



Recapitulative (Tail-Head) Linking as a Marker of Discourse Coherence in Daakie (Ambrym, Vanuatu)

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Recapitulative Linking – RCL



What is it?

- ◆ Originally mentioned in Longacre (1968)
- ◆ Known under different terms:
 - tail-head linkage
 - backgrounded / linked repetition
 - lexical overlap

What do we have to say about it?

- ◆ RCL is a textual linkage device
- ◆ The new information of the first clause (tail, S1) is repeated (head, S2) where it acts as topic for the the following sentence (S3)
- ◆ In the most cases, S1 and S2 are structurally identical, but variations are possible
- ◆ Should be modeled as a specific rhetorical relation (RST)



How does RCL look & sound like?

- ◆ Example from Daakie (Port Vato), Ambrym, Vanuatu
- ◆ Recording of a personal story by Abel Taho (travel to Germany)

(1) na-m pwetye na-m lehe kege na-m loko=van ot soo
 1S-RE dream 1S-RE see CMP.RE1S-RE walk=go place IDEF Abel3.081-84

I dreamt I saw that I go to a place

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee
 1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three

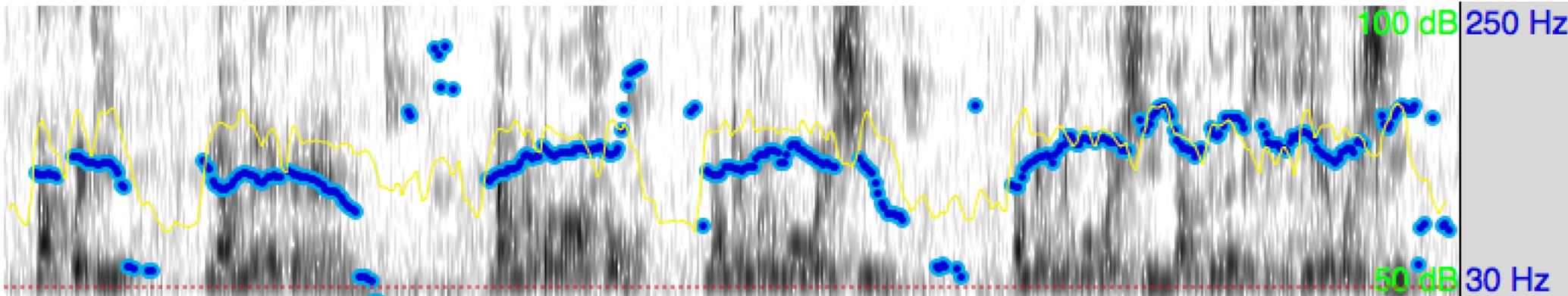
I saw three holes

S1

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee na-m tee=van na-m lehe kiikye woro=syee
 1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three 1S-RE look=go 1S.RE look snake NUMBER=three

I saw three holes I looked into them, I saw three snakes'

S2, S3



Recapitulative linking: attested cases



- ◆ Recapitulative linking has been identified in a number of regions (cf. overviews in de Vries 2005, Guillaume 2011, #)
 - Papua-New Guinea: Kombai (de Vries),
- ◆ Tibeto-Burman:
 - Ersu (Zhang 2013), Japhug (Jacques 2014), Karbi (Konnerth 2014)
- ◆ South American languages:
 - Tariana (Aikhenvald 2003) Cavineña (Guillaume 2011)
 - Bora (with connector pronoun at paragraph beginnings, Seifart 2010)
- ◆ Australian languages
 - Rembarrnga (McKay 2008)
- ◆ Philippine languages (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007: 273-5)
- ◆ Afroasiatic languages
 - Bedja (Vanhove 2005)
- ◆ North-American languages
 - Pomo languages (Oswald 1976: 300)

Recapitulative linking: attested cases



- ◆ Oceanic languages
 - Malvea (Guerin 2011: 325f.; procedural text, narrative text)
 - Tamambo (Jauncey 1997:427)
 - Lewo (Early 1995: 454)
 - Lolovili (Hyslop 2001:426)
 - Sye (Crowley 1998: 282)
 - South Efate (Thieberger 2006:327)
- ◆ Often mentioned,
but no detailed treatment for Oceanic languages (to our knowledge)



Typical properties of RCL

- ◆ S2 often of reduced syntactic complexity compared to S1, but S2 can also be an elaboration of S1
- ◆ Not a strictly grammatical phenomenon, rather a discourse strategy
- ◆ Follows the typical strategy of the language for clausal adjunction
 - e.g. switch reference,
 - e.g. nominalization
- ◆ Often used in languages with a low referential density
 - e.g. few NPs;
 - nominals often used for new referents;
 - reference tracking often via verb
- ◆ Generic verbs may be used in S2 instead of specific verb in S1 (generic verb linkage, summary head linkage)
- ◆ Typical for narrative and procedural texts that report a sequence of events

Functions of RCL



Cf. Guillaume 2011:

- ◆ High thematic continuity within paragraphs, main string of event
- ◆ Marking of completion of action
- ◆ Marking of reduced thematic continuity between paragraphs
- ◆ Backgrounding / Foregrounding and temporal succession

