V-Stranding Constructions in Tamil: Argument ellipsis or V-Stranding VP ellipsis

Rajamathangi S, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

This ongoing research paper explores a construction called V Stranding Construction(VSC)[1] in Tamil, a Dravidian language. This construction has three kinds of analysis in literature namely Pro analysis, Argument Ellipsis(AE) and V-Stranding VP ellipsis. Discussions in this paper show how this construction in Tamil can be accounted as V-Stranding VP ellipsis(V-VPE) and it details evidence to prove the same.

V-VPE is very similar to VP ellipsis but the only difference is that the main V strands after it raises to T and other VP internal items along with the trace of raised main V are deleted. This phenomenon has been described in various languages, like Hebrew (Doron 1990; Goldberg 2005), Irish (McCloskey 1991, 2011), Swahili (Ngonyani 1996), Finnish (Holmberg 2001), Portuguese (Martins 1994; Cyrino & Matos 2002; Santos 2009), Russian (Gribanova 2009, 2011), Japanese(Otani and Whitman 1991; Funakoshi 2016) and Malayalam(Takahashi 2013). Verb stranding construction(VSC) in Tamil is given in example (1).

This paper is divided into two sections: In the first section, it presents the diagnostics to see whether VSCs in Tamil can be accounted for using theories of ellipsis which has the internal structure in the ellipsis site or null proform analysis which is just an empty pronoun that don't have any structure. Secondly, once it is accounted for using theories of ellipsis, this section presents further analysis of VSCs in Tamil to find if it is Argument ellipsis (where all VP internal arguments are deleted independently) or V-VP Ellipsis (where V is raised to T and then the VP layer[2] is deleted).

Pro analysis is given for null arguments when they have agreement with syntactic heads T and V which will show subject and object agreement respectively. In Tamil, there is subject-verb agreement which shows that null subjects are proform. But there is no object-verb agreement which shows that null objects are not proforms. And another diagnostics is to look for the strict/ sloppy reading. Sloppy reading is available only in ellipsis site. Because when there is an overt pronoun, it won't show the sloppy reading. In Tamil, VSCs show sloppy reading which is why it is concluded that this construction is Ellipsis. Consider given example (2) which shows sloppy reading in Tamil.

Another strong argument is Disjunctive reading to diagnose for ellipsis against pro analysis by Sakamoto (2013) which is applied for Korean by Lee (2016). Sakamoto (2013), based on a reading obtained through disjunction, argues that disjunctive reading is a more reliable signal for argument ellipsis in Japanese. His argument is based on the interesting observation that English pronouns anaphoric on disjunction only yield the Disjunctive E-type (DE) reading. Specifically, the pronoun 'her' in (3b) can only be understood as the one that John scolded (DE-reading), but not the disjunctive NP 'either Mary or Nancy' (D(isjunctive) reading). However, VP ellipsis can yield the D-reading as given in (4), where the second conjunct of (4) is interpreted as Bill scolded either Mary or Nancy too. This disjunctive reading test can be applied for VSCs in Tamil too and it patterns exactly like in English and Korean. This shows that Tamil VSCs can't be accounted for pro analysis.

This paper focuses on three main arguments in favour of VVPE for VSCs in Tamil. Firstly, Goldberg(2005) says that languages that show V-T movement have V-Stranding VP ellipsis. Biberauer & Roberts (2006) argued that V to T movement has been related to relatively "rich" verbal agreement inflection. They have also mentioned that the connection between V to T movement and null subjects are very close. Their approach thus postulates that there are two quite distinct types of "richness" of verbal inflection: agreement inflection and tense inflection. Rich agreement inflection has many of the properties which are standardly attributed to it: it triggers movement of a D-bearing category (perhaps V in a null-subject language, but crucially not in a non-null-subject language) and it licenses null subjects. On the other hand,"rich" tense inflection triggers V-movement and is irrelevant to subject-licensing. Tamil has rich agreement inflection and also tense inflection in finite T which shows that it has V-T movement to check its features. Consider examples(5a and 5b) for agreement and tense inflection. Bracketted ones shows that subject can be dropped as verb carries phi-features.

Secondly, adjunct reading in ellipsis site also help us in analysing this construction as given in Funakoshi(2016). In VVPE, after the main verb moves out of VP, lower copy V along with internal arguments and adjuncts should be interpreted. In the example(6), the second conjunct also gets the reading that 'Mary also went home quickly in a car'. But in (7) we get only the reading that 'Mary went'. When we don't use 'um' (which is an additive particle in Tamil) adjunct reading is not possible. It is 'um' that forces the parallelism between antecedent and target clause(elided part). Funakoshi(2016) for Japanese had argued that a particle –mo 'also' in Japanese strongly favours the null adjunct reading due to the parallelism requirement imposed by –mo 'also'. In 'but' construction, adjunct reading is not possible because it don't have additive particle '-um'. And also adjunct ellipsis is not possible when it is deleted independently as given in example (9) which shows that it is possible to elide adjuncts only when it is elided along with the larger constituent like VP. Takahashi(2013) have argued this for Malayalam which is also one of the Dravidian languages.

