

snippets

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A curious A/\bar{A} non-interaction in Tamil double-object constructions

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Double object constructions (DOCs) in Norwegian (Lundquist 2006) and Zulu (Adams 2010) are symmetric for A and \bar{A} -extractions: i.e. either Recipient (R) or Theme (Th) may be passivized or *wh*-extracted. But a curious asymmetry arises when passivization is combined with *wh*-extraction: Th-*wh*+R-passivization is licit, but R-*wh*+Th-passivization is not. Holmberg et al. (2019) argue that this “Double Object Movement Asymmetry (DOMA)” is more pervasive, applying to symmetric and asymmetric languages (like Italian: \checkmark Th-*wh*; \checkmark R-*wh*; \checkmark Th-passive; \times R-passive) alike. For Holmberg et al., DOMA follows from intervention and the PIC (Chomsky 2001; Citko 2014). In a Th-passive, the Theme first A-moves to the ApplP phase edge containing both Theme and Recipient, blocking subsequent \bar{A} -movement of the Recipient to that edge, thereby making it invisible to extraction at C — analogously with subject/object extraction asymmetries with syntactic ergatives (Aldridge 2008).

Here, I showcase an unexpected violation of DOMA in Tamil (Dravidian). DOCs in Tamil pattern just like in Italian (\checkmark Th-*wh*; \checkmark R-*wh*; \checkmark Th-passive; \times R-passive). Given DOMA, we still predict that Th-passive + R-*wh* should be barred even if Th-pass + Th-*wh* is licit (as in Italian). But curiously, both options are perfectly licit, as shown in (2), given the baselines in (1).

- (1) a. Sri Sai-*kkū* andæ pustagatt-æ kuḍṭtaan.
Sri Sai-DAT that book-ACC gave
‘Sri gave Sai that book (Active DOC)’
b. Andæ pustagam Sai-*kkū* kuḍṭka-paṭṭ-adū.
that book.NOM Sai-DAT give-PASS-3NSG
‘That book was given to Sai’ (Th-passive)
- (2) a. Endæ pustagam sai-*kkū* kuḍṭka-paṭṭ-adū?
which book.NOM Sai-DAT give-PASS-3NSG
‘Which book was given to Sai?’ (Th-*wh* + Th-passive)
b. Andæ pustagam yaar-*ūkkū* kuḍṭka-paṭṭ-adū?
that book.NOM who-DAT give-PASS-3NSG
‘Who was that book given’ (\times DOMA: R-*wh* + Th-passive)

Various objections that the data above constitute a counterexample can be rejected. First, Holmberg et al. argue that *to*-PPs are exempt from DOMA due to their different thematic structure. But (2b) cannot involve a *to*-PP. Recipients in *to*-PP structures are suffixed with a postposition *kittæ*, not a dative marker, and show systematic interpretive (Oehrle 1976) and verb-class (Levin 1993) distinctions from the dative variant, paralleling those observed for *to*-PPs vs. DOCs, respectively (Sundaresan 2006). Second, DOCs in languages with fully symmetric passives, e.g. Luganda

(Niger-Congo), seem exempt from DOMA (Holmberg et al. 2017). But Tamil is asymmetric for passivization (✓Th-passive; ×R-passive). Third, Holmberg et al. show, e.g. for Sesotho (Niger-Congo), that DOMA is violable if R is inanimate and Th is animate. But in (2b), R is animate and Th is inanimate and DOMA is still violated.

Finally, given that Tamil is *wh*-in-situ on the surface, a ready explanation could be that the *wh*-elements in (2) are not extracted at all, but are unselectively bound in-situ. A common diagnostic to tease these options apart involves intervention effects (e.g. Beck 2006 and Kotek 2019). A c-commanding scope-bearing element should block in-situ *wh*-licensing, yielding ungrammaticality; but if the *wh*-element can covertly move past the scope-bearing element at LF, such intervention should be obviated. Applying the diagnostic to Tamil shows that focus- intervention effects are prominently absent in ditransitives with a *wh*-Theme (3) or *wh*-Goal (4) showing that *wh*-elements are covertly extracted in such structures.

- (3) Raman Seetha-vūkkū mattum ed-æ kuḍḍ-tt-aan?
 Raman.NOM Seetha-DAT only.FOC what-ACC give-PST-3MSG
 ‘What did Raman give only Seetha?’
- (4) Raman pustagatt-æ mattum jaar-ūkkū kuḍḍ-tt-aan?
 Raman.NOM book-ACC only.FOC who-DAT give-PST-3MSG
 ‘Who(m) did Raman give only the book?’

Preliminary further evidence in violation of DOMA, which also suggests that the *wh*-in-/ex-situ parameter is independent of the DOMA-violation, comes from German. German is *wh*-ex-situ with a DOC profile like Italian/Tamil (✓Th-*wh*; ✓R-*wh*; ✓Th-passive; ×R-passive), but it potentially also violates DOMA:

- (5) Ich habe ihm den Kuchen gegeben.
 I.NOM have him.DAT the.ACC cake given.PTCP
 ‘I gave him the cake.’ (Active)
- (6) Welche-r Kuchen wurde ihm gegeben?
 which-NOM cake was.PASS him.DAT given.PTCP
 ‘Which cake was he given?’ (Th-*wh* + Th-passive)
- (7) Wem wurde der Kuchen gegeben?
 who.DAT was.PASS the.NOM cake given.PTCP
 ‘Who was the cake given?’ (×DOMA: R-*wh* + Th-passive)

A different explanation for DOMA is thus called for.

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