McKay 2008:

- ◆ “the repeated verb backgrounds the preceding action (already given) as a transition to what is now being introduced, which is foregrounded as the next step in the narrative. [...] It has the effect of putting one event behind and moving on to the next event” (McKay 2008: 10)

De Vries 2005:

- ◆ Chained type of RCL for thematic continuity (default)
- ◆ Thematized type of RCL for marking a thematic shift

Closer look at RCL in Daakie



Some background facts about Daakie (aka. Port Vato)

- ◆ Austronesian > Oceanic > Central/Eastern Oceanic > Southern Oceanic > Nuclear Southern Oceanic > Central Vanuatu
- ◆ Spoken by about 1000 persons in the South of the island Ambrym
- ◆ Related to Daakaka, Dalkalaen, North Ambrym (West Ambrym languages),
 - Paton, W.F. 1971. *Ambrym (Lonwolwol) Grammar*. Pacific Linguistics B 19 Canberra: Australian National University.
 - Franjeh, Michael James. 2012. *Possessive classifiers in North Ambrym, a language of Vanuatu: Explorations in semantic classification*. London: SOAS.
 - von Prince, Kilu. 2015. *A grammar of Daakaka*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Closer Look at RCL in Daakie



◆ Linguistic features

- Exclusive / inclusive distinction (1 vs. 1+2)
- Singular, Dual, Paucal, Plural (SI, DU, PC, PL)
- Subject agreement (person + number)
- Possessed nouns, possessive noun classes (e.g. edible, animals), cf. Franjeh 2012
- Transitive nouns, e.g. *wee* 'fruit', *we* 'fruit of', *we do* 'lichi fruits', *we-re* 'its fruits'
- Verbs with numeral requirements for their arguments, e.g. *idi* 'take one', *sogóó* 'take many'
- Reduplication to express pluractionality
- Serial verb construction, e.g. *loko van* 'walk go'
- Categorical distinction between intransitive and transitive (TR) verbs (often marked by *-ne*)
- Modal marking, e.g. realis (RE), potentialis (POT)

(2) *nare-doo ki-yee kye-m loko van lon too kye-p sogóó a-yee we do*
child-1+2.DU DEF-3PC 3PC-RE walk go in garden 3PC-POT take.TR EDIB-3PC fruit.TR lichi

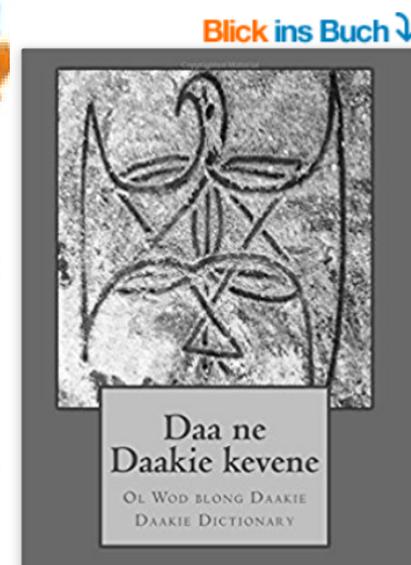
'Our children went to the garden to take their lichi fruits' (elicited)

Closer Look at RCL in Daakie



Background of research

- ◆ 2009 – 2013, DOBES Project *Languages of Southwest Ambrym*, funded by Volkswagen Foundation, with Kilu von Prince, Soraya Hosni, Susanne Fuchs, Abel Taho, Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft Berlin (ZAS)
- ◆ 2016 – 2019, DFG Project Tense, Aspect, Modality and Negation in Languages of Melanesia (MelaTAMP), with Kilu von Prince, Ana Krajinović Rodrigues, Stefan Druskat, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
- ◆ Research on Daakie 2010 – present,
 - about 6 hours of transcribed audiovisual recording (narratives, explanations, speeches, smalltalk)
 - Published collection of local stories
 - Dictionary (2017)
 - Translated texts (European tales and fables, childrens' bible)



RCL Phenomena: S1, S2, S3



A piece of terminology, again)

(1) na-m pwetye na-m lehe kege na-m loko=van ot soo

1S-RE dream 1S-RE see CMP.RE1S-RE walk=go place IDEF Abel3.081-84

I dreamt I saw that I go to a place

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three

I saw three holes

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three 1

I saw three holes

na-m tee=van na-m lehe kiikye woro=sye

1S-RE look=go 1S-RE see snake NUMBER=three

I looked into them, I saw three snakes

S1 (Tail; Antecedent)

S2 (Head; Uptake)

S3 (Continuation)

RCL vs. other repetitions



(1) na-m pwetye na-m lehe kege na-m loko=van ot soo

1S-RE dream 1S-RE see CMP.RE 1S-RE walk=go place IDEF

Abel3.081-84

I dreamt I saw that I go to a place

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee

S1

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three

I saw three holes

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee, na-m tee=van na-m lehe kiikye woro=syee

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three 1SG-RE look=go 1SG-RE look snake NUMBER=three

