

Ditransitives in Tigrinya

Lecture 13
LIN 4409/5609

October 11, 2023

The Ethiosemitic Language Family

The Ethiosemitic languages are distributed Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan

North Ethiosemitic

Ge'ez (†) - Horn of Africa

Tigre - Eritrea, 1.05M

Tigrinya - Eritrea and Ethiopia, 9.85M

South Ethiosemitic

Amharic - Ethiopia, 32M

Argobba - Central Ethiopia, 44K

Gafat (†) - Western Ethiopia

Gurage languages - Central Ethiopia, 2M

Harari - Eastern Ethiopia, 26K

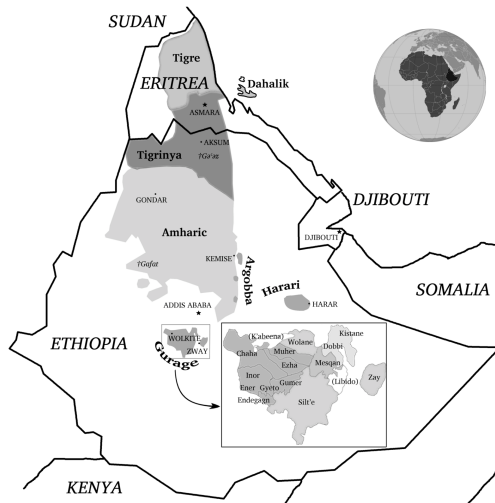


Figure: Distribution of Ethiosemitic languages

Ditransitive Verbs

There are predicates that take two internal arguments

- (1) Kim gave Tom some coffee

Theme : the entity that undergoes the action

Goal : the entity/place towards which the action is directed

- (2) Sue sent Pat a letter

- (3) Joe showed Ann the picture

Some ditransitive predicates can realize their internal arguments in multiple frames (e.g. Bresnan et al. 2007, Harley & Miyagawa 2017)

Double-Object Frame : The **Goal** and the **Theme** argument are realized as DPs in the DO-Frame

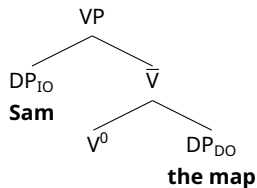
(4) Kim gave [_{DP} Tom] [_{DP} some coffee]

PP-Object Frame : The **Theme** argument is realized as a DP and the **Goal** argument is realized as a PP in the PP-Frame

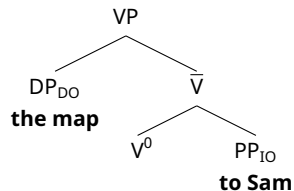
(5) Kim gave [_{DP} some coffee] [_{PP} to Tom]

Barss & Lasnik (1986) and Larson (1988) present a number of c-command sensitive diagnostics showing that in English **Goal** > **Theme**

(6) *Double Object Frame*



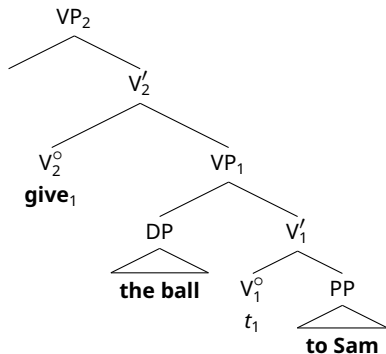
(7) *Prepositional Object Frame*



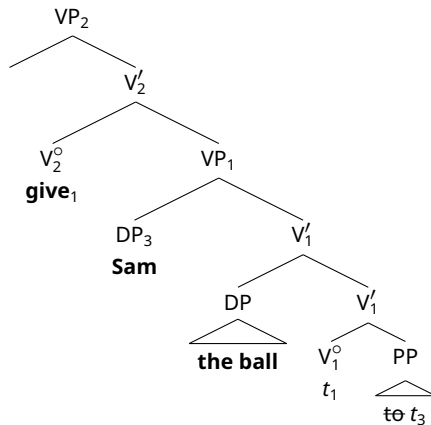
Ditransitive Verbs

Larson (1988) proposes that the two frames are derivationally related

(8) a.



b.



A significant amount of data has emerged that speaks against the idea that the two frames share a syntax

Nominalizations. In the PP-frame, but not the DO-frame, the first object can appear as the genitive or *of*-phrase argument of the nominalization.

