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Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1983), pp. 138-147

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The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

Bengali Conjunctive Participle Constructions*

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This paper is concerned with the conjunctive participle construction, a characteristic device for linking sequences of clauses in Bengali.¹ According to Masica 1976, similar constructions are also found in many languages of the Indian subcontinent both related and unrelated to Bengali, and also in Amharic, Japanese and Korean, Persian, Finno-Ugric and Altaic languages, Greek, Latvian, and Slavic languages, among others.

I shall first describe some basic formal properties of Bengali conjunctive participle constructions. Then I shall take up the problem of clausal compatibility; i.e., how speakers determine that two or more given clauses may be linked through conjunctive participle formation into a single sentential matrix.

1. Formal Properties

- (1) a. se baaṛi giye kaapor̥ cheṛe caan korlo
he house go-CP clothes leave-CP bath did
'He went home, took off his clothes, and had a
bath'
- b. osudh kheyē jodur phal holo
medicine eat-CP Jodu-G benefit became
'Jodu was benefited by taking medicine'
- c. lu lege se maaraa gaelo
heatstroke affect-CP he died
'He got heatstroke and died'

Some examples of Bengali conjunctive participle constructions (CPCs) are given in (1). Each consists of one or more nonfinite clauses plus a single finite clause. We may hypothetically represent an underlying form for the first example, (1a), as shown in (2):

- (2) [[se baaṛi jaa-] [se kaapor̥ chaar̥-] se caan korlo]²
he house go he clothes leave he bath did

Comparing (1a) with (2) it is seen that the verbs of the two leftmost clauses are reduced; they take that special nonfinite form known as the conjunctive participle. In the rightmost clause, however, the verb is not reduced and serves as the finite predicate of the overall sentence (1a).

Together with the reduction of clausal verbs we notice that only one of the underlying clause subjects in (2) surfaces in (1a). This results from the operation of a subject deletion process that is identity conditioned. Notice that the deletion process operates on all but one underlying instance of the common subject NP. Ostensibly, the undeleted instance of the common subject may surface in any of the component clauses of the CPC. This is illustrated in (3):

- (3) a. se baaṛi giye kaapor̥ cheṛe caan korlo (=1a)
he house go-CP clothes leave-CP bath did

- b. baari giye se kaapor chere caan korlo
 house go-CP he clothes leave-CP bath did
- c. baari giye kaapor chere se caan korlo
 house go-CP clothes leave-CP he bath did

There are two possible accounts for the preceding. The first is that the subject exempted from deletion, or controlling subject, originates in any of the component clauses of the construction. The other possibility is that the controlling subject always belongs to a particular clause, serves as the antecedent for the deletion of subjects in noncontrolling clauses and subsequently may be moved out of its original position. In fact, it is the latter which obtains. The way to test for this is to consider CPCs in which the common subjects of the component clauses differ in case marking. Consider (4) and (5), the hypothetical underlying structures corresponding respectively to (1b) and (1c).

- (4) [[jodu osudh khaa-] jodur phal holo]
 Jodu medicine eat Jodu-G benefit became
- (5) [[taar lu laag-] se maaraa gaelo]
 his heatstroke affect he died

In (4) and (5), the leftmost and rightmost clauses have coreferential subjects, but these subjects take different case markings. In (4), the leftmost clause has a direct case subject while the rightmost clause has an indirect or 'dative' subject.³ In (1b), the surface version of (4), we see that the controlling subject is the subject of the rightmost clause, the finite clause. The subject of the leftmost or nonfinite clause is deleted. Observe, in (6), that the sentence is unacceptable if the nonfinite clause subject is made the controlling subject:

- (6) *jodu osudh khey phal holo
 Jodu medicine eat-CP benefit became

Now consider (5). Here the leftmost or nonfinite clause has an indirect ('dative') case subject. The rightmost or finite clause has a direct case subject. In (1c), the surface form of (5), the controlling subject turns out to be once again the finite clause subject. Example (7), in which the subject of the nonfinite clause has been made the controlling subject, is unacceptable:

- (7) *taar lu lege maaraa gaelo
 his heatstroke affect-CP died

This evidence indicates that, when deletion under identity of subject NPs occurs in CPCs, the controlling subject is invariably the subject of the finite clause. Therefore it is to be inferred that sentences such as (3a) and (3b) arise by the movement of the controlling subject out of its original position to the head of a nonfinite clause.