I saw three holes, I saw looked into them and saw three snakes S2, S3

soo mo goló mo van lonbulubuu soo, soo mogoló mo van lonbulubuu soo

one RE crawl RE go in hole one one RE crawl RE go in hole one

one crawled into one hole, one crawled into one hole

distribution

kiikye kiye ye kiye-m menmenen ne lonbulubuu kiye

snake 3PC DEM 3PC-RE same with in hole DEM-3PC

the snakes were similarly in the holes

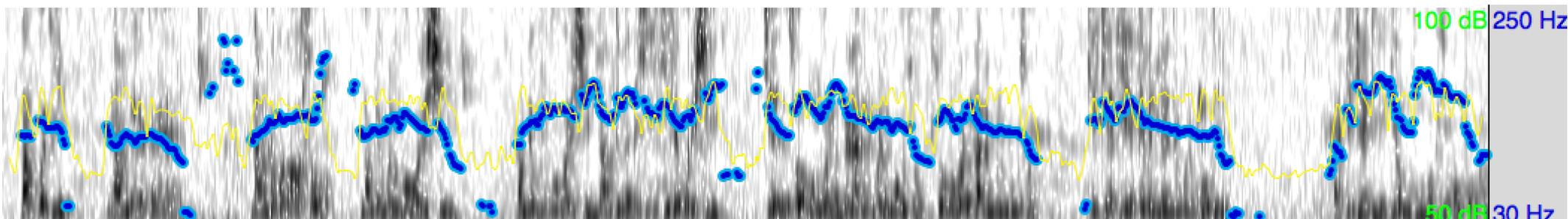
reduplication

kiikye kiye ye kiye-m bobo ke kiye-m bobo

snake 3PC DEM 3PC-RE big CMP 3PC-RE big

the snakes were very big

intensification



RCL vs. other repetitions



(1) kiye-m du van van van kiye-m pwet
 3PC-RE PROG go go go 3PC-RE rest

they went on, on, on, they rested

duration; S1

kiye-m pwet, a ngye mwe tee lan [...] s-aloo syee
 3PC-RE rest and 3S RE look at POSS-3DU plate

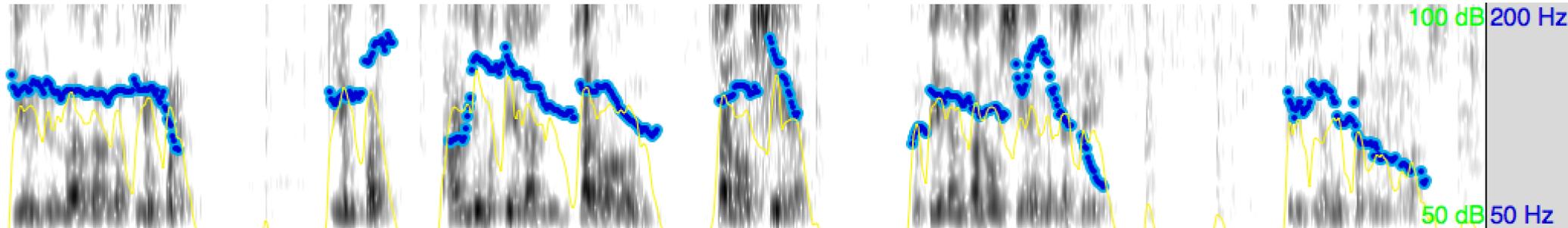
they rested, and he, he looked at their plate

S2, S3=S1'

(2) mwe tee lan s-aloo syee, mwe lehe tiri kiye mwe pwet lon glas
 RE look at POSS-3DU plate 3S see s.th. DEM-3S 3S stay in glas

he looked at their plate, he saw... something that was in the glas

S2', S3'



RCL: Phenomena



◆ Complete repetition

(1) na-m pwetye na-m lehe kege na-m loko=van ot soo

1S-RE dream 1S-RE see CMP.RE 1S-RE walk=go place one

Abel3.081-84

'I dreamt I saw that I go to a place'

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three

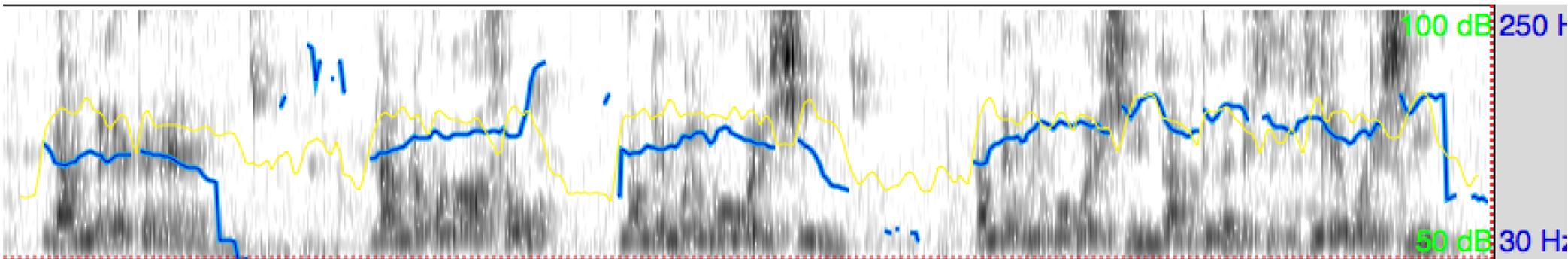
'I saw three holes'

