddenly see-P-3SG:FEM that crazy-MASC-ACC
at-ilē orutti!
that-LOC one:female
‘Suddenly looked up, at the crazy man. One of them.’

Further, there can be only one emphatic postponing per sentence, although sentences with more than one backgrounding postponing are possible.23

Finally, emphatic postponing is precluded if another constituent in the sentence is in focus. Unlike antitopics (A-TOP) or afterthoughts, emphatic focus cannot co-occur with questions or negation, as shown by (32)–(34).

(32) a. *It-aik kēṭ-tān-ā vituran?
this-ACC hear-P-3SG:MASC-Q Vituran
‘Heard this Vituran?’ [Vituran is emphasized]

b. It-aik kēṭ-tān-ā vituran?
this-ACC hear-P-3SG:MASC-Q Vituran
‘Heard this(,) Vituran?’ [V. is A-TOP or afterthought]

(33) a. *enna kēṭ-tāṅ vituran?
what hear-P-3SG:MASC Vituran
‘What heard Vituran?’ [Vituran is emphasized]

b. enna kēṭ-tāṅ vituran?
what hear-P-3SG:MASC Vituran
‘What heard(,) Vituran?’ [V. is A-TOP or afterthought]

23See Fn. 17.

(34) a. *It-aik kēṭ-kav-illai vituran!
this-ACC hear-NF-NEG Vituran
‘Didn’t hear it Vituran!’ [Vituran is emphasized]

b. It-aik kēṭ-kav-illai vituran.
This-ACC hear-NF-NEG Vituran
‘Didn’t hear it(,) Vituran.’ [V. is A-TOP or afterthought]

These restrictions fall out from the fact that focus in Tamil is syntactically unique—that is, there can be one and only one constituent in focus per clause. The incompatibility of emphatic postponing with focusing operations such as question formation and negation supports the view that emphatic postponing is itself focused.

3 Summary and Discussion

I have presented functional, intonational, and syntactic evidence in support of the view that postverbal elements in Tamil are of three distinct types. To the extent that this view is correct, it should be apparent that the question of how and why strict verb-finality is violated cannot be answered by a single generalization on either formal or functional grounds. Indeed, it may not be going too far to state that the only feature all instances of postverbal word order in Tamil have in common is postverbal word order.

Having said that, I would like to go further and suggest that even such an apparently tautological statement is incorrect, if by “postverbal word order” we mean that all elements that appear to the right of the finite verb occupy the same underlying position and are the result of the same formal process (e.g., “right-dislocation”). Rather, the evidence suggests that there are three underlying postverbal positions, each of which operates according to different principles within a different linguistic domain.

3.1 Postverbal Positions and Linguistic Domains

The most general domain evoked here is that of speech production. The production domain includes not only (more or less) complete grammatical utterances, but afterthoughts which repair or modify the communication in a variety of ways. Afterthoughts are in a loose syntactic and pragmatic relationship to the assertion in the main clause, and may be separated from it prosodically by separate intonation contours and pauses, and syntactically by other post-clausal elements such as antitopics. It makes little sense to say that afterthoughts are “right-
dislocated" in a transformational sense; rather they end up after the finite verb by default, as a consequence of the linear nature of speech production.

Antitopics, in turn, occupy a position that is closer to and intonationally unified with the main clause. This position is systematically associated with pragmatic functions related to information status, thematicity, topicality, grounding, etc., and thus the domain within which the position operates may be termed the pragmatic domain. If both an antitopic and an afterthought appear, the former precedes the latter, and thus can be considered to form a tighter syntactic bond with the main clause, although the unity can be interrupted by an emphatic postverbal element.²⁴ Because of the intentional nature of such postposings, they can be considered to “move” rightward, or rather, a copy of the referent moves, leaving a coreferential pronoun or zero in preverbal position.

Finally, emphatic focus postposings occupy a position inside the clause, immediately after the finite verb. They are syntactically focused, pragmatically salient, and intonationally stressed. The position is further subject to a variety of formal co-occurrence constraints to which the other positions are not, and thus is defined, at least in part, within the syntactic or clause-level domain. Postposings of this type represent the clearest cases of movement, since it is the argument itself that appears postverbally (i.e., no copy or trace remains in preverbal position).

