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ЈУЖНОСЛОВЕНСКИ ФИЛОЛОГ

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TWO WH-FRONTING RULES IN SERBO-CROATIAN

In this note we will show that Serbo-Croatian has two rules which move elements containing the mark Wh¹ toward the beginning of the sentence. The first applies to phrases and single words; the second, only to words. The first can apply several times in a single clause; the second, only once. The second applies to the output of the first. Both apply to relative clauses and questions alike.

For clarity of exposition, we take up the second rule first.

1.0. Wh-Word Fronting. We begin the discussion of the Wh-Word Fronting rule with an excursus on Serbo-Croatian clitics (enclitics) and what they can show us. In a simple sentence, there are several possible places where the clitics can occur. But all the clitics of the sentence occur together: it is not possible for one of them to choose one place and another to choose another. The places are:

A. After the first constituent of the sentence.

- (1) a. Njegova prijateljica se boji vukova.
his friend-fem. refl. fears wolves
„His friend is afraid of wolves.“
b. Njegova se prijateljica boji vukova.
- (2) a. Njegova prijateljica je profesor književnosti.
is professor literature-gen.
„His friend is a professor of literature“.
b. Njegova je prijateljica profesor književnosti.

¹ Since most English interrogative and relative words (*who, what, whose, which, why, where*, etc.) begin with *wh-*, many recent writers, especially in generative grammar, use the term „Wh-words“ for them, and denote their common feature by *Wh*. This practice is also followed by those writing about other languages. In Serbo-Croatian one might better speak of K-words, since the corresponding words contain *k-* (*koji* „which“, (*t)ko* „who“, *kako* „how“, *kad(a)* „when“, *koliko* „how much“, etc.) or a reflex of earlier *k-* (*što/šta* „what“, *čiji* „whose“, *gde* „where“, etc.).

In the sentences (1a, 2a) the noun phrase (NP) *njegova prijateljica* is taken as the first constituent, and the clitics *se*, *je* are placed after it. In the b. sentences, the first word is treated as first constituent, and gets the *se* or *je* directly after it.

B. After the first word of the verb or of the nominal predicate (possible only if there are at least a couple of words preceding the verb or predicate in the sentence).

(3) *Njegova prijateljica boji se vukova.*

(4) *Njegova prijateljica profesor je književnosti.* To see that the first word, not the first constituent, is involved, we will make the pluperfect tense, which besides the clitic auxiliary consists of another auxiliary verb and the main verb.

(5) a. *Njegova prijateljica bila se bojala vukova.*
 aux. feared

„His friend had been afraid of wolves.“

b. **Njegova prijateljica bila bojala se vukova.*

(The * denotes that a sentence is ungrammatical.)

Similarly with the nominal predicate:

(6) **Njegova prijateljica profesor književnosti je.* That is, the clitic *je* cannot come after the whole constituent *profesor književnosti*.

C. However, if the sentence (clause) begins with a „sentence introducer“, the clitics have no choice: they must come directly after this beginning element. Among the sentence introducers are subordinating conjunctions:

(7) *Znam da se njegova prijateljica boji vukova.*
 I know that
 „I know that his friend is afraid of wolves.“

(All other positions of *se* are ungrammatical.)

(8) *Raduje se što je njegova prijateljica profesor književnosti.*
 is-glad that
 „He is glad that his friend is a professor of literature.“

In (8) too, all other orders are ungrammatical. *Se* is after the first element (*raduje*) of its clause, the main clause; *je* is after the introducer of the subordinate clause.

Wh-words under certain conditions function as introducers. Compare the following questions and relative clauses with (1—4):

- (9) a. Čija se prijateljica boji vukova?
 whose
 „Whose friend is afraid of wolves?“
 b. ?Čija prijateljica se boji vukova?
 c. *Čija prijateljica boji se vukova?
- (10) a. Ivan, čija se prijateljica boji vukova, ...
 „Ivan, whose friend is afraid of wolves, ...“
 b. ?Ivan, čija prijateljica se boji vukova, ...
 c. *Ivan, čija prijateljica boji se vukova, ...
- (11) a. Čija je prijateljica profesor književnosti?
 „Whose friend is a professor of literature?“
 b. ?Čija prijateljica je profesor književnosti?
 c. *Čija prijateljica profesor je književnosti?
- (12) a. Onaj Englez čija je prijateljica profesor književnosti...
 that Englishman
 „That Englishman whose friend is a professor of literature...“
 b. ?Onaj Englez čija prijateljica je profesor književnosti...
 c. *Onaj Englez čija prijateljica profesor je književnosti...

