



Null Objects and Verb Movement in Eastern Tamang*

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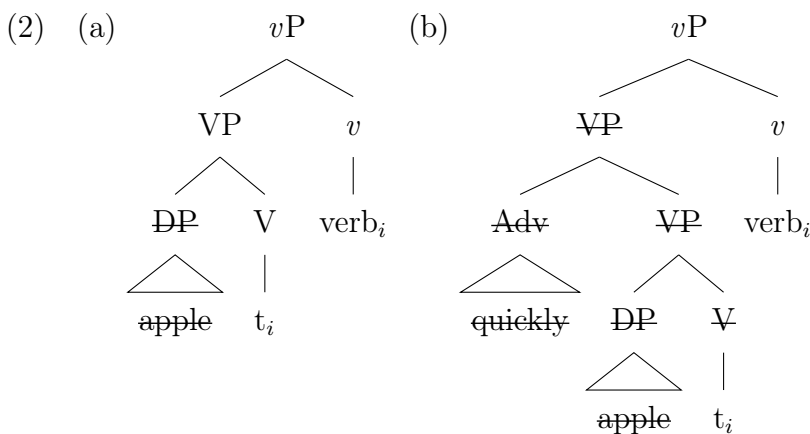
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1 Introduction

- Goal: investigate null arguments in Eastern Tamang
- investigate interaction between null arguments and light verb constructions
- Two possible analyses
 - Argument ellipsis (AE)
 - Verb-stranding VP ellipsis (VSVPE)
- VP ellipsis suggested by adverb resumption
 - shown to be a red herring
- will show that null objects arise through argument ellipsis
- test word order as in the following example

(1) John ate an apple quickly. Mary also ate.

- Reading 1 - Mary also ate an apple (quickly or otherwise) → argument ellipsis (AE)
- Reading 2 - Mary also ate an apple quickly → Verb-stranding VP-ellipsis (VSVPE)



- tree in 2(a) - AE
 - only *apple* is elided
 - If there is no adverb, it's because it's not there to begin with

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- tree in 2(b) - VSVPE
 - V raises out of VP
 - then VP is deleted
 - If the antecedent VP contains an adverb, then the elided VP also contains an adverb
 - ※ Assumption: ellision requires strict identity
- Some data akin to 2(b) in Eastern Tamang → VSVPE
- will show, however, that AE is the preferred analysis

2 Background

2.1 Tamang

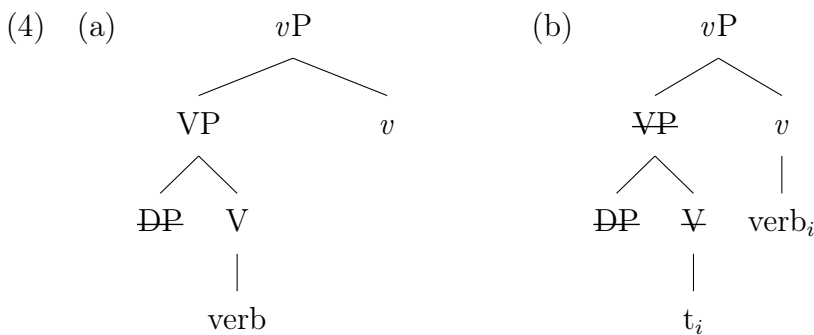
- Tamang - Sino-Tibetan, 1.35 million speakers
- dialect continuum spoken in central/eastern Nepal, neighbouring India
- speaker - mid 20s, non-binary from Lalitpur (previously Patan)
- speaks Eastern Tamang with friends and family, English at school, Nepali with non-Tamang speaking people in Kathmandu
- ergative case alignment, SOV (Owen-Smith, 2015; Lee, 2011; Poudel, 2006, 2012)
- some lexical borrowing from Nepali and English in our speaker’s speech



2.2 Null Arguments

- null arguments found in Eastern Tamang
- (3) $\text{sudʒan-se gor-ki fjav tsa-dʒi ʌni pasan-se e tsa-dʒi}$
 Sujan-ERG CL-1 apple eat-PST and Pasang-ERG also eat-PST
 ‘Sujan ate an apple and so did Pasang.’

