

# Subject marking on non-subjects in Squliq Atayal<sup>1</sup>

Michael Yoshitaka Erlewine, MIT, mitcho@mitcho.com

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## 1 Today

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

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

## 2 “Subject” and voice in Atayal

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

- (1) **Actor Voice (AV):** <sup>S7/24, C7/30</sup> (2) **Patient Voice (PV):** <sup>S8/7</sup>  
 Cyux m-anìq bukin (qu) Yuraw.      Cyux niq-un na Yuraw (qu) sehuy.  
 AUX AV-eat plum QU Yuraw      AUX eat-PV GEN Yuraw QU taro  
 ‘Yuraw eats plums.’      ‘Yuraw eats taro.’

**Note:** I use the term “subject” pre-theoretically to refer to the argument cross-referenced by the verb’s voice morphology.

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

ACC =  $\emptyset$  in Squliq but is overt in other Atayalic languages. GEN = *na*.

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

## 2.1 *Qu* marks the subject

- (4) a. Cyux m-anìq (\*qu) sehuy qasa (‘qu) Yuraw. <sup>S7/24, C7/30</sup>  
 AUX AV-eat QU taro that QU Yuraw  
 ‘Yuraw is eating that taro.’  
 b. Cyux niq-un na/\*qu Yuraw (‘qu) sehuy qasa.  
 AUX eat-PV GEN/QU Yuraw QU taro that  
 ‘Yuraw is eating that taro.’ <sup>S8/7</sup>

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

## 2.2 The subject as discourse topic

- (5) Context: someone asks about what Yuraw is doing  $\Rightarrow$  AV: <sup>S8/7</sup>  
 a.  $\checkmark$  AV (4a) without *qasa* ‘that’  
 b. # PV (4b) without *qasa* ‘that’  
 (6) Context: someone asks about the taro  $\Rightarrow$  PV: <sup>S8/7</sup>  
 a. # AV (4a)  
 b.  $\checkmark$  PV (4b)

## 2.3 $\bar{A}$ -extractions target the subject

- (7) Actor extraction  $\Rightarrow$  AV: <sup>T7/13</sup>  
 a.  $\checkmark$  Ima (qu) p-hapuy sehuy qani \_\_\_\_?  
 who QU AV.FUT-cook taro this \_\_\_\_?  
 ‘Who will cook these taro?’  
 b. \*Ima (qu) puy-un \_\_\_\_ (qu) sehuy  
 who QU cook-PV QU taro  
 (8) Patient extraction  $\Rightarrow$  PV: <sup>T7/30</sup>  
 a.  $\checkmark$  Nanu (qu) wal niq-un (na) Yuraw \_\_\_\_?  
 what QU AUX eat-PV GEN Yuraw \_\_\_\_?  
 ‘What did Yuraw eat?’  
 b. \*Nanu (qu) m-anìq \_\_\_\_ (qu) Yuraw?  
 what QU AV-eat QU Yuraw

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

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

### 3 Subject marking on non-subjects

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

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

- (9) ***Qu*-marking requires specificity:** C7/30
- a. Nyux=saku m-aniq (**qu**) yutak qani.  
 AUX=NOM.1sg AV-eat **QU** orange this  
 'I am eating this orange.'
- b. Nyux=saku m-aniq (\**qu*) yutak.  
 AUX=NOM.1sg AV-eat **QU** orange  
 'I am eating oranges.'

☞ *Qu* cannot simply be NOM.

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

- (10) **Actor *wh* question, AV:** C7/23, T7/30, S8/7  
 Ima (qu) wal m-aniq (**qu**) sehuy qasa?  
 who **QU** AUX AV-eat **QU** taro that  
 'Who ate that taro?'
- (11) **Actor cleft, AV:** T7/13, C8/6, S8/7  
 Iyat Yuraw (qu) m-aniq (**qu**) sehuy qani.  
 NEG Yuraw **QU** AV-eat **QU** taro this  
 'It's not Yuraw who ate this taro.'
- (12) **Actor focus-movement, AV:** T7/30, C8/6, S8/7  
 Nanak Yuraw (qu) m-aniq (**qu**) yaqeh na qnaniq.  
 only Yuraw **QU** AV-eat **QU** bad **GEN** food  
 'Only Yuraw eats the bad food.'