S1

na-m lehe bulubuu woro=syee na-m tee=van na-m lehe kiikye woro=syee

1S-RE see hole NUMBER=three 1S-RE look=go 1S-RE look snake NUMBER=three

'I saw three holes, I looked into them, I saw three snakes' S2, S3



nam lehe kege

nam loko van ot soo

nam lehe bulubuu worosyee

nam lehe bulubuu worosyee nam teevan nam lehe kiikye worosyee

RCL Phenomena:



◆ Partial repetition: Deletion of adverbials in S2

(1) van kiikye soo me mee pán em

go snake IDEF RE come under house

Abel1.018-019, traditional narrative

a snake came into the house

S1

me mee mwe tee=van mwe lehe timaleh kiye

RE come RE look=go RE look child DEM.3S

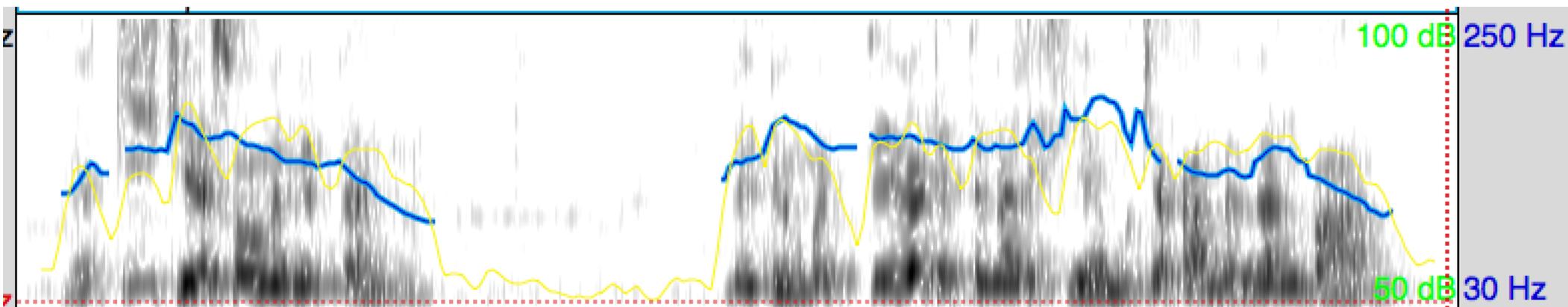
it came, it looked into (it), it saw the child

S2, S3

mwe kieka be van ba ane

RE say CMP.IR IR go IR eat.TR

it said that it would come to eat it





RCL phenomena:

- ◆ S2 more complex than S1, marking of completion:
- ◆ Change of predicate in S2 possible:

(1) la-m mee la-m en byen

3P-RE come 3P-RE eat of.it

they came, they ate of it

Jemis1.056-058

S!

la-m en byen mo-nok a mwe sevele pon

3P-RE eat LOC RE-finish and RE come.out now

they finished eating there and he came out now

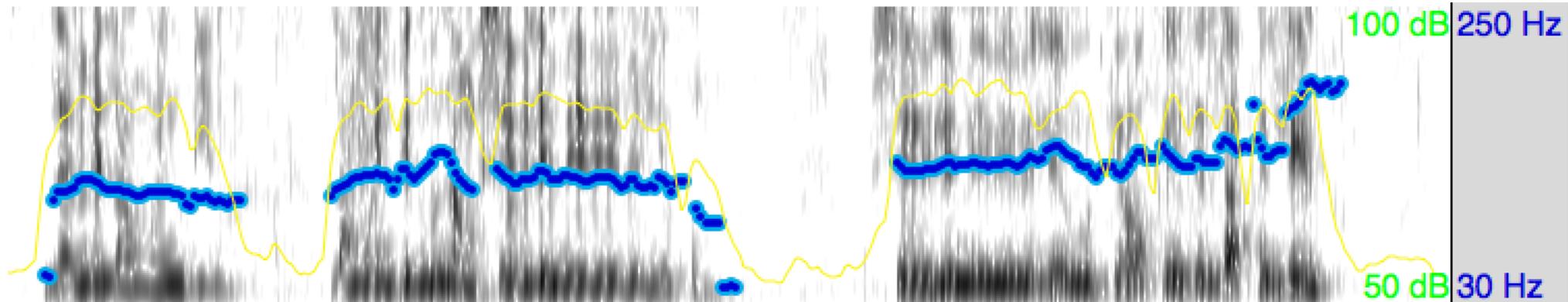
S2, S3 (=S1')

mwe sevele mee vevele, mwe kie moo lonlakele

RE come.out come outside RE say o.k. now

he came out, came to the outside, he said, o.k. now, ...