The c. examples are all ungrammatical. This is because the clitic-placement rule is sensitive to the presence of Wh-words like *čija*: it treats them in the same way as it treats other sentence-introducers, e.g. the subordinating conjunctions *da*, *što* of (7) and (8).

The a. examples are preferable to the b. examples (marked with the sign ?). Why? Perhaps it is merely that there is a complication in the clitic-placement rule, saying that one position is preferable to another. However, there is reason to believe that a separate rule is responsible for this preference: a rule which attaches Wh-words directly to the beginning of the sentence as separate constituents. The rule, Wh-Word Fronting, is not quite obligatory, but strongly favored, in that applying it gives better sentences than not applying it does. It has the effect shown schematically in Fig. 1:

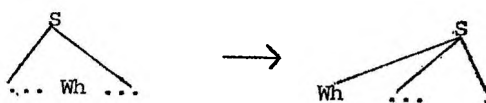


Fig. 1.

For example,

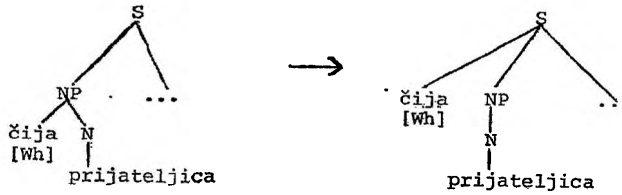


Fig. 2.

Clitic placement then puts the clitic(s) after the Wh-word *čija*, if Wh-Word Fronting has applied. (If Wh-Word Fronting is not applied, than *čija prijateljica* can still be considered as the first constituent, and so clitics may appear after it as in the less preferable sentences in (9—12)).

Several arguments can be given in favor of the proposed rule of Wh-Word Fronting.

1.1. The particle *i* in a relative. The following example with a relative clause is simplified from a sentence in an article by M. Ivić (p. 332):

- (13) Zamenica upućuje na poznata lica
 pronoun points to known people
čiji se i broj precizno zna.
 whose refl. number precisely knows.
 „The pronoun refers to known people whose number too is precisely known.“

Striking to the eye of the speaker of another language is the presence of the proclitic particle *i* „also, too“ between the possessive *čiji* and the noun *broj*. One can certainly not put „also“ between an English possessive and its noun; nor, in fact, can one in Serbo-Croatian:

- (14) *Njihov se i broj precizno zna.
 their

The particle *i*, rather, goes before the whole noun phrase which it modifies:

- (15) a. I njihov se broj precizno zna.
 „Their number too is precisely known.“
 b. I njihov broj se precizno zna.

Let us assume, as seems reasonable, that the normal position of the Wh-bearing possessive *čij-* in the NP is the same as with ordinary possessives like

njihov „their“ or like *Ivanov-* „Ivan’s“ in *Ivanova prijateljica* „Ivan’s friend“. Then the relative clause of (13) must be derived by a rule from a deeper structure like Fig. 3.

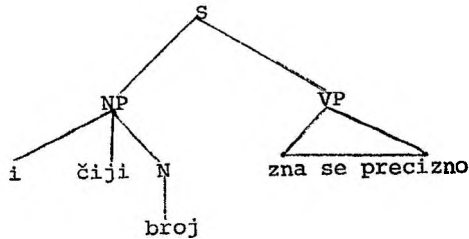


Fig. 3.

Rather than having a rule moving *i* to after *čiji*, unrelated to the fact that *se* is necessarily placed after *čiji*, it seems preferable to state that the Wh-word *čiji* is moved to before the whole NP.

