

# snippets

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# Agreement resolution in ditransitives: An undiscussed pattern from Sampang

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This paper notes an agreement system of a type apparently undiscussed in the theoretical literature. This system is found in Sampang (Kiranti [Tibeto-Burman], Nepal [Khotang district] — see Hodgson 1857; Konow 1909; Wolfenden 1933; Wong 2006; Rai 2009; Huysmans 2007, 2011; Rai et al. 2015; Rai 2018). a language with biactantial (ergative-absolutive) verb agreement, displaying three-way contrasts in person (1, 2, 3) and number (singular [SG], dual [DU], plural [PL]), as well as a two-way clusivity contrast (inclusive [INC] vs. exclusive [EXC]). An example is given below, with ergative agreement underlined and absolutive agreement **bolded**:

- (1) Japs-a-**tsi-ka-na**.  
hit-PST-DU-**1EXC-2**  
'You (sg.) hit us (du.).'

Unusually, certain ditransitive verbal forms show a single marker (optionally) expressing *resolved* agreement with the two object arguments, similar to what is crosslinguistically observed with coordinate constructions (e.g. Corbett 1983, 1991, see also Nevins and Weisser 2019 for a recent review, as well as references below) or between subjects and objects (Gluckman 2016). We observe the following resolutions:

- (2) *Feature Resolution in Sampang Agreement*

## Number

SG	+	SG	→	DU
SG/PL/DU	+	PL/DU	→	PL

## Person

1EXC	+	3	→	1EXC
1EXC	+	2	→	1INC
2	+	3	→	2

Some of the relevant contrasts are neutralised on the surface due to other properties of the Sampang agreement system – in particular, 3DU and 3PL marking are generally not distinguished for object agreement.

An example of resolved agreement can be seen in (3):

- (3) Gita-wa kã-lai um-pama-lo tup-m-**e-ka**.  
Gita-ERG 1SG-DAT 3SG.POSS-parents-COM meet-CAUS-**1PL.ABS-EXC**  
'Gita introduced me to her parents.'

In (3), first and third persons are resolved as first person exclusive, with singular and dual resolved as plural number.

These sorts of resolutions are symmetric – they occur regardless of the order or case-marking of the elements in question, as can be seen in (4):

- (4) a. Rame-wa kã-lai ana-lo m<sup>h</sup>u-mj-a-tsi.  
 Ram-ERG 1SG-DAT 2SG-COM fight-CAUS-PST-DU.ABS(1INC)  
 ‘Ram made me fight [with] you (sg.).’  
 b. Rame-wa ana-lai kã-lo m<sup>h</sup>u-mj-a-tsi.  
 Ram-ERG 2SG-DAT 1SG-COM fight-CAUS-PST-DU.ABS(1INC)  
 ‘Ram made you (sg.) fight [with] me.’

(It may be noted that all of the examples here are derived ditransitives, in particular causatives – the reason for this is that Sampang only permits agreement with animate arguments, and simple ditransitives in Sampang like *pi-ma* ‘to give’ are difficult to elicit with multiple animate arguments for pragmatic reasons. As such I have not been able to obtain examples of simple ditransitives with multiple potential object agreement targets. I do not entirely rule out the possibility that simple ditransitives may show different behaviour to the derived ditransitives shown here.)

Given the comitative marking on the embedded object in (3) and (4), it may be tempting to suppose that what we are observing here is in fact a coordinate phrase, in particular as Sampang coordinate phrases both typically involve the same marker *-lo*, and show resolved agreement. A coordinate analysis is not tenable, however, for two reasons. First, in coordinate constructions *-lo* appears on the first coordinand, not on the second, as we see here. Secondly, as with most languages of the region, Sampang case markers are clitics attaching to whole arguments, including whole coordinate phrases. In these examples, however, *-lai* attaches only to the first of the object-like elements. Both of the relevant properties are illustrated in an example involving true coordination below (coordinate phrase underlined):

- (5) Rame-wa Ramese-lo Krisne-lai Sjame-lo tup-mj-u-tsi.  
 Ram-ERG Ramesh-COORD Krishna-DAT Shyam-COM meet-CAUS-PST.TR.3ABS-NSG.ABS  
 ‘Ram introduced Ramesh and Krishna to Shyam.’

The comitative marking is in fact due to selectional properties of the embedded predicate in these constructions. If we consider a non-causative version of one of these predicates we can observe that we *do not* see resolved agreement, in spite of the presence of the marker *-lo*. Instead we see normal ergative/absolutive agreement. This is further evidence against treating the forms with *-lo* as coordinate phrases.

- (6) Kã k<sup>h</sup>o-tsi-lo tup-u-ŋ-tsu-ŋ.  
 1SG 3-NSG-COM meet-PST.TR.3ABS-1SG.ERG-NSG.ABS-1SG.ERG  
 ‘I met them.’

The fact that we do not have a coordination construction here means we cannot directly apply accounts where feature resolution applies within the coordinate phrase itself (e.g. Dalrymple and Kaplan 2000; Wechsler 2008; Bošković 2009; Franks and Willer-Gold 2014; Marušič et al. 2015; Murphy and Puškar 2018). Instead we must assume the locus of resolution is another agreement probe – cf., e.g., Grosz 2015; Citko 2018; also cf. the cases of agreement discussed by e.g. Gluckman (2016); Nevins (2018); Shen (2019); Camargo Souza (2020). In particular, we can plausibly suppose that the probe in question here is an absolutive agreement probe.

This pattern does not extend to all ditransitives, or indeed all forms which take *-lo* on one of their objects – most show absolutive agreement with only a single argument. In fact, the verbs permitting resolved agreement tend to be causatives of *symmetric* predicates. For example, the verb translated ‘introduce’ above is a causative of *tup-ma* ‘to meet’. This is a symmetric predicate – ‘I met him’ implies ‘he met me’. Causatives of *asymmetric* predicates do not show the same patterning. Take *toi-me-ma* ‘to make ask’. The verb ‘ask’ is asymmetric – ‘I asked you’ does not imply ‘you asked me’. Its causative accordingly does not permit resolved agreement – contrast the examples below:

- (7) a. Gita-wa ana-lai Rames-lo tup-mj-a-**tsi-na**.  
 Gita-ERG 2SG-DAT Ramesh-COM meet-CAUS-PST-**DU-2**  
 ‘Gita introduced you (sg.) to Ramesh.’  
 b. Ram-wa ana-lai Gita-lo toi-mj-a-**na**.  
 Ram-ERG 2SG-DAT Gita-COM ask-CAUS-PST-**2(SG)**  
 ‘Ram made you (sg.) ask Gita.’ (\*toi-mj-a-tsi-na)

Symmetric predicates show additional special properties in Sampang – e.g. they do not permit reciprocal voice marking, instead showing a bare detransitivised form. Consider the forms below:

- (8) a. Katsika tol-mj-a-**tsi-ka**.  
 1DU.EXC push-RECIP-PST-**DU.ABS-1EXC**  
 ‘We (du.) pushed each other.’  
 (Asymmetric predicate; licenses reciprocal voice marking)  
 b. Katsika tup-(\*mj-)a-**tsi-ka**.  
 1DU.EXC meet-(\*RECIP-)PST-**DU.ABS-1EXC**  
 ‘We (du.) met [each other].’  
 (Symmetric predicate; does not license reciprocal voice marking)

It seems likely that this is linked to the reason for the availability of resolved agreement in the ditransitive forms.

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