S2', S3'





RLC Phenomena:

- ◆ Regular final accent shifted from (typically) pre-final syllable to final syllable due to non-falling boundary tone

(1) la-m van la-m idi MAIup

3P-RE go 3P-RE take volcano

they went on and took the lava

Bong3.069, traditional story

S1

la-m idi maLUP

3P-RE take volcano

they took the lava

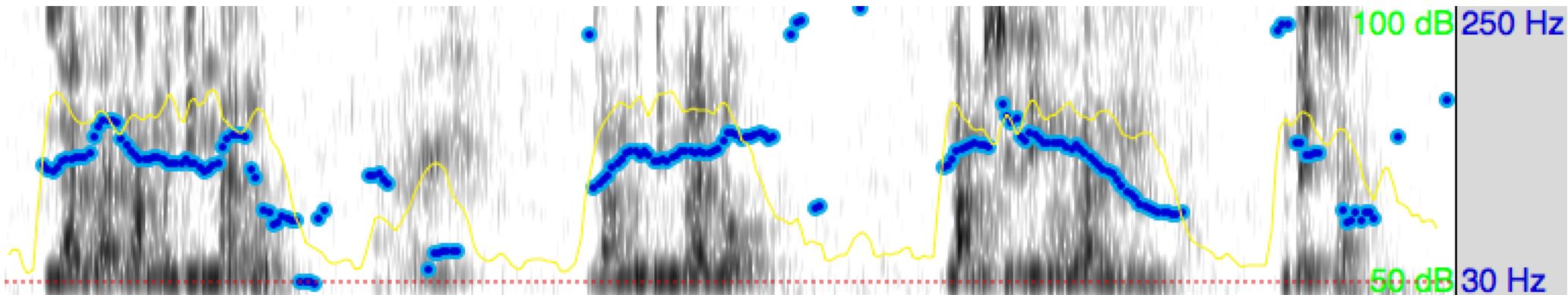
S2

la-m siling=van Besaa

3P-RE descend=go Southeast.Ambrym

they went down (with it) to Southeast Ambrym

S3



RCL properties



- ◆ Indefinites in S2 do not introduce new discourse referents

(1) me van mwe siling=van lereh

RE go RE descend=go to.beach

he went down to the beach

Rel1.006-009, traditional story

S1

me van mwe seene masolo soo

RE go RE hook.TR fish IDEF

he went and hooked a fish

S2, S3 (= S1')

mwe seene masolo soo, masolo piipili

RE hook.TR fish IDF fish red

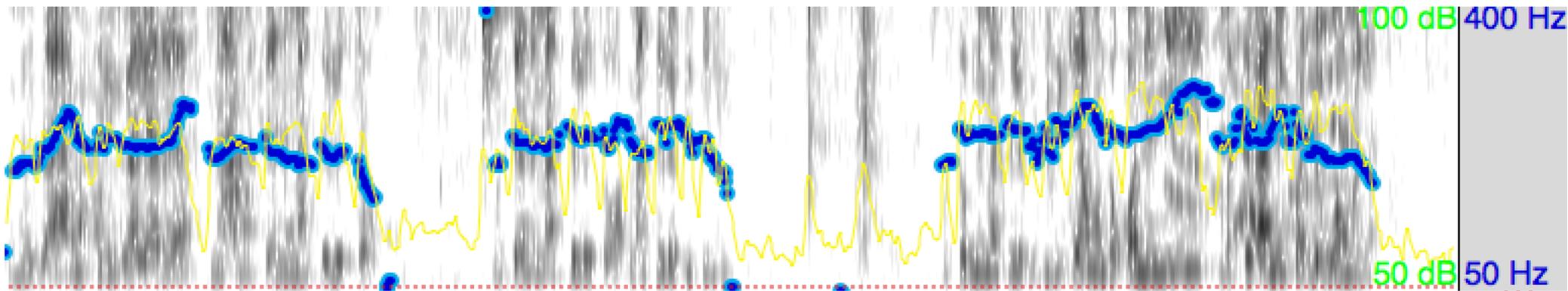
he hooked a fish, a red fish

S1', S2'

mo top-ne masolo piipili ki-ye, mo doko-ne mee mwe teване mwe pwet lon womela

RE throw-TR fish red this.SG RE pull-TR come RE bury.TR RE stay in sand

he threw the red fish, he pulled it towards him, he buried it in the sand



The prosody of RCL



Previous observations:

De Vries (2005), for Papuan languages:

- ◆ S1 falling contour, S2 rising contour
- ◆ S2 realized more slowly
- ◆ Often: a pause between S2 and S3

A proposal for RCL



Proposal, based on McKay (2008), Guillaume (2011)

- ◆ RCL as an **anaphoric device**:
S2 as anaphoric to S1, referring to the same event
- ◆ RCL as expression of the **rhetorical relation**, cf. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)
S2 as **background** of S3
- ◆ Typically, the event reported by S2 is **completed**,
providing the **topic / frame / setting** for the event or state reported by S3

Consequences of S2 being anaphoric to S1:

- ◆ As an anaphoric device, S2 tends to be **shorter** than S1
- ◆ As an anaphoric device, S2 tends to be **deaccented** with respect to S1:
F0 of main accent of S2 lower than F0 of main accent of S1
- ◆ As an anaphoric device, S2 has a **smaller amplitude** than amplitude of S1

