

Verb Class Restrictions on NP Referentiality in Falam Chin Verbs

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RRG Framework: Key Concepts (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005)

- Semantic valence
 - Number of arguments in LS
- Syntactic valence (S-transitivity)
 - Number of arguments in core
- M-transitivity
 - Number of macroroles
 - Syntactically most significant
 - Activity verbs of creation/consumption have non-referential second argument which cannot take macrorole/undergo certain syntactic operations
 - Active accomplishment verbs take 2 referential arguments/2 macroroles
- State predicates
 - Two-place predicates
 - **be'** (x, [**bald'**])
 - **feel'** (x, [**happy'**])
- Activity predicates
 - Zero-place predicates
 - **do'** ([**rain'**])
 - Single-place predicates
 - **do'** (x, [**walk'** (x)])
 - Two-place predicates
 - **do'** (x, [**write'** (x, (y))])
 - **do'** (x, [**write'** (x, y)]) & INGR **written'** (y)
- Inherent argument
 - Optional **do'** (x, [**write'** (x, (y))])
 - Incorporated
 - Oblique
 - Obligatory
- Activity vs. active accomplishment alternation found in many ergative languages
 - Active accomplishment = ergative
 - Activity = non-ergative

Ergative vs. Non-Ergative Structures

- FC a “double-marking language” (Nichols 1986)
 - Cross-reference (head-marking, ACC)
 - Case marking (dependent-marking, ERG)

- (1) Cinte Ø cu a it.
Cinte ABS TOP 3SG.NOM sleep
'Cinte slept/is sleeping.'
 - (2) Thangte in hrampi Ø a Ø at.
Thangte ERG grass ABS 3SG.NOM 3.ACC cut
'Thangte cut the grass.'
 - (3) Thangte in a lo at.
Thangte ERG 3SG.NOM 2.ACC cut
'Thangte cut you.'
 - (4) Hrampi Ø cu Thangte in a Ø at.
grass ABS TOP Thangte ERG 3SG.NOM 3.ACC cut
'Thangte cut the grass.'
- Head-marking is dominant syntactically (Jelinek 1984)
 - Cross-reference is fixed & obligatory; NPs are free & optional
 - NPs do not necessarily “match” coreferential cross-reference
 - Cross-reference forms are syntactic arguments
 - NPs are appositives to the arguments (VV 2008; Nichols 1986)

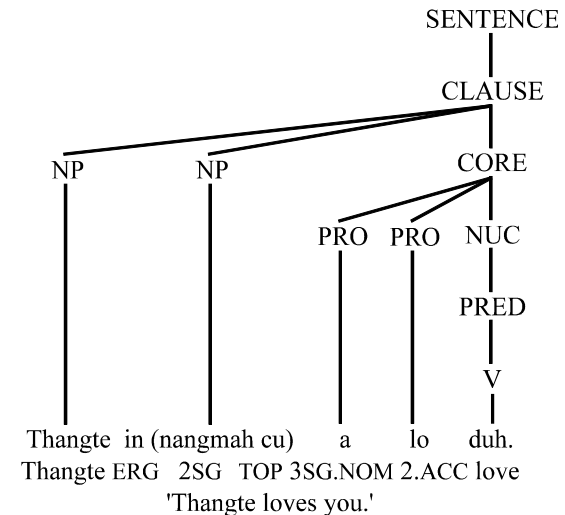


Figure 1: Syntactic structure of head-marking language

Active accomplishment = ergative

- (5) Cinte in bezai Ø a Ø phuah.
 Cinte ERG poem ABS 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write
 'Cinte wrote/is writing a poem.'

LS for act. acc. *phuah* do' (x, [write' (x, y)]) & INGR written' (y)
 SR for (5) do' (3sg[Cinte], [write' (3sg[Cinte], 3sg[bezai])])
 & INGR written' (3sg[bezai])

Activity = non-ergative

- (6) Cinte Ø cu bezai a phuah.
 Cinte ABS TOP poem 3SG.NOM write
 'Cinte wrote/is writing poems/poetry.'