(9) present **the award** to Sue \Rightarrow
the presentation of the award to Sue
the award's presentation to Sue

(10) present **Sue** the award \Rightarrow
*the presentation of Sue of the award
*Sue's presentation of the award

Animacy Restrictions. With respect to animacy:

- the indirect object in the PP-frame has no animacy restrictions on it, but
- the indirect object in the DO-frame prefers to be an animate DPs.

Animate and inanimate indirect objects are acceptable in the PP-frame (11-a), but inanimate indirect objects are infelicitous in the DO-frame (11-b).

- (11) a. Sue sent the letter to {Damon/Detroit}.
b. Sue sent {Damn/#Detroit} the letter.

Object (A)symmetry in Ditransitives

Ditransitive structures within and between languages come in different flavors on the basis of the primary object properties of each argument in a ditransitive frame (Bresnan & Moshi 1990, van der Wal 2018)

Asymmetric Objects : Only the **Goal** shows primary object properties

(12) a. A-li-**m**-pa kitabu
S.1-PST-O.1-give 7.book
'She gave him a book.'

b. *A-li-**ki**-pa Juma
S.1-PST-O.7-give 1.Juma
'She gave it to Juma.'

(Swahili)

Symmetric Objects : Both the **Goal** and the **Theme** show primary object properties

(13) a. Chibua ko-**w**-eng'a **iwana** ipfitabu
1.Chibua S.1-O.2-give 2.children 8.books
'Chibua is giving children books.'

b. Chibua ko-**pf**-eng'a iwana **ipfitabu**
1.Chibua S.1-O.8-give 2.children 8.books
'Chibua is giving children books.'

(KiLuguru)

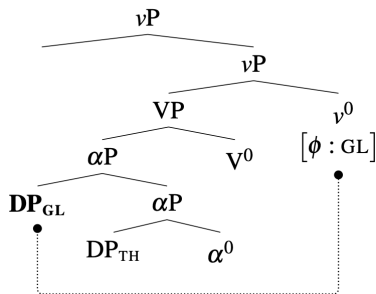
Object (A)symmetry in Ditransitives

Dialects of English show object (a)symmetry effects in passives

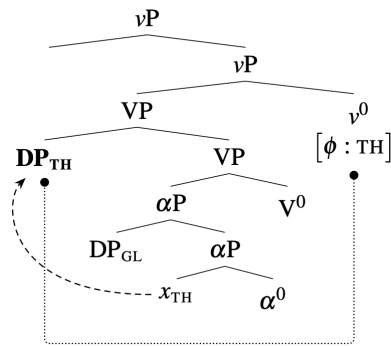
- (14) a. Tom was given x some coffee
 b. %Some coffee was given Tom x

There are various proposals for dealing with object symmetry

In-situ Theme



Ex-situ Theme



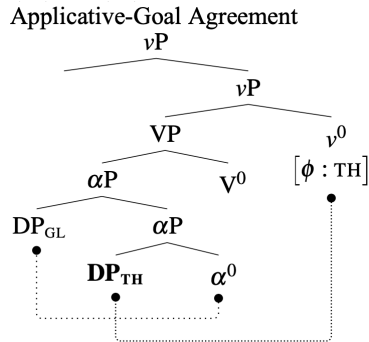
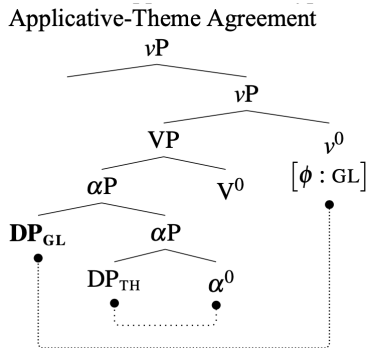
(McGinnis 2001)

Object (A)symmetry in Ditransitives

Dialects of English show object (a)symmetry effects in passives

- (14) a. Tom was given *x* some coffee
b. %Some coffee was given Tom *x*

There are various proposals for dealing with object symmetry



(Haddican & Holmberg 2019)

Ethiosemitic Ditransitives

Ditransitives in Ethiosemitic languages appear to differ in their object (a)symmetry with respect to object marking (OM)

- (15) a. ləmma l-almaz məs'əhaf-u-n sət't'-at
Lemma DAT-Almaz book-DEF-ACC give-(S3M)-O3F
'Lemma gave the book to Almaz.'