Consequences of S2 being background event to S3:

- ◆ **S2** has a **final rise**, as it relates by a rhetorical relation to S3
- ◆ S1 bears anaphoric relation, no rhetorical relation, to S2/S3, hence **S1** has a **final fall**
- ◆ **Intonational phrasing**: (S1)_{ip} ((S2) (S3))_{ip}
- ◆ F0 range of S1 broader than F0 range of S2, due to final fall in S1
- ◆ Typical occurrence in **narratives and procedural** texts (event centered)

RCL in the Daakie Corpus



Procedure:

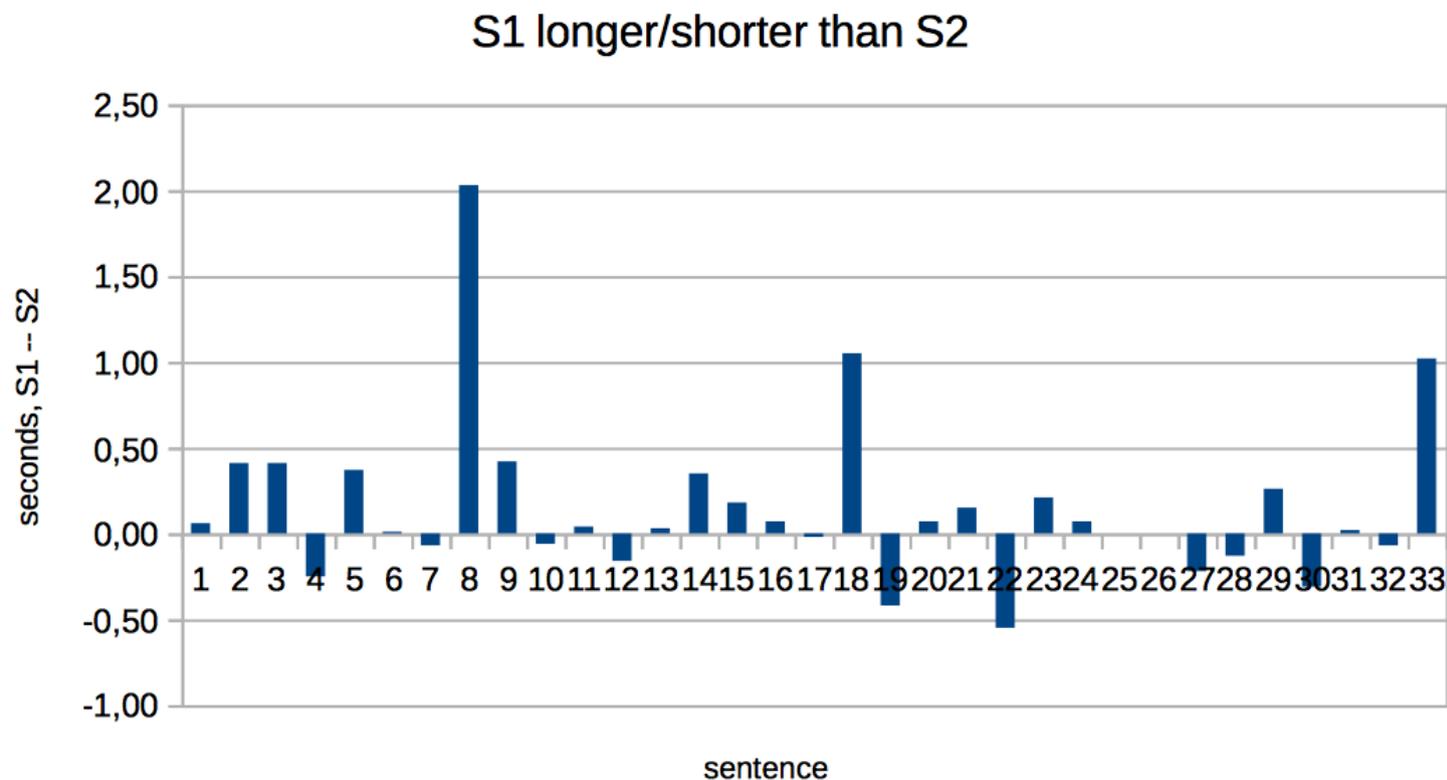
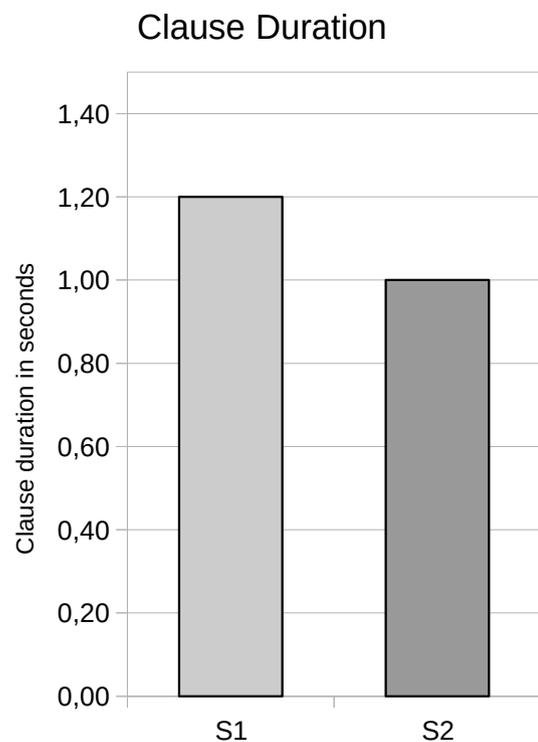
- ◆ Selection of 45 instances that were likely cases of RCL, taken from 16 different narratives
- ◆ Some turned out to be other kinds of repetitions of sentences on closer examination, reduced to 38 instances of certain instances of RCL
- ◆ Measured items of S1 and S2 (with PRAAT):
 - Pitch contour
 - Pitch range
 - F0 frequency
 - duration
 - pause between S1 and S2.
 - moras in S1 and S2 (CV syllable one mora, CV: or CVC two moras).