LS for act. *phuah* do' (x, [write' (x, ca)])
 SR for (6) do' (3sg[Cinte], [write' (3sg[Cinte], 3sg[bezai])])

Discourse Context

- (7) Zo in hi bezai cu a Ø phuah.
 Who ERG this poem TOP 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write
 'Who wrote this poem?'

- (8) Cinte in a Ø phuah.
 Cinte ERG 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write
 'Cinte wrote it.'

- (9) *Cinte Ø cu a phuah.
 Cinte ABS TOP 3SG.NOM write
 'Cinte wrote it.'

Topicality/Definiteness

Non-ergative cannot be marked by *cu* 'TOP'

- (10) Cinte in bezai cu a Ø phuah.
 Cinte ERG poem TOP 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write
 'Cinte wrote the poem.'

- (11) *Cinte Ø cu bezai cu a phuah.
 Cinte ABS TOP poem TOP 3SG.NOM write
 'Cinte wrote the poem.'

Topicalization

Non-ergative cannot be fronted

- (12) Bezai cu Cinte in a Ø phuah.
 poem TOP Cinte ERG 3SG.NOM 3.ACC write
 'The poem, Cinte wrote it.'

- (13) *Bezai cu Cinte Ø cu a phuah.
 poem TOP Cinte ABS TOP 3SG.NOM write
 'The poem, Cinte wrote it.'

For Further Study

- Some unexpected NPs are compatible with the non-ergative variant.
 - Demonstrative NPs
 - Proper names
 - Possessed items
- (14) Cinte Ø cu hi bezai a phuah.
 Cinte ABS top this poem 3SG.NOM write
 'Cinte wrote/is writing this poem.'
- Perhaps referentiality is not the only important factor? (Hopper & Thompson 1980; Næss 2007)

Referentiality and M-Transitivity in Various Falam Chin Verb Subclasses

- FC subclasses with obligatory non-referential arguments
 - Weather/time of day
 - Some motion
 - Internal experience
 - Some attributive

Weather/Time of Day Verbs

ruah sur 'to rain'

- (15) Ruah a sur.
 rain 3SG.NOM fall
 'It's raining.'

- (16) *A sur.
 3sg.nom fall
 'It's raining.'

- (17) *Ruah cu a sur.
 rain TOP 3SG.NOM fall
 'It's raining.'

English

It's raining.

LS: do' ([rain'])

SR: do' ([rain'])

No semantic arguments

M-atransitive

Falam Chin

Ruah a sur.

LS: do' (*ruah*, [rain' (*ruah*)])

SR: do' (3sg[*ruah*], [rain' (3sg[*ruah*])])

One semantic argument

M-atransitive

Other examples: *ni sa* 'to be hot [weather]'; *zanlam khua sim* 'to be evening'

Motion Verbs

lam leng ‘to walk’

(18) Thangte *in/cu nazi pakhat sung lam a leng.
 Thangte ERG/TOP hour one for path 3SG.NOM walk
 ‘Thangte walked for an hour.’

(19) Thangte cu a Ø leng.
 Thangte TOP 3SG.NOM 3.ACC visit
 ‘He visited Thangte.’

(20) *Thangte cu lam cu a leng.
 Thangte TOP path TOP 3SG.NOM walk
 ‘Thangte walked.’

(21) *Lam cu Thangte cu a leng.
 path TOP Thangte TOP 3SG.NOM walk
 ‘Thangte walked.’

English

John walks.

LS: do' (x, [walk' (x)])

SR: do' (John, [walk' (John)])

One semantic argument
M-intransitive

Falam Chin

Thangte cu lam a leng.

LS: do' (x, [walk' (x, lam)])

SR: do' (3sg[Thangte], [walk' (3sg[Thangte], 3sg[lam])])

Two semantic arguments
M-intransitive

Other examples: *ti leuh* ‘to swim’; *hna fuan* ‘to work’

Internal Experience Verbs

lung awi ‘to be happy’

(22) Thangte le Mang *in/cu an lung a/*an awi.
 Thangte and Mang ERG/TOP 3PL heart 3SG.NOM/3PL.NOM happy
 ‘Thangte and Mang are happy.’

(23) *A awi.
 3SG.NOM happy
 ‘They are/It is happy.’

(24) *Thangte le Mang cu an lung cu a awi.
 Thangte and Mang TOP 3PL heart TOP 3SG.NOM happy
 ‘Thangte and Mang are happy.’

