

(1) Kaoí Kohoibíhiai xobáobá?

Assuming a framework where movement is a thing, it could be argued, that the wh-element can be interpreted either as though it was in its base-position (leading to "Who saw K.?"") or as having been moved (leading to "Who did K. see?"). Thus my question: Can there be scrambling behaviour in Piraha such that a sentence can end up with Non-agent-Agent-Verb (viz., OSV) order? For example, would (2) be grammatical/acceptable given an appropriate discourse context (in German, this would be, e.g., 'I saw the hunters cutting up the animals they brought back from today's hunt.')

In normal speech, without prosodic marking, the normal interpretation is SOV. However, this is not the only possible order. With prosodic marking the O can appear prior to the subject.

(2) Kabatíí paóxaisi xiboítópí.

'Dan cut up the tapir.'

If (2) is ungrammatical/unacceptable, would the orders in (3) be grammatical/acceptable?

(3) (a) Kabatíí paóxaisi piohoaó xiboítópí.

(b) Kabatíí piohoaó paóxaisi xiboítópí.

(c) Piohoaó Kabatíí paóxaisi xiboítópí.

'Dan cut up the tapir by the water.'

Depending on context and prosodic marking, I think all of these are possible (would love to be in the village as I answer, but I am not).

There were also some other examples in the literature that made me curious. For example, is there the possibility of an adjunct intervening between direct object and verb as in (4)?

(4) Xahoapioxíó xigihí toioxaagá hi kabatíí xogíí xi mahaháhiigí xiboítópí piohoaó.

In this maximal sentence, 'mahaháhiigí' intervenes between 'xi' and 'xiboítópí'. Is this occurrence an exception (e.g. on par with object shift in English ('He cut with the knife the big old brown tapir which we bought two weeks after our only child got married.')), or is O-Adjunct-V order rather natural?

The adverbial normally appears immediately before the verb. I could also appear afterwards. Or even at the beginning of the clause.

And finally, another thing that would be interesting to Gisbert and me is the possibility of verb clustering. As you most likely know, Rodrigues and Sandalo argue that there is embedding in Piraha when there are alleged control verbs. However, Haider (2010, 'The syntax of German') hypothesizes that any OV language should allow for monoclausal control structures, i.e., verb clustering. If there is verb clustering, the cluster should be compact and it should exhibit variable verb ordering. So, could there be any non-verbal element between

'kagakai', 'ogabagai', and 'sogabagai' as in (5)?

(5) (a) ti kapiiga kagakai ogabagai xahoapioxio sogabagai

(b) ti kapiiga kagakai xahoapioxio ogabagai sogabagai

This is entirely possible. But you can have arguments in between all of the verbs. Arguments are optional in Piraha, as I think I have mentioned elsewhere.

And second, is only (6a) acceptable/grammatical, or are some of the other orders in (6) well-formed as well?

(6) (a) ti kapiiga kagakai ogabagai sogabagai

(b) ti kapiiga kagakai sogabagai ogabagai

(c) ti kapiiga ogabagai kagakai sogabagai

(d) ti kapiiga ogabagai sogabagai kagakai

(e) ti kapiiga sogabagai kagakai ogabagai

(f) ti kapiiga sogabagai ogabagai kagakai

Since these are all separate sentences (an inflected verb = separate sentence), any order is possible, without change in meaning and arguments can appear between any of the verbs, regardless of their reference. Control has nothing to do with it.

I'm sincerely looking forward to your answers!

I hope that these were helpful. Now on to the Rodrigues-Sandalo data.

(1) Maria hi gai-sai. Ana hi (goo) gai-sai aogi Ana goo gai-sai maasi ti

This is a series of sentences. A perfectly fine series of sentences. No evidence for embedding here at all.

Maria said: Ana said like: The foreigner said like: I am pretty.

(2) ti kapiiga kagakai ogabagai apaitisai

I paper study want Pirahã

'I want to study Pirahã'

This is fine. Also two sentences. And you can have the arguments in between. So it could also have any noun/pronoun in between the two verbs. It could be I want to study. I want Piraha. I want to study (as when I am talking to the language teacher). You want Piraha (as when the language teacher is talking to me). Again, arguments are optional.

(4) ti kapiiga kagakai ogabagai sogabagai

I paper study want would.like
'I would like to want to study'

Same thing. Three separate sentences. If it was one sentence they would use the desiderative affix (that would only get "I want to study" because affixes are not repeated)

(5) ti kaai iaipaha tabo kabahai neai
I house make wood gave-not you
'I did not give you wood to make a house'

This literally means: "I did not build a house. No wood to you."

(6) # I did not give you wood. Make a house!

No, it does not mean that. They are correct. Why would it? Would make no sense from those words.

(7) ti tabo kabahai neai abaago kaai iaipa
I wood gave-not you alone house make

This means "I have no wood. You alone make a house."

(8) mothoi agoa
motor canoe
'canoe's motor'

This is just the two words 'motor' and 'canoe.' It literally means "motor's canoe." That is, the motor goes with that canoe/the canoe goes with that motor. There is very little difference, hence easy to confuse.

(9) *[kó'ói hoagí] kai góihíí 'íga
name son daughter that true
'That is Kó'ói's son's daughter.'

This is not impossible. It can mean "Koxoi's daughter" – an separate (nonsentential) utterance, followed by the phrase. Hard to say because in this example as in all their examples, the Piraha is garbled and I am trying to reconstruct. For example, in góihíí 'íga, the first o should be a.

(10) agoa Iapohen motohoi
canoe Iapohen motor
'Iapohen's canoe's motor'

This would literally mean, according to their example (8) "The motor's Xiapohai's

canoe." Since that is garbled, the phrase is not built by simple right-to-left/bottom-up compositionality. It is first a statement of 'canoe', followed by "Xiapohai's motor." It is an indirect meaning, deriving, at most, from something like: "Xiapohai's canoe. The motor." Interesting that this is not given in a full sentence.

(11) niupai ti igato huakue kopae
dog I tail long back
'My black dog's long tail'

The normal order for "my dog" would be "ti niupai" This is just a string of words. Nothing more.

Their data is all poorly represented phonologically. And so far as I know they worked with Verao, whose father was Piraha and mother was Diarroi. Verao learned some Piraha from his father before he and his siblings left with his mother to go live with the Tenharim. He speaks very little Piraha. Mainly words and certainly could not tell a story in their language. Presenting this stuff as data in a way denigrates field research.