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HILL MARI =OK: SYNTAX AND SCOPE

This paper focuses on syntactic properties of Hill Mari focus particle =ok and its scope properties. I am going to show that it has several different interpretations, which are partially correlated with its linear position. This can be explained by the fact that it takes various **scope**. Following Rooth (1992) and much of the subsequent literature, I will distinguish focus associate of a focus-sensitive item (the very constituent which is focused) and the scope of the focus, which is the domain with respect to which the focus alternatives are calculated.

1. =ok with adnominal modifiers. Like the majority of focus particles in the Volga-Kama region, =ok is a clitic and is most often placed adjacent to its associate.

- (1) mən' səkərəm=ok näl'əm
I bread.ACC=ok buy.AOR.1SG

‘It is bread that I have bought.’

However, there are several deviations from this rule. First of all, =ok cannot intrude into a noun phrase. If its associate is an adnominal modifier, =ok have to attach to the head of the NP:

- (2) a. *əšarg=ok mašinä / əšargə mašinä=ok
green=ok car green car=ok
b. *ti=ok mašinä / ti mašinä=ok
this=ok car this car=ok

The only exception are possessors, which usually occupy the leftmost position in Hill Mari noun phrases and can host =ok.

2. =ok with broad foci. When its associate is a non-single-word constituent such as a NP or a PP, =ok usually attaches to the head of this constituent, which (as Hill Mari is consistently left-branching) is the rightmost element thereof. However, it is not the case with VPs. Whenever the associate of =ok is broad focus, i. e. =the verb + the direct object, the particle appears not on the verb, but on the object:

- (3) vas'a sedöräm=ok məšk-en
V. floor-ACC=ok wash-PRF.3SG
‘{What did Vas'a do? — } Vasya washed the floor.’

3. =ok with narrow foci on the verb. With NPs or PPs, =ok has two main interpretation: one roughly similar to *again* (speakers translate in with Russian *že*) and another to English it-cleft (the translation equivalent in this case is Russian *imenno*):

- (4) mä piterburg-əšt=ok vəstupaj-en-nä
we P.-LOC=ok perform-PRF-1PL

1. ‘We performed in St. Petersburg again.’
2. ‘It’s in St. Petersburg that we performed.’

However, in the case of narrow focus on the verb, only the latter interpretation is available:

- (5) vas’a kol-êm [šolt-en]_{FOC=ok}
 V. fish-ACC boil-PRF.3SG=ok

1. ‘Vasya BOILED the fish. {and not stewed it.} (Lit. “It’s boiling that Vasya did to the fish”)’

2. ‘Vasya AGAIN BOILED the fish.’

4. **Double =ok.** The only case in which the =ok=ok sequences are consistently allowed by the speakers (apart, of course, of lexicalized =ok’s) is when it attaches to locative PPs. In this case the first =ok has the interpretation ‘exactly, straight, directly’.

- (6) loštə-št=ok sənzä pöken
 between-POSS.3PL=ok sit.NPST.3SG chair
 ‘There is a chair exactly between them.’

To such PPs already modified with =ok, another =ok can attach, having one of its regular interpretations:

- (6) loštə-št=ok=ok sənzä pöken
 between-POSS.3PL=ok=ok sit.NPST.3SG chair

1. ‘It’s exactly between them that the chair stands, {not closer to the left or to the right}’

2. ‘There is a chair, which again is exactly between them.’

5. Discussion. We propose that the scope of =ok can be a VP, a CP or a PP. In LF, =ok heads a separate projection taking its scope as a complement, but in PF, it is spelled out on the focus. Furthermore, we claim that all the three interpretations of =ok stem from the same lexical entry; the differences arise only because the scope is different. The “again”-reading is there whenever the scope of =ok is a VP, and the “it-cleft” reading when the scope of =ok is a CP. The former reading is impossible with narrow-focused verbs due to V-to-T movement: verbs end up higher than the position of =ok in LF should be (7). There is no such problem when =ok attaches to a CP:

- (7) [TP [DP vas’a] [[VP [DP kolêm] t_i] =ok] šolten_i]

- (8) [CP [TP [DP vas’a] [VP [DP kolêm] t_i] šolten_i] =ok]

In the talk, we shall show how these and some other assumptions can account for the facts stated above.

References. Rooth, Maths. (1992). A theory of focus interpretation. *Natural language semantics*, 1(1), 75-116.