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

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

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

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

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

- (14) **Patient *wh* question, PV:** C7/23, T7/30, S8/7
- a. Nanu (qu) cyux niq-un na/\**qu* Yuraw?  
 what **QU** AUX eat-PV **GEN**/\***QU** Yuraw  
 'What is Yuraw eating?'
- b. Nanu (qu) cyux=\*(**nya**) niq-un **qu**/\**na* Yuraw?  
 what **QU** AUX=**GEN**.3sg eat-PV **QU**/\***GEN** Yuraw  
 'What is Yuraw eating?'
- (15) **Patient focus movement, PV:** C7/23, T8/6, S8/7
- a. Ana knux na qnaniq (qu) niq-un na/\**qu* Yuraw.  
 even smelly **GEN** food **QU** eat-PV **GEN**/\***QU** Yuraw  
 'Yuraw eats even smelly food.'
- b. Ana knux na qnaniq (qu) niq-un=\*(**nya**) **qu**/\**na* Yuraw.  
 even smelly **GEN** food **QU** eat-PV=**GEN**.3sg **QU**/\***GEN** Yuraw  
 'Yuraw eats even smelly food.'
- (16) **PV clause with cliticized subject (patient):** T7/23, C8/6, S8/7
- a. Wal=sami kt-an na Tali.  
 AUX=NOM.1plE see-PV **GEN** Tali  
 'Tali saw us (exclusive).'
- b. Wal=sami=\*(**nya**) kt-an **qu**/\**na* Tali.  
 AUX=NOM.1plE=**GEN**.3sg see-PV **QU**/**GEN** Tali  
 'Tali saw us (exclusive).'

### 3.4 Summary

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

## 4 Proposal

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

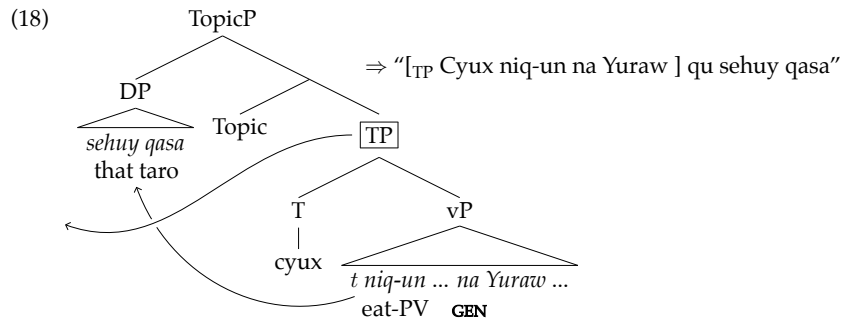
**Clitic left dislocation (CLLD)** is a construction where a clitic cooccurs with an antecedent DP in a higher position. The antecedent DP is base-generated in its clause-peripheral position (Cinque, 1990; Iatridou, 1995; Anagnostopoulou, 1994).

### 4.1 The clausal syntax of Squliq

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

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

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



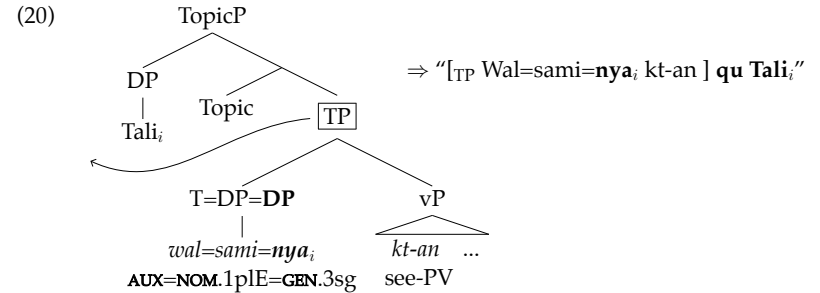
☞ The DP in *Spec,TopicP* gets *qu*-marked.