- b. *ləmma l-almaz məs'əhaf-u-n sət't'-ə-w
Lemma DAT-Almaz book-DEF-ACC give-S3M-O3M
'Lemma gave the book to Almaz.'

(Amharic)

- (16) a. ʔit-a g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe n-ət-i wədi hib-a-to
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-MS boy give-S3FS-O3MS
'The girl gave the boy the letter.'

- b. ʔit-a g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe n-ət-i wədi hib-a-ta
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-MS boy give-S3FS-O3FS
'The girl gave the letter to the boy.'

(Tigrinya)

Object symmetry in Tigrinya is only apparent (Overfelt 2022):

- (17)
- a. ʔita g^{wal} n-ət-a dəbdabe **n-ət-i** **wədi** hib-a-**to**
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-ms boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
‘The girl gave the boy the letter.’
- b. ʔita g^{wal} **n-ət-a** **dəbdabe** n-ət-i wədi hib-a-**ta**
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-ms boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
‘The girl gave the letter to the boy.’

The symmetry breaks when only one argument is eligible for OM

- (18)
- ʔit-a g^{wal} **n-ət-i** **wədi** dəbdabe hib-a-**(to)**
that-FS girl N-that-MS boy letter GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
‘The girl gave the boy a letter.’
- (19)
- ʔit-i g^{wal} **n-ət-a** **dəbdabe** n-wədi hib-a-***(ta)**
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
‘The girl gave the letter to a boy.’

Tigrinya Ditransitives

Object symmetry in Tigrinya is only apparent (Overfelt 2022):

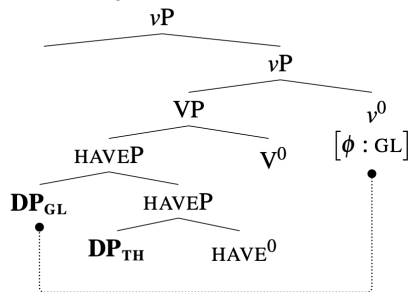
Object asymmetry : Tigrinya employs two asymmetric ditransitive frames

Obligatory OM : OM on v^0 obligatorily cross-references the highest DP

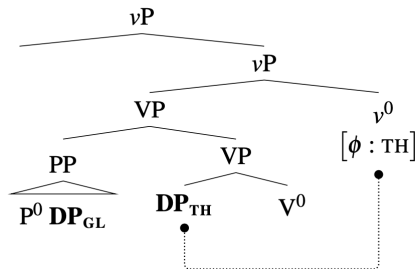
The Goal : The Goal varies as a direct/indirect argument

The N-marker : The two frames are hidden by the ambiguity of N on the Goal (DOM/ P^0)

Double-Object Frame



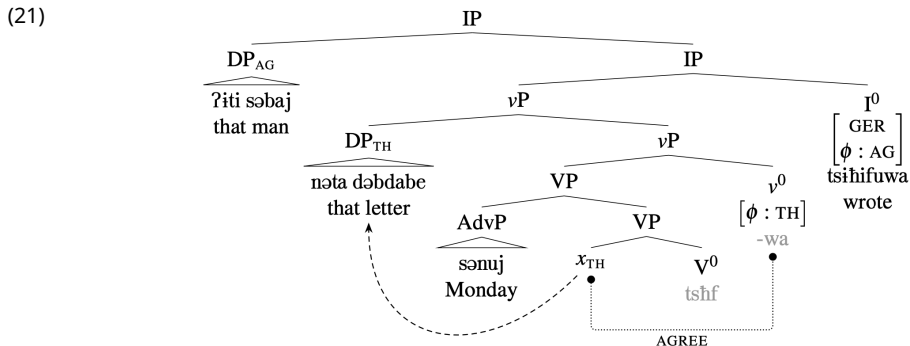
Prepositional-Object Frame



Syntactic Assumptions

The syntax of typical objects is reflected in the following example:

- (20) ʔiti-i səbaj [n-ət-a dəbdabe]₁ sənuj x₁ tsihif-u-wa
 that-ms man N-that-FS letter Monday GER.write-S.3MS-O.3FS
 ‘The man wrote the letter on Monday.’