(25) *An lung cu Thangte le Mang cu a awi.
 3PL heart TOP Thangte and Mang TOP 3SG.NOM happy
 ‘Thangte and Mang are happy.’

Attributive Verbs

cal ngawlh ‘to be bald’

(26) Thangte le Mang *in/cu an cal a/*an ngawlh.
 Thangte and Mang ERG/TOP 3PL forehead 3SG.NOM bald
 ‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

(27) *Thangte le Mang cu an cal cu a ngawlh.
 Thangte and Mang TOP 3PL forehead TOP 3SG.NOM bald
 ‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

(28) *An cal cu Thangte le Mang cu a ngawlh.
 3PL forehead TOP Thangte and Mang TOP 3SG.NOM bald
 ‘Thangte and Mang are bald.’

English

John is happy/bald.

LS: feel' (x, [happy'])

LS: be' (x, [bald'])

SR: feel' (John, [happy'])

SR: be' (John, [bald'])

Two arguments, one non-referential
M-intransitive

Falam Chin

Thangte cu a lung a awi.

Thangte cu a cal a ngawlh.

LS: feel' ([have.as.part' (x, lung)], [happy'])

LS: be' ([have.as.part' (x, cal)], [bald'])

SR: feel' ([have.as.part' (3sg[Thangte], 3sg[lung])], [happy'])

SR: be' ([have.as.part' (3sg[Thangte], 3sg[cal])], [bald'])

Two arguments, both non-referential

M-atransitive

Other examples: *riah sia* ‘to be sad’; *mit mal* ‘to have poor eyesight’; *ril rawng* ‘to be hungry’

Thoughts on Syntactic Representation

- Non-referential NPs have a predicative function
 - They are obligatory (Falam Chin)
 - They are in the focus domain
 - Core incorporation

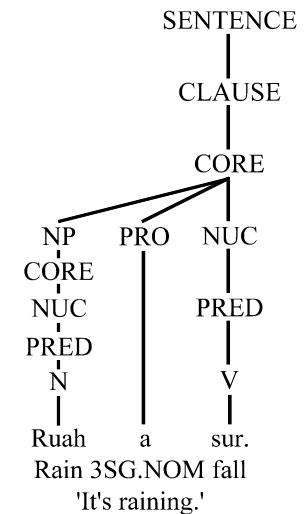


Figure 2: Syntactic structure of weather verbs

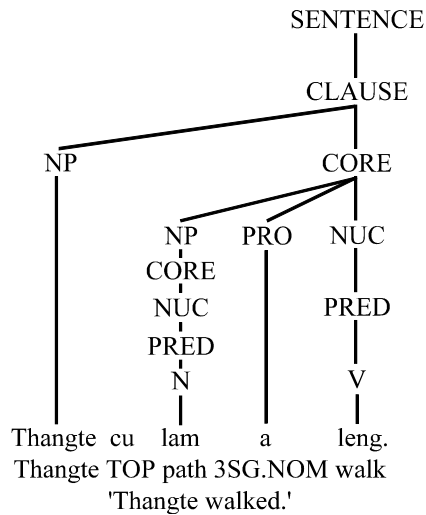


Figure 3: Syntactic structure of some motion verbs

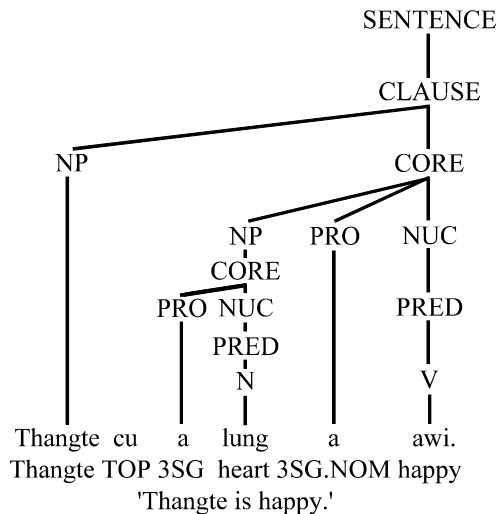


Figure 4: Syntactic structure of internal experience and some attributive verbs

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