And finally Verb matching is the third argument for VVPE: Verbal Identity Requirement on VP Ellipsis, a novel generalization involving strict identity in root and derivational morphology between the antecedent and target clause main Vs of the constructionGoldberg(2005). If the Verb matching fails, then adjunct reading is also impossible as in (8) which then will be analysed as Argument ellipsis where only arguments are elided independently. Takahashi(2013) have said Malayalam has VVPE in account with impossibility of adjunct ellipsis, verb matching and V movement which is applied in this paper for Tamil too. The only difference between Tamil and Malayalam is in verb movement. He has mentioned Matthew(2012) where she says Malayalam has verb movement to focus phrase above little VP which I don't agree for Tamil as Goldberg(2005) clearly says VVPE is found in languages that has V-T movement.

Thus this paper will conclude that VSCs found in Tamil is V-Stranding VP ellipsis. The theoratical implication of this paper is to contribute under PF deletion appraoch for VVPE in Tamil. There are very few works on ellipsis in Indian languages. Further reseach in this phenomena will help to compare the similarities and differences in the distribution of ellipsis.

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1   As this paper's main aim is to find whether the given construction in example (1) is V-Stranding VP ellipsis with the evidences given in literature, I will call this as VSC (V stranding construction) till it is prooved as V-Stranding VP ellipsis.

2   In this paper, VP layer is meant including whole little vP layer.

Abbreviations used: Acc-accusative; Loc-Locative; Inst-Instrumental; 3-3rd person; S-Singular; M-masculine; F-Feminine; N-Neuter; Pres-Present tense; Past-Past tense, Foc-Focus

Examples: Bolded ones are antecedant and italicized 'e' is elided part.

1. john [vP**veetu-kku   po-n-aan**]   mariy-um   taan   po-n-aal   [vP.....*t*V....]

John-3SM   House-Loc   go-PAST-3SM   Mary-3SF-too   Foc   go-PAST-3SF   *[e]*

'John went home and Mary went [e] too.'

2. Ram$_i$ [vP**avan   amma-v-ai$_i$ *t*V**]   nesi-kir-a:n   Sita$_k$-v-um   taan   [vParaval   amma-v-ai$_{i/k}$ *t*V]   nesi-kir-a:l

Ram-3SM   his   mother-Acc   love-Pres-3SM   Sita-3SF-too   Foc   *[e]*   Love-Pres-3SF

'Ram loves his mother and Sita loves[e] too'.

3a.(ram)   saap-tt-aan   3b.(Sitaa)   saap-dr-aal

Ram-3SM   eat-Past-3SM   sita-3SF   eat-Pres-3SF

'Ram ate'   'Sita eats'

4a. John scolded *either Mary or Nancy*.
4b. Bill scolded *her*, too. √DE-reading/*D-reading
5. John **scolded either Mary or Nancy**, and Bill did *[e]* too. √D-reading

6.john [vP**veetu-kku   kaar-la   seekirama**]   po-n-aan   mariy-um   taan   ponaal   [vP.....*t*V....]

John-3SM   House-Loc   car-Inst   quickly   go-Past-3SM   Mary-3SF-too   Foc   go-Past-3SF   *[e]*

'John went home quickly in car and Mary went home quickly in car too'.

7.john [vP**veetukku   kaar-la   seekirama**]   po-n-aan   mary   ponaal   [vP.....*t*V....]

John-3SM   House-Loc   car-Inst   quickly   go-Past-3SM   Mary-3SF   go-Past-3SF   *[e]*

'John went home quickly in car and Mary went'.

8. ram [vP**meduvaga   nada-nt-aan**]   mary   ood-in-aal   [vP.....*t*V....]

Ram-3SM   slowly   walk-PAST-3SM   Mary-3SF   run-PAST-3SF   *[e]*

'Ram walked slowly and Mary ran'

9. raja [AdvP**meduvaga**]   kadai-kku   po-n-aan   mary-um   taan   [AdvP]   kadai-kku   po-n-aal

Raja-3SM   slowly   shop-Loc   go-PAST-3SM   Mary-3SF-too   Foc   *[e]*   shop-Loc   go-PAST-3SF

'Raja went to shop slowly and Mary went to shop too'

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