1.2. The particle *to*. A special use of the Serbo-Croatian word *to* „it, that“ (also *ovo* „this“, *ono* „that (distant)“) is to explain the source of a perceived stimulus or feeling. If someone comments on an odd noise, for example, he may be told simply

- (16) *Marija svira klavir.*
 Mary plays piano
 „Marija is playing the piano.“

or

- (17) *To Marija svira klavir.*

which could best be translated with „that is“ plus a participle phrase: „That’s Mary playing the piano“. To reassure the hearer further, one might modify the sentence with *samo* „only“:

- (18) *To samo Marija svira klavir.*
 „That’s only Marija playing the piano.“

(Outside the *to*-S construction, *samo* in

- (19) *Samo Marija svira klavir.*

would modify the noun *Marija*: „Only Marija, not anyone else, is playing the piano.“)

The word *to* in this special use exhibits the behavior of a sentence introducer. Clitics, if the sentence has any, must follow *to* directly. Thus *je* (the auxiliary in *prošla je* „passed“) in a sentence from Dinko Šimunović’s story *Ljubav* („Love“):

- (20) To je samo ljubav prošla pored mene.
love passed by me

„That was only love passing by me.“

Elements of the sentence (unless heavily stressed) do not normally come before *to*:

- (21) *Marija to svira klavir.

It is instructive, however, to look at its behavior in questions. (Since it occurs only in main clauses, we do not find it in relatives.)

- (22) a. Tko to svira klavir?

who

„Who’s that playing the piano?“

- b. *To tko svira klavir?

- c. Tko je to svirao klavir?

played

„Who was that playing the piano?“

Wh-words show up before *to*. The *to* no longer acts as a sentence introducer; clitics come after the Wh-word, as in c., not after the *to*. In fact, other constituents of the clause can now change places with *to*, which was not possible in the declarative sentence (21):

- (23) a. Što to Marija svira?

what

„What’s that Marija’s playing?“

- b. Što Marija to svira?

But, interestingly, when there are several Wh-words (see sec. 2 below), only the first of them can come before *to*.²

- (24) a. Tko je to koga udario?

who aux. whom hit

„Who hit whom? ?Who was that hitting whom?“

- b. *Tko je koga to udario?

Let us now consider a *to*-sentence beginning with a possessive:

- (25) a. To Ivanova prijateljica svira klavir.

„That’s Ivan’s friend playing the piano.“

- b. To je Ivanova prijateljica svirala klavir.

played

„That was Ivan’s friend playing the piano.“

Questioning the possessor, we get

² It is not yet clear why this is.

- (26) a. Čija to prijateljica svira klavir?
 „Whose friend is that playing the piano?“
 b. Čija je to prijateljica svirala klavir?
 „Whose friend was that playing the piano?“

To derive (26 a, b), we need a rule — the Wh-Word Fronting rule — which will put the Wh-word *čija* out before the rest of the sentence as a separate constituent.

2.0. Wh-Phrase Fronting. The examples in sec. 1 above mainly contained Wh-phrases acting as subjects — that is, phrases which would precede the verb anyway in normal Serbo-Croatian word order. Let us now turn to objects and adverbial phrases. These normally follow the verb.

- (27) Ivan svira klavir u podrumu vrlo često.
 in cellar very often
 „Ivan plays the piano in the cellar very often.“

But when they contain a Wh-word, whether in a question or in a relative clause, they precede the rest of the sentence:

- (28) a. Što Ivan svira?
 what
 „What is Ivan playing?“
 b. Gdje Ivan svira klavir?
 where
 „Where is Ivan playing the piano?“
 c. podrum u kome Ivan svira klavir...
 cellar in which
 „the cellar in which Ivan plays the piano...“
 d. klavir koji Ivan svira u podrumu...
 which
 „the piano which Ivan plays in the cellar...“
 e. Ivan, koga Marija voli, ...
 whom loves
 „Ivan, whom Marija loves, ...“

The rule putting such Wh-bearing elements first in the sentence is not the same as Wh-Word Fronting. We can see this, first, because the rule applies to whole phrases:

- (29) a. Koji instrument Ivan svira?
 which
 „Which instrument does Ivan play?“

- b. U kojoj sobi Ivan svira?
 in which room
 „In which room does Ivan play?“
- c. klavir, koji instrument Ivan svira, ...
 „the piano, which instrument Ivan plays, ...“

while Wh-Word Fronting splits off a Wh-word from the rest of its phrase.