Object Marking : the result of an AGREE relationship between v^0 and a “visible” DP

Differential Object Marking : Case feature valued in Spec,vP

Apparent Symmetry : Either argument can be cross-referenced by OM when both are eligible.

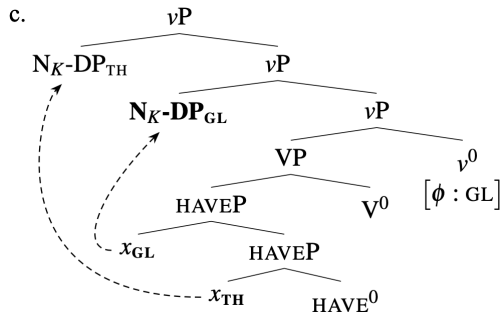
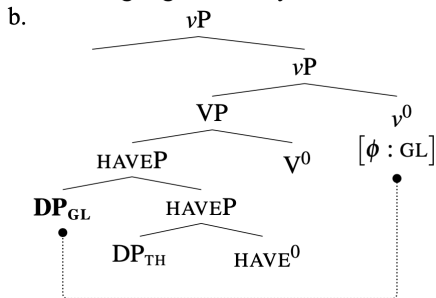
- (22)
- a. ʔita g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe **n-ət-i** **wədi** hib-a-**to**
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-ms boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
‘The girl gave the boy the letter.’
- b. ʔita g^wal **n-ət-a** **dəbdabe** n-ət-i wədi hib-a-**ta**
that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-that-ms boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
‘The girl gave the letter to the boy.’

Argument Structure Alternation : Which argument is cross-referenced by OM is a function of the underlying argument structure

Argument Structure Alternations

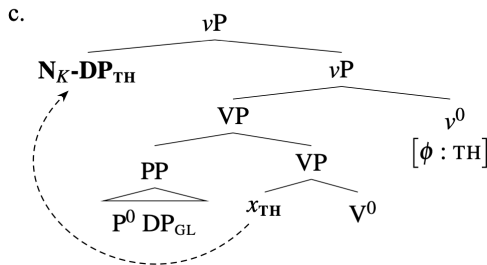
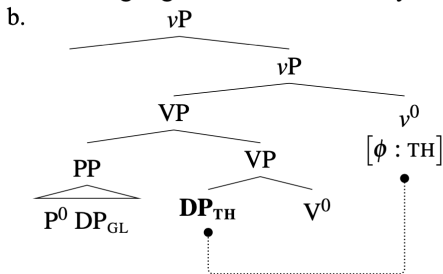
Cross-Referencing the Goal : The goal is the highest eligible argument in the DO-Frame

- (23) a. ʔit-a g^{wal} n-ət-a dəbdabe **n-ət-i** **wədi** hib-a-to
 that-FS girl N_K -that-FS letter N_K -that-MS boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
 ‘The girl gave the boy the letter.’



Cross-Referencing the Theme : The theme is the highest eligible argument in the PP-Frame

- (24) a. ʔit-a g^{wal} **n-ət-a** **dəbdabe** n-ət-i wədi hib-a-ta
 that-FS girl N_K-that-FS letter N_P-that-MS boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
 ‘The girl gave the letter to the boy.’



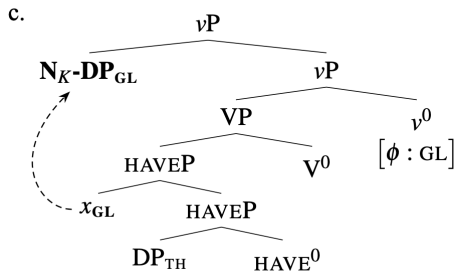
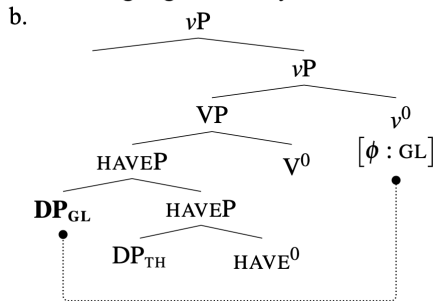
Apparent Optionality of the Goal : When only the goal is eligible it is optionally cross-referenced by OM

- (25) ʔit-a g^wal n-ət-i wədi dəbdabe hib-a-(to)
 that-FS girl N-that-MS boy letter GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
 ‘The girl gave the boy a letter.’