### 4.2 Non-subject *qu* in PV clauses

Subject cliticization:

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

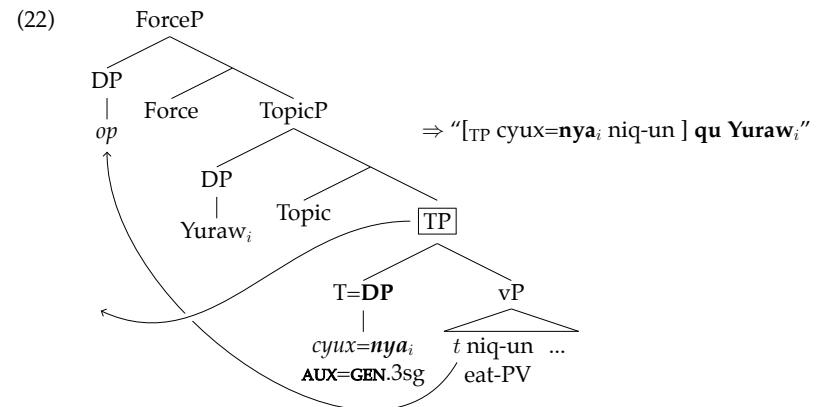
- (19) Wal=sami=nya kt-an qu Tali.  
 AUX=NOM.1pIE=GEN.3sg see-PV QU/GEN Tali  
 'Tali saw us (exclusive).' (=16b)



A̅-movement of the subject

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

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



### 4.3 Non-subject *qu* in AV clauses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup>Question markers in pre-subject position are observed in other Austronesian languages as well:

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

## 5 Non-subject *qu* does not feed extraction

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

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

**A:** No.

- (26) a. AV baseline: exceptionally *qu*-marked patient C7/30, S8/7  
Nyux=saku m-aniq (**qu**) yutak qani.  
AUX=**NOM**.1sg AV-eat **QU** orange this

'I am eating this orange.'

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

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

Intended: 'What are you eating?'

- (27) a. PV baseline: exceptionally *qu*-marked actor with clitic C7/30, T8/6, S8/7  
Wal=saku=nya kt-an (**qu**) Tali.  
AUX=**NOM**.1sg=**GEN**.3sg see-PV **QU** Tali

'Tali saw me.'

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

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

Intended: 'Who saw me?'

(C7/30 ok)

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

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

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

## 6 Conclusion

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

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## 7 Appendix: specificity-marking across Atayal

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

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

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

Note the phonological similarity of the topic marker *qu* studied here and the “referential” series in Mayrinax (*kuʔ*, *ckuʔ*, *nkuʔ*), as well as the Seediq topic marker *ka*.

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

### (29) *Nqu* on a specific genitive?

S7/24, S8/7, C8/6

Niq-un na/nqu Tali qu sehuy.  
eat-PV GEN/NQU Tali QU taro  
‘Tali eats taro’

### (30) *Squ* on a specific dative?

T7/30

Sehuy qani ga, b<n>iq ni Tali ʔsa/squ/\*qu Yuraw.  
taro that TOP, <Perf>give GEN Tali DAT/SQU/QU Yuraw  
‘That taro, Tali gave to Yuraw.’

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

## 8 Appendix: Topics with clitic left dislocation across Atayalic

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

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

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

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

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

### (32) Squliq non-subject *qu* requires the subject to have moved:

C8/6, S8/7

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

b. %\* Niq-un=nya (qu) sehuy (qani) qu Yuraw  
eat-PV-GEN.3sg QU taro this QU Yuraw  
Intended: ‘Yuraw is eating this taro.’ (cf 31b)

(T8/6 ok)

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