Focus and constituency in Fox: expressions for 'only'

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In this talk I am going to examine the distribution of the Fox word *še·ški* 'only'. There are a number of instances where *še·ški* appears separated from the constituent it is associated with: I will argue that this sort of syntactic discontinuity is of a different sort than the types of discontinuous constituents many of us have discussed for Algonquian languages; rather it is more similar to the distribution of *only* in English. The patterns found with English *only* have been used to argue for particular analyses of constituent structure in English, and much of the present paper will be devoted to the question of what the distribution of Fox *še·ški* can tell us about Fox constituent structure.

A. *še·ški* in the context of other expressions for 'only'.

Let me start with a little background information. The Fox word *še·ški* is only one of many ways that Fox speakers can express the restriction we gloss as 'only'. Some of the others are listed under (1) on the handout:

(1)   Fox expressions meaning 'only' (glosses from Goddard 1994)

   a. *še·ški*   'only, alone; unmarried'

   b. *mehteno·hi* 'only, except, unless'

   c. *ke·sipi*   'only (him, them)'

   d. *iše, aše*   'just, only, merely'

   e. *mo·šaki*   'only, exclusively'

   f. *neši-*   'alone, only' (preverb)

   g. *nešihka*   'alone'

   h. *iši-*   'thus' plus a number (e.g. *iši-nekoti* 'only one')

   i. diminutive suffix on verb (Goddard 1992)
                  e.g. *i·ni e·ne·hiya·niki* 'the only ones I told to do that'
                  vs. *i·ni e·nakiki*   'the ones I told to do that'

   Sorting out all the semantic and syntactic distinctions among these forms is worth a paper or more by itself. I can't claim to know in all cases why one particular expression from the list in (1) is chosen over the others. There are, however, some clear cases of semantic difference among the forms: for example, *iše* or *aše* in (1d) typically has a dismissive sense (i.e. 'merely...'), while *mo·šaki* in (e) emphasizes the uniformity of a particular quality across a set.

(2)   o·ni   **aše**=mekoho   čaki-ki·ke·no·hiye·kwe,
        and   just=emph   small-give.clan.feast.dim 2p/subjunctive
        'And when you give just a small clan feast, …' O81H

(3)   na·htaswihe·wa='pi   otehkwe·mahi,
        have.several 3-3'/ind.ind=quot   his.sisters.obv

        mo·šaki=meko='pi   we·wenesiniwahi
        only=emph=quot   be.pretty 3'p/ind.ind

        'He had several sisters, it's said,
        and nothing but pretty ones, it's said.' L142-3

        For some of the other items in (1), there seem to be distributional restrictions. For example, (1c)
ke·sipi is used either with a personal pronoun, or with a verb containing diminutive morphology.

(4)   ki·na=meko   **ke·sipi** keketemina·kwa.
        you=emph   only   bless 3-1/ind.ind.
        'He blesses only you, by yourself.' N16I

(5)   kena·či=mekoho   ki·h=anwe·we·hta·pwa   **ke·sipi** ki·ke·no·hiye·kwini.
        slowly=emph   fut=sound 2p-0/ind.ind   only   hold.clan.feast.dim 2p/iter
        'You are to blow it softly when you only hold small clan feasts.' O82A
        [as opposed to blowing the flute loudly at a large feast]

        mehteno·hi in (1b) seems to be the only choice possible if a temporal or conditional clause is to
be in the scope of 'only'.

(6)   **mehteno·h**=meko='piowiye·hani   ne·po·hiničini,
        only=emph=quot   someone.obv   die 3'/iterative
        'Only whenever someone died, it's said, …' N3I

(7)   **mehteno·h**=meko=ye·toke   wa·waneška·hike
        only=emph=it.seems   be.bad X/subjunctive
        'Only, it seems, if one were bad, …' W182M

This is not the only context in which *mehteno·hi* is used, however; it also shows up in main clauses:

(8)   i·nina·h=mana **mehteno·hi**   netahkohkona·na   wi·h=anwe·we·kesiči,
        then=this   only   our.drum   fut=sound 3/aor
        'At that time only this drum of ours will sound, …' W260B

B. Background on 'only'.

It may also be worthwhile to point out some aspects of the semantics of 'only'. 'only' is associated with a focus element elsewhere in the sentence, and implicitly or explicitly contrasts the focus with other alternatives (cf. McCawley 1988:52). The contrast may be among members of some contextually or culturally determined set, or the contrast may be between points on a scale. Here are two examples with *še·ški* which illustrate such contrasts.

