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A Possessor Raising Light Verb out of Small Clauses in Tigrinya

Abstract

In Tigrinya the two verbal elements, *ʔallo* and *ʔiyyu*, predicate individual-level characteristics (*ʔiyyu*) and stage-level characteristics (*ʔallo*), as well as temporal and stative readings (both *ʔallo*). These stage/individual level predicates can be seen in (1) and (2) below. Kifle (2011) gives a descriptive account of *ʔallo* and *ʔiyyu*. Her claim is *ʔallo* and *ʔiyyu* belong to the same category, copula (COP), and they only differ on their predicational properties. In my paper I claim that this classification is inaccurate, and instead I argue that *ʔallo* is a light verb that allows for possessor raising out of small clauses.

Tigrinya

Ethio-Semitic, 7 million speakers, with 4.3 in Ethiopia and 2.3 in Eritrea, the rest as diaspora.
SOV head final, with some variations depending on clefting, focused subjects and topicalization
Alienable possession depending on animacy, differential object marking depending on definiteness and minimal case marking.

Kifle's Tigrinya Applicatives in Lexical Functional Grammar

Kifle claims that the two verbal elements **ʔallo** and **ʔiyyu** are both copulas and they only differ in their predicational properties.

ʔallo- stage level, temporal and stative

ʔiyyu- individual level

1 Yonas ʃibbuq ʔiyyu
Yonas.M good.MSg Pres.IDcop-be-SM.3MSg
'Yonas is handsome' (Kifle 2011:50, (47b))

2 Yonas ʃibbuq ʔallo
Yonas.M good-Pres Pres.LOcop.exist-SM.3MSg
'Yonas is fine' (Kifle 2011:50, (48a))

My claim

The two verbal elements **ʔallo** and **ʔiyyu** are not both copulas, only **ʔiyyu**. Instead, **ʔallo** is a possessor raising light verb.

Reasons why:

- i. Object marking
- ii. Verbal co-occurrence
- iii. Differential object marking

Object marking

?iyyu does not allow object marking

?allo allow object marking

3 (ni-) Yonas lam ?allo-wu-wo
(Obj-) Yonas cow.FSg Pres.Loc-loc.exist-SM.3FSg-OM1.3MSg
'Yonas has cow/For Yonas there are cow that exist' (Kifle 2011:51, (49a))

Verbal Co-occurrence

?allo does allow verbal co-occurrence but very minimally

?iyyu does allow verbal co-occurrence

4 ?anā ?ay-?i-barāki-n ?iy-a
Pro.1Sg Neg-Imperf.SM.1Sg-DT.bless-Neg Pres.IDcop.be-1Sg
'I will not be blessed' (Kifle 2011: 54 (52a))

5 ʕasa ki-t-bāliʕ ?all-o-ka ni-ʕiʕna ʕibbuq
Fish Purp-Imperf.2-eat.SM.MSg Pres.Locop.exist-SM.3MSg-OM1.2MSg
ni-ʕiʕna ʕibbuq ?iyy-u
for-health good.M Pres.IDcop.be-SM.3MSg
'You have to eat fish. It is good for health' (Kifle 2011: 47, (44b))

?iyyu is very productive with verbal co-occurrence, which is expected of a copula

5 is the only example of verbal co-occurrence for **?allo**. It is important to note that it occurs with **?iyyu** and the verb it co-occurs with is an embedded verb.

Differential Object Marking

Again, obligatory on definites and becomes obfuscated with animacy.

?iyyu does not allow it

?allo does allow it

6 (ni-) Yonas lam ?allo-wu-wo
(Obj-) Yonas cow.FSg Pres.Loc-loc.exist-SM.3FSg-OM1.3MSg
'Yonas has cow/For Yonas there are cow that exist' (Kifle 2011:51, (49a))

DOM, per Kifle and others, can be understood as something like case. The prohibition of the DOM marker on **?iyyu** is expected, since it is a copula. It's occurrence on **?allo** should not be expected, if we are to accept Kifle's categorization as a copula

Problematic data for object marking

7 ?it-a gāza sāb ?all-o-wa
Det-3FSg house person Pres.Loc-loc.exist-SM.3MSg-**OM**.3FSg
'The house has people in it/There are people in the house' (Kifle 2011: 51, (50))

8 ?ab't-i gāza sāb ?all-o
Loc'Det-3MSg house person Pres.exist-SM.3MSg
'There exists a person in that house/In that house exists a person.' (Kifle 2011: 133, (144b))

7 **?allo** does have object marking, 8 **?allo** does not have object marking. And note the appearance of a loc morpheme on 8. There is not anything different between the two, besides the appearance of a loc morpheme, so why did OM disappear.