Figure 1 schematically represents the relationships among the three postverbal positions and their respective domains. Note that for each post-clausal position, there is an analogous preclausal position and a function associated with it. Afterthoughts mirror false starts, prefatory comments, etc. that may occur in natural speech production before the speaker embarks on the utterance proper. The unit containing these production-based elements constitutes an extended utterance. On the utterance level, antitopics are paired with presentential topics, i.e., those of the marked or shifted variety, as in the English expression "as for X, ..." and the Tamil expression 'X vantu, ...' or 'X engal ....'

Finally, within the sentence itself, initial (subject) position is preferred for non-shifted topics, and this function is mirrored by sentence-final 'focus' position, represented in the diagram as F.²⁵

²⁴ Backgrounding adverbials should probably be included in the pragmatic domain as well, although it is difficult to draw a principled distinction between them and true afterthoughts.

²⁵ I include F in the diagram as part of a maximally differentiated system, e.g., that

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Figure 1: Functional positions in three domains in Tamil

As figure 1 suggests, the three postverbal positions are situated along a continuum of increasing closeness of bond between postverbal element and finite clause, proceeding inward from speech production in contexts of use to the pragmatic and ultimately to the syntactic or sentence-level domain. That is, the three types pattern synchronically according to a model that was originally intended by Givón (1979:222) to describe a diachronic process, that of syntactization, whereby “[tightly bound] constructions arise diachronically ... from looser, conjoined, paratactic constructions.”²⁶ The question then arises as to whether the model implies a necessary diachronic relationship among the three postposing types in Tamil.

²⁶ Cf. also Leumann (1985) and Traugott (1993).
3.2 Diachronic Considerations

Unfortunately, few studies to date have addressed the history of word order in Tamil, and none systematically. Lacking diachronic data, I can only speculate as to which of the postposing types came first, and whether or not there is a direct historical relationship among them. For the purposes of this discussion, I will assume (along with Givón) a path of diachronic development that mirrors the syntacticization continuum. The problem is then to account for two links: that between afterthoughts and backgroundings, and that between backgroundings and emphasis.

It is implicit in a number of studies (Lambrecht 1981, Erguvanli 1984) that antitopics and other conventionalized backgrounding postposings have their genesis in true afterthoughts. Indeed such a development is consistent with general principles of grammaticalization as articulated by Hopper (1991); specifically, the tendency for an emerging grammatical structure to be more restricted in function and distribution than its source, and the tendency for older and newer functions to coexist in a “layered” synchronic relationship. A diachronic development from backgroundings to backgrounding postposings, with the latter representing a conventionalization and a specialization of the functions of the former, is highly plausible according to these criteria.

The relationship between backgrounding and emphasis is more controversial. On the one hand, a relatively high frequency of backgrounding postposings could have at some point licensed a weakening of the strict verb-final constraint, thereby opening the door for postposings of other (i.e., non-backgrounding) functional types. Such a view can be reinforced by appealing to the notion of sentence-final focus position as a pragmatic (or language type-relative) universal (cf. Firbas 1964; Halliday 1967; Herring 1990; Herring and Paolillo in press; Hetzron 1975). On the other hand, a shift in function from backgrounding (de-emphasis) to emphasis is not widely attested in languages for which diachronic evidence is available, nor is there direct evidence to support such an interpretation for Tamil. On the contrary, the fact that emphatic postposing is limited to traditional oral performance genres suggests that the strategy, rather than being innovating, may be archaic, a relic of a time when word order in Tamil was less strict. In light of these considerations, and until such time as historical research establishes a direct link, we cannot assume any necessary diachronic relationship between backgrounding postposing and emphatic postposing.

Does this then mean that the continuum model is flawed as a description of the facts of postposing in Tamil? Not at all. It is valid in two important respects. First, the properties of each postposing type are amenable to being arranged in a particular linear order, that order being the same regardless of whether the criterion is syntactic bondness, intonation, or motivatedness of function; this is presumably not a random coincidence, but rather reflects a principled relationship. Second, the actual attested data represent a gradient of uses. Thus in addition to the “core” cases presented as examples of each type above, there are “mixed” or “hybrid” uses, where features of one type are combined with features of another. For example, much of the difficulty in distinguishing afterthought adverbiales and conventionalized adverbiales postposings in speech is that both sometimes follow an intonational break (normally a feature of afterthought alone); cf. the variation in examples (19) and (20) above. This represents an area where the two postposing types are not separated by a very great functional distance. Moreover, antitopics as well are sometimes accompanied by true afterthought intonation, i.e., delivered as if they were afterthoughts when they clearly fulfill a specific pragmatic function, a fact which suggests that the notion of the afterthought is available in some sense even in conventionalized uses. The antitopic “king” in (21) could be considered an example of this type, although antitopics following an even more pronounced intonational break can be identified in the corpus. More surprising perhaps are uses which blur the distinction between antitopicalization and emphasis, two functions which might at first glance appear to be mutually exclusive. In traditional oral epic narration, referents that otherwise function as antitopics e.g., for purposes of switch reference are sometimes intonationally emphasized, as in the following example.