Argument Structure Alternation : Whether the goal is cross-referenced by OM is a function of the underlying argument structure

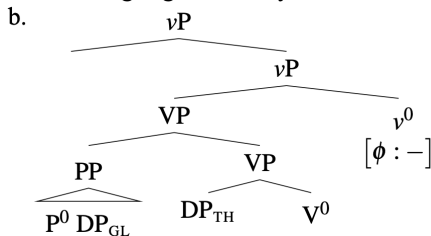
Cross-Referencing the Goal : The goal is the highest eligible argument in the DO-Frame

- (26) a. $\text{ʔit-a } g^{\text{wal}} \text{ n-ət-i } wədi \text{ dəbdabe } hib-a-to$
 that-FS girl N_K -that-MS boy letter GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
 ‘The girl gave the boy a letter.’



NOT Cross-Referencing the Goal : The goal is ineligible in the PP-Frame and

- (27)
- a. ʔit-a g^{wal} **n-ət-i** **wədi** dəbdəbe hib-a
 that-FS girl $\text{N}_{\text{P}}\text{-that-MS}$ boy letter GER.give-S.3FS
 ‘The girl gave the boy a letter.’



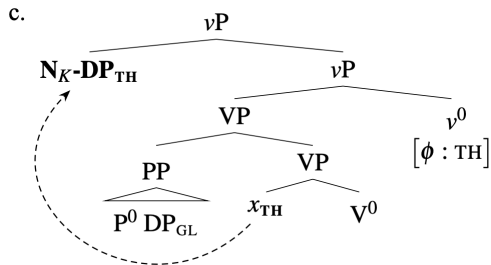
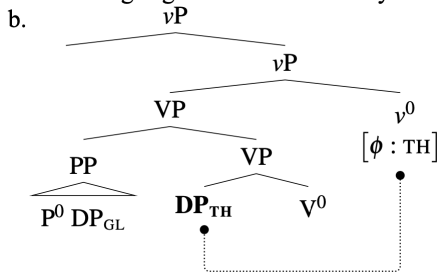
Obligation of the Theme : When only the theme is eligible it is obligatorily cross-referenced by OM

- (28) ʔit-i g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe n-wədi hib-a-*(ta)
 that-FS girl N-that-FS letter N-boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
 ‘The girl gave the letter to a boy.’

Argument Structure Alternation : The ungrammaticality of not cross-referencing the theme with OM reflects the obligatoriness of OM

Cross-Referencing the Theme : The theme is the highest eligible argument in the PP-Frame

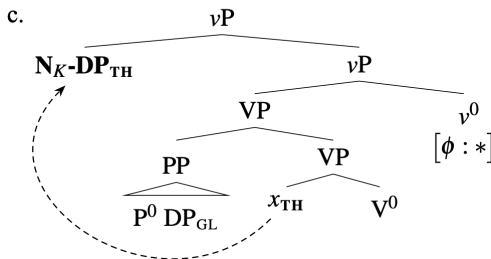
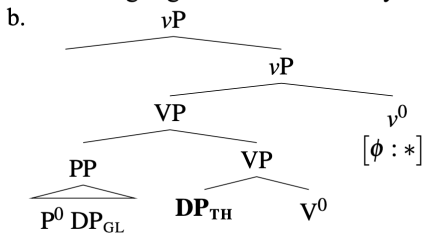
- (29) a. ʔit-i g^{wal} n-ət-a dəbdabe n-wədi hib-a-ta
 that-FS girl N_K-that-FS letter N_P-boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
 ‘The girl gave the letter to a boy.’



Argument Structure Alternations

NOT Cross-Referencing the Theme : The theme is the highest eligible argument in the PP-Frame and *must be cross-referenced by OM*

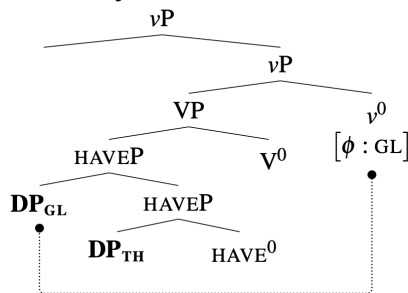
- (30) a. *ʔit-i g^{wal} n-ət-a dəbdabe n-wədi hib-a
 that-FS girl N_K-that-FS letter N_P-boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
 ‘The girl gave the letter to a boy.’