- null arguments can arise in a variety of ways (Sato, 2019; Huang, 1984; Saito, 2007; Kim, 1999; Park and Bae, 2012; Manetta, 2018, 2019; Simpson et al., 2013; Lee and Park, 2021; Toosarvandani, 2009)
- *pro* - requires strict identity
- clearly not the case in (3), since two people can't eat the same apple
- two other possibilities:
 1. argument ellipsis (AE)
 2. verb-stranding VP-ellipsis (VSVPE)
- AE results from deletion of DP (i)
- VSVPE results from V-raising and VP deletion (ii)



- Recent debate on which analysis is correct for which language, and if VSVPE (4a) even exists (Landau, 2020; Landau; Simpson).
- several proposals for VSVPE (Manetta, 2018; Simpson et al., 2013; Lee and Park, 2021; Toosarvandani, 2009)

2.3 Light Verbs

- Light verbs - two types
 - *laba* ('do') - quite common, often combines with a Nepali loanword (in our data)
 - *taba* ('become') - less common
- (5) a. $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-se } t^{\text{h}}\text{e } \text{kitab } \eta\text{i-rem } \text{p}\lambda\text{d}\lambda\text{p } \text{la-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}.$
 SujanERG DEM book two-times read do-PST
 'Sujan read the book twice.'
- b. $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-se } \text{ga}\widehat{\text{ti}} \eta\text{i-rem } \text{s}\lambda\text{p}^{\text{h}}\text{a } \text{la-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}.$
 SujanERG car two-times wash do-PST
 'Sujan washed the car twice.'
- (6) a. $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-da } \text{ram-la } \widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{m}\lambda\text{din } t^{\text{h}}\text{a } \text{ta } \text{mu-la}$
 Sujan-DAT Ram-GEN birthday knowledge become AUX-PST
 'Sujan came to know Ram's birthday.'
- b. $\text{pas}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{ng}} \text{ kovid-se } \text{lasi } \text{ak}^{\text{h}}\text{amba } \text{ta-ba}.$
 Pasang covid-INSTR due.to sickness become-PST.
 'Pasang got sick from covid.'

3 Support for the VSVPE approach

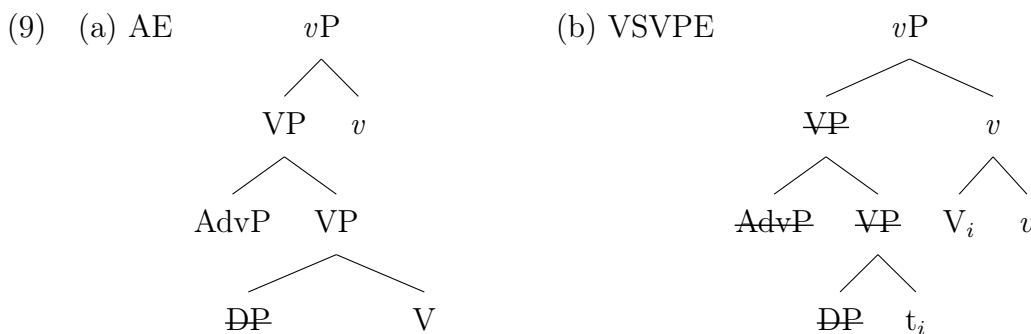
- typical evidence for the VSVPE analysis is the resumption of VP-internal modifiers.

(7) John ate an apple quickly, and so did Mary (*so* = “ate an apple quickly”)

- much evidence suggests that this holds in Eastern Tamang (with our speaker)
- much inter-speaker variation reported for other languages

(8) a. $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-se}$ $\text{ʃja}\widehat{\text{y}}$ jona $\widehat{\text{tʃa}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$ $\text{t}\Lambda\text{r}\Lambda$ $\text{pa}\widehat{\text{sa}}\widehat{\text{n}}\text{-se}$ $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{za}}$ $\text{a-}\widehat{\text{tʃa}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$
 Sujan-ERG apple quickly eat-PST but Pasang-ERG FOC NEG-eat-PST
 ‘Sujan ate an apple quickly, but Pasang didn’t (eat one quickly).’
 b. $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-se}$ $\text{t}^{\text{h}}\text{e}$ kitab $\eta\text{i-rem}$ $\text{p}\Lambda\text{d}\Lambda\text{p}$ $\text{la-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$ $\text{t}\Lambda\text{r}\Lambda$ $\text{pa}\widehat{\text{sa}}\widehat{\text{n}}\text{-se}$ $\text{a-la-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$.
 Sujan-ERG DEM book two-times read do-PST but Pasang NEG-do-PST
 ‘Sujan read that book twice, but Pasang didn’t (read it twice).’