(9) **še·ški** mehtekwi e·h=ota·hkwatomiči
     only   stick   aor=have.as.weapon 3/aor
     'He had only a club for a weapon.' JT12.15

(10) **še·šk** e·h=ki·ški·škeše·šwa·či
     only   aor=redup.cut.off.ear 3-3'/aor

     na·hk e·h=ki·ški·škikome·šwa·či
     also   aor=redup.cut.off.nose 3-3'/aor

     na·hk e·h=ki·ški·škenehke·šwa·či
     also   aor=redup.cut.off.hand 3-3'/aor

     'he only cut their ears off and cut their noses off and cut their hands off.' JT10.3
     [context: White-Robe did not kill his prisoners...]

In (9) the contrast is between a club and any other sort of weapon one might have; (10) assumes a scale of ill-treatment where killing prisoners is further along the scale than cutting off various body parts.

Turning briefly now to English, we may observe that a well known property of English *only* is that it need not be immediately adjacent to the element which is its focus. Consider the following examples, patterned after ones in McCawley 1988:52. In each I have underlined the element which is the focus of *only*.

(11)   Mickey watches only <u>sports</u>. (he doesn't watch the news, Oprah, ...)

(12)   Mickey only watches <u>sports</u>. (same interpretation as (11))

There are other possible interpretations if *only* precedes the verb:

(13)   Mickey only <u>watches</u> sports. (he doesn't play them, bet on them, ...)

(14)   Mickey only <u>watches sports</u>. (he doesn't have any other hobbies)

In (11), (13), and (14), the focus immediately follows *only* – in (14) the focus is the entire VP *watches sports*. (12) is the most interesting case, since the focus is not adjacent to only.[1]

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[1] The different interpretations in (11)-(14) above are disambiguated by stress. However, with the data I am using from Fox texts I don't have information about what role (if any) contrastive stress plays in identifying the focus in

McCawley states the generalization thus:

(15)   "*only* can appear only as a left sister of a constituent containing the focus...
        the constituent that [*only*] precedes may not be an S." McCawley (1988:52-3)

(16)   * Only Mickey watches <u>sports</u>.

        For English, the distribution of *only* confirms the existence of a VP node:[2]

(17)   [[a tree of Mickey only watches sports]]

C. Distribution of *še·ški*

Turning back to Fox now, let's see where *še·ški* can appear. First of all, *še·ški* is typically to the left of its focus, as we saw already in (9) and (10), but it is also possible for *še·ški* to appear to the right of the element it is putting into focus. (Again, the focus is underlined in the examples below.)

(18)   i·ni   <u>a·mi-'šite·he·ye·kwe</u>   **še·ški**
        that   should-think.thus 2p/participle   only
        'That is the only thing you should think about' O146B

The remaining examples on the handout, however, will all have *še·ški* to the left of its focus.

        I propose the following hypothesis regarding the relative position of *še·ški* and its focus:

(19)   Hypothesis: *še·ški* may be EITHER adjoined immediately to the left (or right) of the single
        constituent which is its focus OR adjoined to the left of a clause which contains the focus.

This hypothesis requires the following assumption about Fox clause structure:

(20)   Assumption: there is no VP constituent in Fox; instead there is a flat structure
        with no asymmetry between subject and object.

This hypothesis makes a number of predictions. First, there should be no difference between subjects and objects put into focus by *še·ški*. Second, in a clause containing more than two constituents, it should not be possible for *še·ški* to put two of the elements (e.g. the verb and its object) into focus while excluding the remainder of the sentence. Third, it should only be possible for *še·ški* to have a non-adjacent focus if it is at the left edge of the clause. (This last prediction has to be adjusted slightly, because there is independent evidence for considering overt topics to be outside the structure of the core clause.)

        Let's look first at clear examples of *še·ški* adjoined immediately to its focus:

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[2] See Ueno 1993 for a discussion of the Japanese focus particle *mo* 'also' and how it can be used as a test for constituent structure in Japanese.