Possession

Possession configuration:

9 (ni-) Yonas lam ?allo-wu-wo
(Obj-) Yonas cow.FSg Pres.Loc-loc.exist-SM.3FSg-OM1.3MSg
'Yonas has cow/For Yonas there are cow that exist' (Kifle 2011:51, (49a))

In Tigrinya the way subjects and objects are marked in the syntax and the semantics is not aligned in all circumstances. The syntax sometimes inverts it.

Inalienable possession:

10 nay joni gəza
nay john house
'John's house' (Gebregziabher 2012: 161 (1a))

11 ?arki joni
friend john
'John's friend' (Gebregziabher 2012: 161 (1b))

Notice the overt possessive structure in the alienable structure, and the lack of an overt possessive structure in the inalienable structure.

External possession:

i. No overt possessive structure, ii. mismatch in the syntax and semantics
Tigrinya has external possession

This issue of external possession and Tigrinya inalienable possession is important for possessor raising and loc-inv

Contributing proposals

Amy Rose Deal: You're Having Me On (1998):

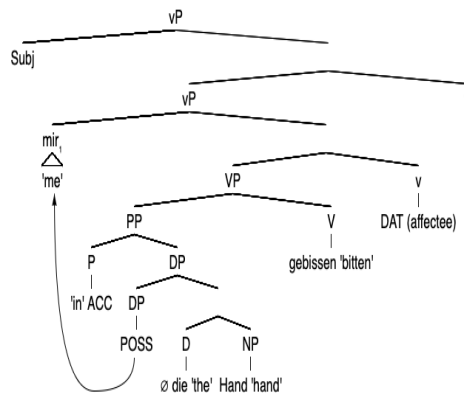
Adopted some parts of her aspectual 'have' proposal, specifically her small clause approach. Although, her causative/eventive semantics proposal did not fit Tigrinya.

Lee-Schoenfield's approach (2006):

Her approach was three pronged; it begins with a PP-embedded part, then i. embedded PP with an external possessor, ii. with an internal possessor iii. with doubly marked possession

This approach also includes issues of case, wherein dative is paired with the external possessor or doubly marked possessor, accusative with the internal possessor or external possessor or doubly marked possessor. This is what her representation looks like.

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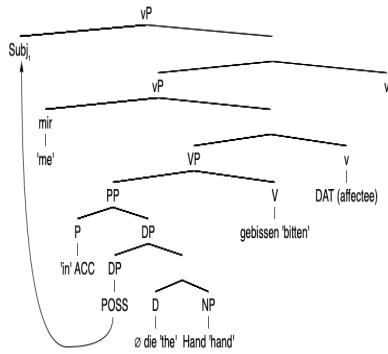


In her representation the possessive DP begins in a standard possessor position, and that is the specifier of the possessed/possessum DP. Considering the claims made in Deal (2013), the head of this DP cannot case license for nominals. So, instead it must search higher in the tree for a more suitable place that allows for case licensing. The head finds a suitable place in the form of a light verb, often referred to as an applicative verb head as well, that allows for the licensing of a dative case.

My proposal

Slightly adapted from Lee-Schoenfield (2006):

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SpecDP moved into a subject position rather than an object position. Remember the Loc-Inv, or purported Loc-Inv, example (8). If (8) is an instance of Loc-Inv, then this object to subject movement is sound, rendering the underlying form akin to ‘in the man the house’. The surface form may be realized through topicaliation, object shift or something else.

Possessor Raising

Standard PR:

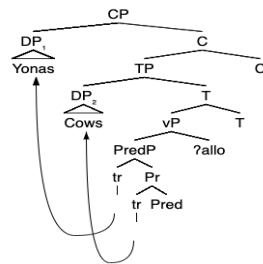
Double DP- [DP[DP Possessor][DP Possessum]D]]

Would violate minimality conditions and create agreement barriers in Tigrinya

Small clause PR

Instead an SC approach was used instead, with the intention it would avoid the problems of minimality and agreement barriers. The SC in this case was a PredP, and PredP exhaustively dominates the string AP/PP/etc, this will be represented below.

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The probing for an XP that fits the requirement of vP, is allowed to probe past the DP ‘cows’ because the target is no longer a DP, it is now a SC. And including avoiding violating phase boundaries and minimality, this possessor raising also accounts for some of the nominal agreement patterns and subject/object marking

Works cited

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