RCL in the Daakie corpus



Duration:

- ◆ Average of S1 slightly longer than average of S2 (1:15s vs. 1:00s)
- ◆ Contradicts expectation of de Vries 2006 that S2 is realized more slowly
- ◆ Consistent with anaphoric nature of S2

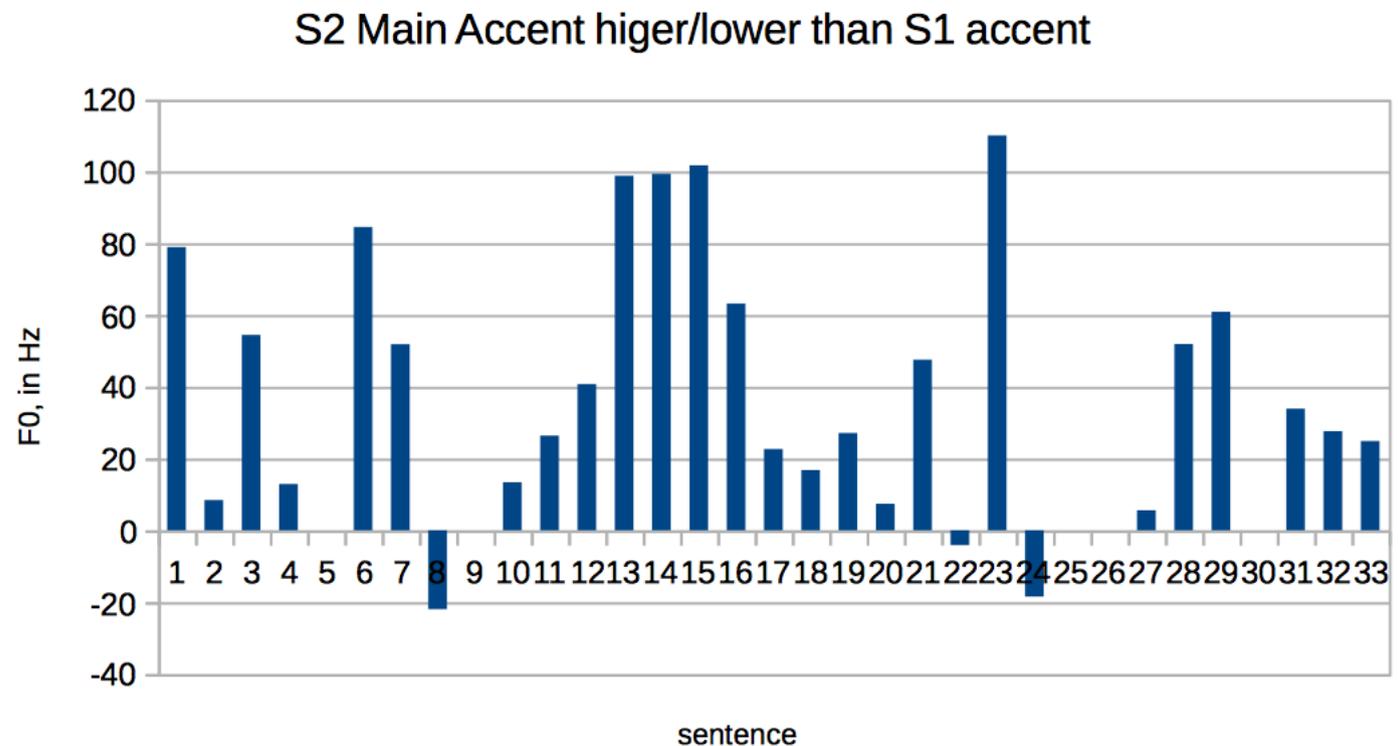
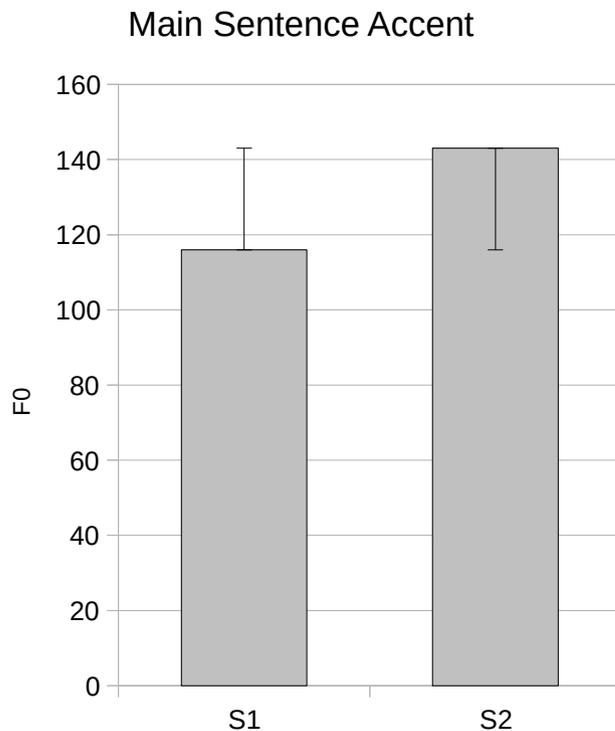