30 A possible link preserved between the two is various stylistic connotations speech containing true afterthoughts may possess informality, spontaneity, colloquiality, etc. These observations are not surprising, of course, if true afterthoughts and backgrounding postposings are diachronically related, the latter arising out of the former as “conventionalizations” of the afterthought strategy.
31 There are also postposings that appear to function as true afterthoughts which do not follow an intonational break, e.g. “uncle” in example (28).
3.3 Conclusion

In concluding, I return to the problem of postposing in verb-final languages more generally. Despite differences in terminology and descriptive approach, the studies cited at the outset agree remarkably in terms of what constitutes the overall functional character of postverbal position. Kuno (1978) uses the term “afterthoughts” to characterize what in our terms would be both afterthoughts and backgrounding in Japanese (cf. also Fuji 1991), and Erguvanlı (1984) labels as “backgrounding” a similarly diverse set of phenomena in Turkish. The same three functions, more or less, as are found in Tamil are attributed by Kim and Shin (1992) to Korean and by Junghare (1985) to Indo-Aryan: afterthoughts (“corrections”), de-emphasis, and emphasis. All languages, presumably, make use of afterthoughts as a repair mechanism in unplanned speech. Further, it would seem that this strategy regularly becomes conventionalized in a backgrounding or de-emphatic function. Emphatic postposing, in contrast, is considerably more restricted in its occurrence crosslinguistically and within any given language (it is the least frequently attested type in both Korean and Indo-Aryan). Presumably, this is due to the fact that postverbal emphatics, as focusing devices, form a closer syntactic bond with the main clause, and thus constitute a potential threat to basic word order in ways that more loosely conjoined afterthoughts, antitopics, etc. do not. Thus the continuum model, in addition to accounting for the facts of Modern Tamil, has implications for the analysis of postposing more generally.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges, with thanks, insightful criticism by Wallace Chafe, James Gair, Talmey Givón, Alan Kim, Knud Lambrecht, and John Paoliello of an earlier version of this paper.
APPENDIX: Abbreviations

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1. first person
2. second person
3. third person

References


Junghare, I. Y. 1985. The functions of word order variants in Indo-Aryan. In E. Bashir, M. Deshpande, and P. Hook (Eds.), *Select Papers from SALA-7: South Asian Languages Analysis*
Issues in Word Order in South Asian Languages: Enriched Phrase Structure or Multidimensionality?
K. P. Mohanan & T. Mohanan

There are a number of intriguing word order phenomena in South Asian languages which challenge existing ideas in syntactic theory about the representation of word order, and the formal mechanisms for capturing word order freedom. In this paper, we will examine some of these phenomena and indicate how they impinge upon theoretical assumptions. Our goal is not to defend any particular theory of word order or a framework for analysing word order phenomena. Rather, we will spell out some of the consequences of word order phenomena to theoretical assumptions in current treatments of word order, and outline a conception of linguistic structure that makes possible a particular line of analysis. As the title indicates, the paper is to be taken as a set of issues surrounding multidimensionality in relation to word order, and a statement of some interesting problems for research, rather than as a set of solutions.

The mechanism of co-indexed traces in current syntactic theory allows us to express two different kinds of information within the same level of representation. Thus, in a passive construction, the chain of an NP and its trace is simultaneously a grammatical subject and a "logical object", the logical objecthood being signalled by the trace. In a sentence like John, Mary said Bill likes, the chain of a wh- and its trace is simultaneously the topic of the sentence and the grammatical object of the embedded verb, the grammatical objecthood being signalled by the trace. Thus, traces allow us to copy information from one level of representation to another. Compared with phrase structure repre-