- adverb resumption easily captured by VSVPE



- AE - Adv must be present to be part of assertion
- VSVPE - null Adv is part of elided VP

4 Support for the AE approach

- previous section - appears to be sound evidence for VSVPE
- judgements often unstable and variable among speakers
- possible speaker variations to be worked out
- other evidence against VSVPE

4.1 Verb Identity

- VSVPE - cannot have different verbs in source and resumed clause

CONTEXT Sujan and Pasang are independently in a fruit market. Sujan decides to buy an apple. Pasang is a poor street kid and simply eats an apple when no one is looking.

(10) $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}\text{-se}$ $\text{ʃja}\widehat{\text{y}}$ $\text{g}^{\text{h}}\text{lu-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$ Λni $\text{pa}\widehat{\text{sa}}\widehat{\text{n}}\text{-se}$ $\widehat{\text{tʃa}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$
 Sujan-ERG apple buy-PST and Pasang-ERG eat-PST
 ‘Sujan bought an apple and Pasang ate one.’

CONTEXT Sujan and Pasang are in a supermarket. They're both hungry, but don't have a lot of money. Nevertheless, Sujan is a person of a good character, while Pasang is less so. So...

- (11) $\widehat{\text{sudʒan-se}} \text{ fja}\check{\text{y}} \text{ g}^{\text{h}}\text{lu-d}\check{\text{z}}\text{i} \text{ t}_{\text{LFLA}} \text{ pa}\check{\text{s}}\text{a}\check{\text{ŋ-se}} \text{ hjo} \text{ la-d}\check{\text{z}}\text{i}$
 Sujan-ERG apple buy-PST but Pasang-ERG steal do-PST
 'Sujan bought an apple but Pasang stole (one).' [different apples]

- different verbs - AE analysis more likely
- note: *pro* analysis would require strict identity
- i.e., Pasang ate the apple that Sujan bought

4.2 Tag answers

- test due to Landau (to appear)
- Tag no answers do not allow VP modifier resumption

- (12) $\text{e-se} \text{ momo} \text{ k}\check{\text{a}}\check{\text{t}}\text{a-se} \text{ t}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{a-ba} \text{ hinna?}$
 you-ERG momo fork-INSTR eat-PST COP
 'Did you eat the momo with a fork?'

- possible answer

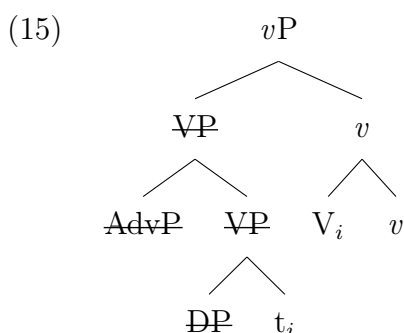
- (13) $\text{ahin, t}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{amt}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{a-se}$
 no, spoon-INSTR
 'No, with a spoon.'

- not a possible answer

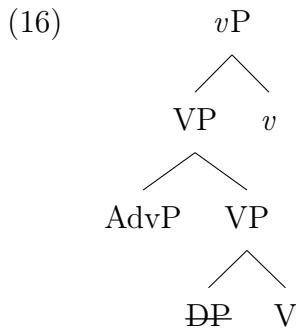
- (14) $\# \text{a-t}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{a} \text{ mu-ba, t}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{amt}\check{\text{ʃ}}\text{a-se}$
 NEG-eat COP-PST, spoon-INSTR
 ('No, with a spoon.')

4.3 Summary

- lack of verb identity
- no adverb resumption with tag answers
- both suggest only AE is an appropriate analysis



- (15) - VSVPE, verb must be the same
- tag resuming adverb should be permitted
- neither of these two hold
- AE analysis preferred, below



- (16) - Adv can only be interpreted if present

5 Adverb resumption: Landau

- Landau (to appear) notes that most studies on ellipsis of this kind have reported significant speaker variation and uncertainty with adverb resumption
- our data: resumption of adverb is a strong implicature
- can be over-ridden

(17) $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}$ -se t^he kitab $\widehat{\text{ni}}$ -rem $\widehat{\text{pa}}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{ap}}$ la- $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}$ $\widehat{\text{ani}}$ $\widehat{\text{pa}}\widehat{\text{sa}}\widehat{\text{ŋ}}$ -se e ($\widehat{\text{pa}}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{ap}}$) la- $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}$.
 Sujān-ERG DEM book two-times read do-PST and Paṣāṅ also (read) do-PST
 ‘Sujan read the book twice and so did Paṣāṅ.’

- example above contains an implicature that Paṣāṅ also read the book twice
- holds regardless of whether lexical verb appears in resumed clause
- can be overridden

(18) ... t_{LA} t^he-se $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{za}}$ ti-rem $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{ek}}\widehat{\text{k}}^{\text{h}}$ e la- $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}$
 but he-ERG FOC one-time only do-PST
 ‘...but he only read it once.’

