Left-dislocation and complement sentences in Avatime (Kwa)
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Avatime is a Kwa (Niger-Congo) language spoken in Ghana. It has rigid SVO word order with an optional pre-core focus position. Preceding the clause is space for left dislocated elements; elements which are often set off from the rest of the utterance by an intonation break or pause, and are referred to in the remainder of the clause by a resumptive pronoun. Left-dislocation is a frequently used device in Avatime, to introduce or re-introduce referents or to mark a referent as the sentence or discourse topic.

(1) *ɔ́-dzɛ*   *yɛ*   *fóto-à*   *bɛ-zɛ̀*   *ba*   *pɔ́*   *a*[1]
     C₁S-woman   C₁S.POS   photo-DEF.P   C₁P-receive   C₁P   finish   Q
     'The woman's photos, have they collected them all?'

Left dislocation also has the function of establishing a referent before integrating it in the syntax and pragmatics of the utterance. This often results in a left-dislocated referent with a contrastive (2) or focused (3) resumptive pronoun.

(2) a) *e-gù-mu-á*   *lálɔ=ɛ*   **la**   **kɔ**   *xé* *gì* *bɛ-sɔ̀*   *pɔ́*
        C₃P-african-rice-DEF   C₃P-DIST=CM   **C₃P**   **CTR1** when REL C₁P-grow finish
        'That African rice, as for that, if they finish growing (the other types)...'
     b) *xé* *wɔ-sɔ̀*   *tsyɛɛ la* *kɔ*   *í-ze-dzagbàgba gì* *í-ze-te-dò*   *kóko*
        if   2S-grow ADD C₃P   CTR1 C₃P-HAB-try   REL C₃P-HAB-?-move.out already
        'if you grow it, as for that one, it tries and germinates by all means.'

(3) *kò* *kɔ* *ò-ní*   *lɔ́-wlɔ̀=ɛ*   **lɔ́**   *ɔ-médzɛ*   *a-tá-zɛ-ŋa*
     just so   C₂S-soup   C₂S-DIST=CM   **C₂S:FOC**   C₁S-pregnant.woman   C₁S-INT-REC-eat
     'So that soup, that's the one the pregnant woman will be eating.'

The pre-clausal nature of left dislocated elements is reflected in the fact that they can optionally be followed by the clitic =*E* (see examples (2)and (3)). This clitic also marks off certain kinds of subordinate and coordinate clauses.

Unlike English, Avatime allows left-dislocated elements inside subordinate structures. These are all complements linked by the complementizer *sì*.

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[1] Abbreviations. 1 first person ; 2 second person ; ADD additive ; C_number noun class ; CM clause marker ; COMP complementizer ; CTR contrast ; DEF definite ; DIST distal demonstrative ; FOC focus ; HAB habitual ; INT intentive ; LOC locative ; P plural ; POS possessor ; PROH prohibitive ; Q question particle ; REC recurrent ; REL relativizer ; S singular ; SBJ subjunctive

(4)   *sì*   *ba*   *sì*   *ì-tsré*   *lɔ*   *gì*   *elɔ̀m*   *á-kɔ*   *manì*
      tell C_1P COMP C_2P-okro   DIST   REL   elɔm C_1S-take   bring

      ke-pa   *mὲ*   ...   *ba-da*   *lɛ*   *kị́*   *wɔ*
      C_6S-house   inside   ... C_1P.SBJ-sell C_2P give   2S

      'Tell them the okro that Elorm brought to the house, they should sell it to you.'

(5)   *ma-pɛ*   *sì*   *li-wé*   *lέ-lɔ*   *kɔ=ɛ*   *lí-kí-dò*   *ní*
       1S-want   COMP C_3S-day C_3S-that   CTR1=CM C_3S-PROH-move.out   LOC

      ɔ́nɛnɛ   *ku-susu*   *mὲ*
      nobody C_5S-mind   inside

      'I want that date not to leave anybody's mind.'

These data suggest that structures larger than the clause can be subject to subordination. However, the question remains whether the complements that permit left-dislocation are truly subordinate, or whether they should be analyzed differently. Another theoretical issue that I will discuss is whether left-dislocation is a unified phenomenon, both within a language and crosslinguistically.