RCL in the Daakie corpus



F0 frequency at main accent

- ◆ Average peak of S2 (116 Hz; StDv 32) slightly greater than peak of S1 (143 Hz: StDv 37)
- ◆ In contradiction of our predictions from the anaphoric nature of S2, but may reflect final rise of S2, link to S3



RCL in the Daakie corpus



Amplitude

- ◆ roughly equal for S1 and S2,
S1: 74 dB (StDev 3.9), S2: 75 (St.Dev. 4.6)

RCL in the Daakie corpus



Pitch contour

- ◆ Final fall in all cases of S1
- ◆ Final rise in all cases of S2;
explained by background function for S3

Is this an empirical finding?

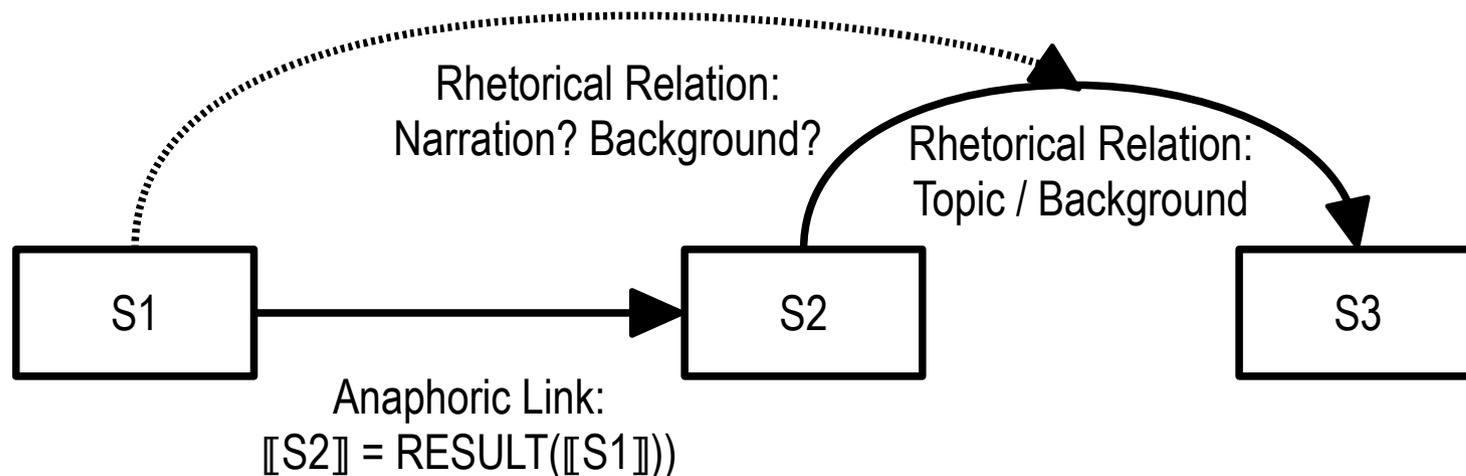
- ◆ Criterion was used to identify cases of RCL!
- ◆ Nevertheless: it is remarkable how frequent this pattern occurs



RCL and Discourse

Proposal for RCL as a discourse phenomenon:

- ◆ Anaphoric link between S1 and S2;
S2 (typically?) refers to the completed event reported in S2,
 - No introduction of new discourse referents in S2
 - possible new information that the event was finishedprediction: no progressives in S2
- ◆ Information structure relation / Rhetorical relation of Topic / Background between S2 and S3; S3: Nucleus
 - Taboada, Maite & William C. Mann. 2006. Rhetorical Structure Theory: Looking back and moving ahead. *Discourse Studies* 8: 423-459.
- ◆ Inferred rhetorical relation between S1 and S2: Narration? Background?



RCL: Questions for further research



- ◆ Progressives in S2 possible or disfavored?
- ◆ Where in a story does RCL occur?
 - Turning points?
 - Sequence of actions?
 - Support for speaker, leaves time for collecting one's thoughts?
- ◆ Can the effect of this oral strategy be captured somehow in writing?