- change in polarity (affirmative/negative)
- different results

(19) $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}$ -se t^he kitab $\widehat{\text{ni}}$ -rem $\widehat{\text{pa}}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{ap}}$ la- $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}$ t_{LA} $\widehat{\text{pa}}\widehat{\text{sa}}\widehat{\text{ŋ}}$ -se a-la- $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{zi}}$
 Sujān-ERG DEM book two-times read do-PST but Paṣāṅ-ERG NEG-do-PST
 ‘Sujan read the book twice but Paṣāṅ did not.’

- two readings possible

1. Paṣāṅ didn’t read it at all.

2. Pasang read it, but not twice.

→ possible when the lexical verb is absent in resumed clause

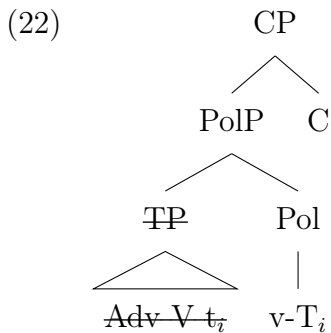
- consider the following, lexical V is present

(20) $\widehat{\text{sud}}\widehat{\text{zan}}$ -se t^he kitab η i-rem p \wedge d \wedge p la-d $\widehat{\text{z}}$ i t \wedge \wedge \wedge p \wedge s \wedge η -se p \wedge d \wedge p a-la-d $\widehat{\text{z}}$ i.
 Suj \wedge n-ERG DEM book two-times read do-PST but Pasang-ERG read NEG-do-PST
 ‘Sujan read the book twice but Pasang did not read it (at all).’

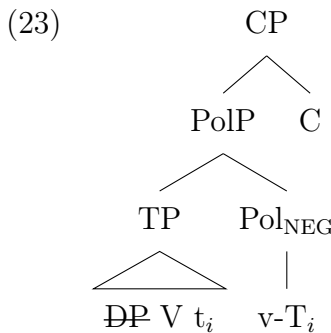
- when lexical verb is present in resumed clause, adverb cannot be resumed
- can only mean that Pasang didn’t read the book at all.

(21) # ... t^he-se ti-rem d $\widehat{\text{z}}$ ekk^he p \wedge d \wedge p la-d $\widehat{\text{z}}$ i.
 3-ERG one-time only read do-PST
 (‘...but he only read it once.’)

- potential analysis
 - contrastive context: V raises to T to Pol (Landau; Manetta, 2018)
 - TP ellipsis can result in resumed adverbial reading
 - only light verb raises to T (then to Pol)
 - lexical verb remains
- can be optionally elided (with *laba* only)
- must be elided with TP ellipsis
- if present in contrastive context, then only AE reading is allowed (with no possibility for implicature, but not sure why)



- If V is present, then no TP ellipsis has taken place - only AE



- for *taba* (to become), lexical portion cannot be omitted as in 24, 25

- (24) $\widehat{\text{su}}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{an}}\text{-da}$ am-la $\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{n}}\widehat{\text{m}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{d}}\widehat{\text{i}}\widehat{\text{n}}$ $\text{t}^{\text{h}}\text{a}$ ta mu-la ani $\text{pa}\text{sang}\text{-da}$ e
 Sujān-DAT mother-GEN birthday knowledge become AUX-PST and Paśang-DAT also
 *(t^ha) ta mu-la
 *(knowledge) become AUX-PST
 ‘Sujan came to know his mother’s birthday, and so did Paśang.’ (strict or sloppy reading)
- (25) pasang kovid-se lasi $\text{ak}^{\text{h}}\text{amba}$ ta-ba ani pemba e *(ak^hamba)
 Paśan covid-INSTR due.to sickness become-PST and Pemba also *(sickness)
 $\text{ta-d}\widehat{\text{z}}\widehat{\text{i}}$
 become-PST
 ‘Paśang got sick from COVID, and Pemba did, too.’

- assume that V raises to *v* with *taba* (but not with *laba*)
- *taba/laba* asymmetry in ellipsis remains to be tested further

6 Conclusion

- AE preferred analysis:
- different lexical verb
- tag questions
- adverb resumption - unstable
- implicatures - can be overridden
- with contrastive environments, TP ellipsis possible
- difference with light verbs:
- *laba* - lexical portion can be elided
- elision obligatory with TP ellipsis
- *taba* - lexical portion cannot be elided
- variation with adjunct resumption reported
- must test with several speakers

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