Second, the rule fronts as many Wh-phrases as there are in the sentence, unlike Wh-Word Fronting which affects only one word. This applies particularly to questions, since the usual type of relative clause in modern Serbo-Croatian contains only one Wh-phrase. (Cf., however, an older type which can have more than one:

- (30) a. Tko laže, taj i krade.
 who₁ lies that-one₁ also steals
 „Whoever lies, steals too.“
- b. Ko koga ljubi, onaj onoga i sluša.
 who₁ whom₂ loves that-one₁ that-one₂ listens-to
 „Whoever loves anyone, listens to him too.“ Budmani p. 52.

The first clause in b. has the Wh-marked object fronted as well as, presumably, the Wh-marked subject.)

Thus a newspaper article giving statistics about the consumption of electricity in Slovenia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Hercegovina is headlined:

- (31) Koliko ko troši struje
 how-much who uses current
 „Who uses how much current?“

In such multiple-Wh questions, enclitics come after the first Wh-word

- (32) a. Tko je koga udario?
 hit
 „Who hit whom?“
- b. *Tko koga je udario?

and so does *to*:

- (33) a. Tko je to koga udario?
 „?Who was that hitting whom?“
- b. *Tko je koga to udario?

In:

- (34) Kojega je dana što bog stvorio?
 which day what god created
 „What day did God create what?“

where the clitic *je* is after *kojega* and not after the whole Wh-phrase *kojega dana*, we see the action of both our rules. Wh-Phrase Fronting has moved *kojega dana* and *što* to the beginning, and Wh-Word Fronting has separated *kojega* off as a separate constituent. That is, in deriving such sentences the rules must act in a particular order: Wh-Phrase Fronting produces a structure in which Wh-Word Fronting makes a further change.

Questions with 3 (or more) Wh-words are found as well:

- (35) a. *Tko je gdje koliko suveren?*
 who is where how-much sovereign?
 „Who is how sovereign where?“
 b. *Šta ko gde hoće?*
 wants
 „Who wants what where?“

and, as we see, all have to be fronted. Which one comes first is not determined by any grammatical principle, but by what the speaker primarily wants to hear about in the answer:

- (36) a. *Tko je koga udario?*
 b. *Koga je tko udario?*

In a. we are specially interested in the assailant's identity; in b., in his victim's.³

Wayles Browne

³ In particular, there is no prohibition against moving non-subject Wh-words or phrases to before a Wh-bearing subject: cf. (31, 35b, 36b). In English, where Wh-Fronting seems to be able to apply only once per clause, one would expect that it could apply to the second Wh-element in, say, *Who saw what?* to give *What did who see?* This is in fact possible for some speakers of English but not for others (not for the present writer, for example).

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Резиме

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**ДВА ПРАВИЛА ЗА ПОЛОЖАЈ СРПСКОХРВАТСКИХ
К-РЕЧИ У РЕЧЕНИЦИ**

Ако релативним и упитним заменичким речима (*који, (ш)ко, како, када, што/шта, где* и сл.) дамо заједнички назив „К-речи“, можемо формулисати два синтаксичка правила која одређују положај К-речи у савременој српскохрватској реченици. Једно од тих правила пребацује К-реч на почетак реченице (*Милан је ситановао где? → Где је Милан ситановао?*), док друго правило премешта према почетку реченице целу синтагму која садржи К-реч (*Он свира који инструмент? → Који инструмент он свира?*) Анализа примера, у првом реду оних са енклитикама, показује да се може пребацити сукцесивно, прво К-синтагма а затим њена К-реч, што имплицира да се правила примењују у одређеном редоследу. У једној реченици можемо да пребацимо више К-синтагми, али се К-реч као таква свега једном пребацује на сам почетак реченице.