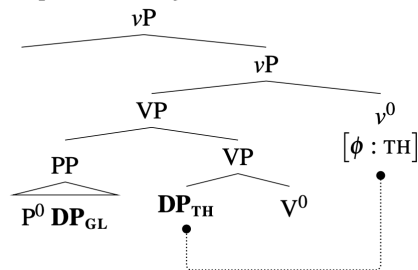
Structure Sensitive Predictions

Object symmetry in Tigrinya is only apparent (Overfelt 2022):

Double-Object Frame



Prepositional-Object Frame

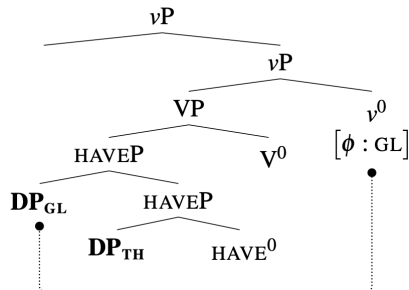


A Prediction : The observed marking pattern should correlate with other structural and interpretive asymmetries

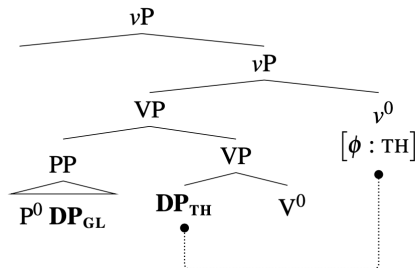
Structure Sensitive Predictions

Goal Specificity : Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM must be definite/specific

Double-Object Frame



Prepositional-Object Frame



Structure Sensitive Predictions

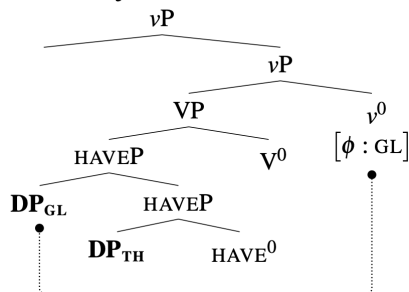
Goal Specificity : Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM must be definite/specific

- (31) a. ʔit-i g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe ***(n)-ət-i wədi** hib-a-ta
that-FS girl N_K-that-FS letter N_P-that-MS boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
'The girl gave the letter to the boy.' (Theme OM; PP Frame)
- b. ʔit-i g^wal n-ət-a dəbdabe ***(ni)-wədi** hib-a-ta
that-FS girl N_K-that-FS letter N_P-boy GER.give-S.3FS-O.3FS
'The girl gave the letter to a boy.' (Theme OM; PP Frame)
- (32) a. ʔit-a g^wal **n-ət-i wədi** dəbdabe hib-a
that-FS girl N_P-that-MS boy letter GER.give-S.3FS
'The girl gave the boy a letter.' (No OM; PP Frame)
- b. ʔit-a g^wal **ni-wədi** dəbdabe hib-a
that-FS girl N_P-boy letter GER.give-S.3FS
'The girl gave a letter to a boy.' (No OM; PP Frame)
- (33) a. ʔit-a g^wal **n-ət-i wədi** dəbdabe hib-a-to
that-FS girl N_K-that-MS boy letter GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
'The girl gave the boy a letter.' (Goal OM; DO Frame)
- b. *ʔit-a g^wal **ni-wədi** dəbdabe hib-a-to
that-FS girl N_K-boy letter GER.give-S.3FS-O.3MS
'The girl gave a letter to a boy.' (Goal OM; DO Frame)

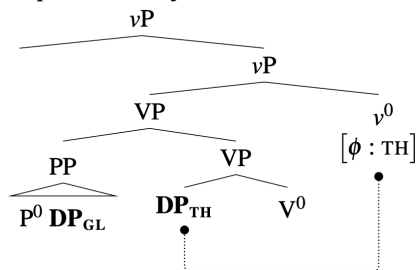
Structure Sensitive Predictions

CAUSE-HAVE : Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM should be subject the animacy requirements of HAVE