(21) e·h=ne·tamowa·či   **še·ški**   <u>menehki</u>
      aor=see 3p-0/aor   only   hand
      'They saw only a hand' N18A

(22) nenehke·netake·koha=mekoho   **še·ški**   <u>kemehtose·neniwiwenwa·wi</u>
      think.about 2p-0/pot=emph   only   your.pl.lives
      'You should indeed think only about your lives.' O148J

(23) e·h=ma·mahkate·wi·wa·či   **še·ški**   <u>wi·či·so·ma·čiki</u>
      aor=redup.fast 3p/aor   only   be.of.(OBJ's).clan 3p-3'/part/3p
      'Just the other members of their clan were fasting.' O163A

(24) a·kwi=koh=ne·h=ki·na   **še·ški**   <u>pesetawačini</u>   ko·hkomese·hena·na
      not=obviously=also=you   only   listen.to 2-3/neg   our.grandmother
      'You do not just listen to our grandmother.' W85J
      [previous context: Wisahkeha is always arguing and talking back...]

      Now, let's examine some cases where *še·ški* is clearly not adjacent to its focus:

(25) **še·ški**   e·h=ne·tamowa·či   <u>mi·ša·mi</u>
      only   aor=see 3p-0/aor   sacred.pack
      'They saw only the sacred pack.' O101E

(26) **še·ški** =mek   e·h=awato·č   <u>ota·siya·ni.</u>
      only=emph   aor=take.away 3-0/aor   his.breech.clout
      'He had with him only his breech-clout.' JT276.11

Where the focus is just the verb:

(27) **še·ški**=meko   i·nahi   <u>apihapiwaki</u>   ki·ke·nočiki
      only=emph   there   redup.sit 3p/ind.ind   give.clan.feast 3p/part/3p
      'Those who were the hosts of the clan feast just sat there.' O37C
      [previous context: the hosts do not smoke or eat there]

(28) **še·ški**=ke·h=meko   o·šiseme·hahi   <u>e·h=pesepeseta·koči</u>
      only=and=emph   her.grandchildren.obv aor=redup.listen.to 3'-3/aor
      'And her grandchildren just listened to her indeed.' W389A
      [context: before they were talking back to her]

(29) **še·ški**=meko·='ni   <u>e·h=pesepesetawaki</u>   no·hkomesa
      only=emph=then   aor=redup.listen.to 1-3/aor   my.grandmother
      'Then I only listened to my grandmother.' AKA91E
      [before he was always talking back to her]

      A particularly interesting example is the following:

(30) **še·ški** aša·haki aškote·wi e·h=ne·tamowa·či
only Sioux.pl fire aor=see 3p-0/aor
'The Sioux saw only fire.' O150I
[context: the Mesquakie heroine is escaping, but the Sioux don't see her.]

In texts, one often finds stylistic variation between *še·ški* with an immediately adjacent focus and *še·ški* adjoined to the whole clause:

(31) wi·sahke·ha **še·ški** e·h=na·no·mehkwe·sa·či, …
W. only aor=shake.head 3/aor
na·hka=meko **še·ški** e·h=na·no·mehkwe·sa·či. ….
again=emph only aor=shake.head 3/aor
še·ški=meko na·hkači e·h=na·no·mehkwe·sa·či.
only=emph again aor=shake.head 3/aor

'Wisahkeha only shook his head, …
Again he only shook his head. …
Again he only shook his head.' W229B,F,I

For cases where the focus of *še·ški* is at the left edge of the clause, it is not clear whether *še·ški* is adjoined only to that constituent, or whether it is adjoined to the whole S and picks out the leftmost element:

(32) **še·ški** e·h=nana·hišiki mahkwa.
only aor=lie.down 3/aor bear
'The bear just lay down.' W252C
[next sentence: Wisahkeha lay down too]

(33) **še·ški**=mekoho mahkwa·či ki·h=išite·he·pwa
only=emph quietly fut=think.thus 2p/ind.ind
'You are to have only calm thoughts …' O137C
[in the clan feast; as opposed to thinking about women, etc.]

(34) **še·ški**=meko mehto·či=meko metemo·he·haki netešawipena
only=emph like=emph old.women be.thus 1p/ind.ind
'We are only like old women.' W181A

In fact the left edge of the clause (after the negative position) is a favored spot for all sorts of focused elements, including contrastive focus, wh-questions, and answers to wh-questions. It is not surprising, therefore, that *še·ški* plus its focus is often found in this position:

(35) **še·ški**=meko ki·hče·wani ašiha·kwe·ni
only=emph turkey make 3-3'/interrogative
'He must have created only the turkey.' W210G

(36) o·ni   **še·ški**=meko <u>kehkeše·wi</u>   i·nahi ahte·wi
      and.then   only=emph   ashes   there   be.[there] 0/ind.ind
      'And then only ashes were there.' W62F

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