Double-Object Frame



Prepositional-Object Frame

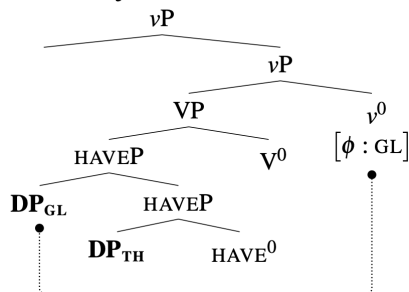


CAUSE-HAVE : Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM should be subject the animacy requirements of HAVE

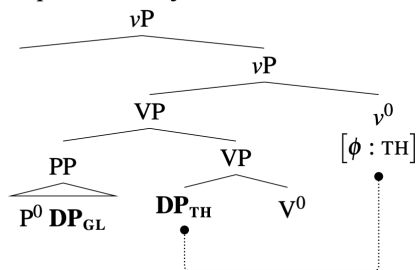
- (34)
- a. ʔit-a g^wal ni-ʔasməra dəbdabe sədid-a
 that-FS girl N_P-Asmera letter GER.send-S.3FS
 ‘The girl sent a letter to Asmera.’ (No OM; PP Frame)
 - b. #ʔit-a g^wal **ni-ʔasməra** dəbdabe sədid-a-**ta**
 that-FS girl N_K-Asmera letter GER.send-S.3FS-O.3FS
 #‘The girl sent Asmera a letter.’ (Goal OM; DO Frame)
- (35)
- a. ʔit-a g^wal **n-ət-ən dəbdabe** ni-ʔasməra sədid-a-**tən**
 that-FS girl N_K-that-FP letter N_P-Asmera GER.send-S.3FS-O.3FP
 ‘The girl sent the letters to Asmera.’ (Theme OM; PP Frame)
 - b. #ʔit-a g^wal n-ət-ən dəbdabe **ni-ʔasməra** sədid-a-**ta**
 that-FS girl N_K-that-FP letter N_K-Asmera GER.send-S.3FS-O.3FS
 #‘The girl sent Asmera the letters.’ (Goal OM; DO Frame)

Condition A : Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM should be able to bind reflexives in the Theme

Double-Object Frame



Prepositional-Object Frame



Condition A: Only a goal that is cross-referenced by OM should be able to bind reflexives in the Theme

- (36) a. ʔit-a g^wal ni-kefi₁ n-ət-ən naj [gəzaʔ riʔisu]₁ siʔilt-at hib-a-to
that-FS girl N_K-Keffy.M N_K-that-FP of own self-3MS picture-P GER.give-S.3FS-
S
'The girl gave Keffy₁ the pictures of himself₁.' (Goal OM; DO Frame)
- (37) *ʔit-a g^wal ni-kefi₁ n-ət-ən naj [gəzaʔ riʔisu]₁ siʔilt-at hib-a-tən
that-FS girl N_P-Keffy.M N_K-that-FP of own self-3MS picture-P GER.give-S.3fs-
* 'The girl gave the pictures of himself₁ to Keffy₁.' (Theme OM; PP Frame)

Summary of Tigrinya Ditransitives

Object symmetry in Tigrinya is only apparent (Overfelt 2022):

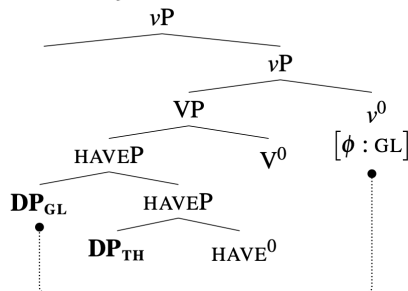
Object asymmetry : Tigrinya employs two asymmetric ditransitive frames

Obligatory OM : OM on v^0 obligatorily cross-references the highest DP

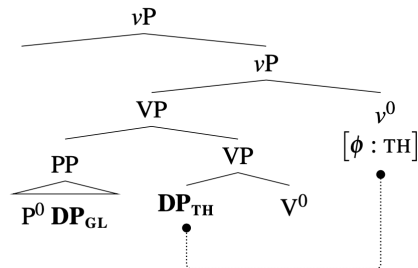
The Goal : The Goal varies as a direct/indirect argument

The N-marker : The two frames are hidden by the ambiguity of N on the Goal (DOM/ P^0)

Double-Object Frame



Prepositional-Object Frame



References I

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