2. The Same Subject Condition

Let us consider how speakers determine that two or more given

clauses are suitable to be linked into a single CPC. Writers on several languages of the Indian subcontinent (Dwarikesh 1971 and McGregor 1977:38ff. on Hindi; Arden 1969:200 and Rhenius 1845 on Tamil; Forbes 1862:139; Chatterji 1926:1003, and Dimock et al. 1976: 190-191 on Bengali) have postulated a single formal condition on the formation of CPCs. This is given in (8):

(8) The Same Subject Condition (SSC)

A CPC may be formed only when the subjects of all component clauses are coreferential.

All Bengali CPCs illustrated so far in this paper conform to the SSC. Consider (9a), the hypothetical underlying structure of which is given in (9b):

- (9) a. omuk unnisso pañcaas saale jomi kine
so-and-so 1900 50 year-L land buy-CP
kuri bacchor pare anek laabhe bikri korlo
20' year later many profit-L sale did
'So-and-so bought some land in 1950 and twenty
years later sold it off for a big profit'
- b. [[omuk unnisso pañcaas saale jomi kin-]
so-and-so 1900 50 year-L land buy
omuk kuri bacchor pare anek laabhe bikri
so-and-so 20' year later many profit-L sale
korlo]
did

The SCC accounts for the acceptability of (9a) because each of its component clauses, as shown in (9b), shares a common subject omuk 'so-and-so'. At the same time, the SSC accounts for the unacceptability of (10a):

- (10) a. *jodu thele modhu pore gaelo
Jodu push-CP Modhu fell-down
'Jodu gave a push and Modhu fell down'
- b. [[jodu thel-] modhu pore gaelo]
Jodu push Modhu fell-down

As (10b) shows, (10a) consists of two clauses which do not share a coreferential subject, and therefore by the SSC the resulting sentence (10a) must be unacceptable.

The SSC is adequate in many instances, such as (9) and (10). However, it does not account for the judgments of Bengali speakers in all cases. In other words, we cannot say that speakers determine clausal compatibility for the purposes of conjunctive participle formation purely in accordance with the SSC. Compare (9) with (11):

- (11) a. *omuk gato bacchor iurope giye ei bacchor
so-and-so last year Europe-L go-CP this year
hañkañe giyeche
Hong Kong-L has-gone
'So-and-so went to Europe last year and this year
he's gone to Hong Kong'
- b. [[omuk gato bacchor iurope jaa-] omuk
so-and-so last year Europe-L go so-and-so

ei bacchor hañkañe giyeche]
 this year Hong Kong-L has-gone

Unlike (9a), (11a) is unacceptable even though, as (11b) shows, it conforms to the SSC. This demonstrates that the SSC cannot be the sole condition on the subjoining of clauses in CPCs. But what is worse, the SSC cannot be even a partial condition on CPCs. This is because many Bengali CPCs are acceptable even though the SSC is violated. Consider (12):

- (12) a. ceaar bheñge giye modhu pore gaelo
 chair break down-CP Modhu fell off
 'The chair broke and Modhu fell off'
 b. [[ceaar bheñge jaa-] modhu pore gaelo
 chair break down Modhu fell off

(12b), the hypothetical underlying structure of (12a), shows that the two component clauses have distinct subjects. Yet the CPC (12a) is acceptable. On the face of it, this acceptability is difficult to understand, since the partially similar sentence (10a) (repeated here for convenience) is unacceptable:

- (10) a. *jodu ðele modhu pore gaelo
 Jodu push-CP Modhu fell down
 'Jodu gave a push and Modhu fell down'

It needs to be emphasized that an example like (10a) is not controversial in terms of informants' judgments, nor is it stylistically peculiar. CPCs which violate the SSC are found not only in the spoken register of Bengali, but also occur in the written language. Examples are found even in the work of some of the most conservative and respected writers. Karpushkin 1964:88-89 has culled a number of literary instances including those in (13):

- (13) a. ghare bris̄ti prabes kariyaa jal bosiyaaache
 room-L rain entrance do-CP water has-sat
 'The rain having come into the room, water
 accumulated' (Bankim Chandra Chatterji,
Racanabali v. 2, Calcutta 1954:60)
 b. raannaagharer paase praacir bhaañgiyaa katokgulo
 kitchen-G beside wall break-up some
 it̄ jaro haiyaa aache
 brick piled-up become-CP are
 'Beside the kitchen, a wall having broken, some
 bricks are piled up' (R. Tagore, Galpaguccha,
 Calcutta 1954:165)

It would seem desirable to formulate a condition on the formation of CPCs which would account for the same data which the SSC accounts for, and which would also account for those acceptable sentences that the SSC does not account for. With this goal in mind, I have collected and analyzed a number of counterinstances to the SSC. In general, they have fallen into several broad types.

3. Counterinstances

First, in many counterinstances to the SSC, the subjects of each

of the component clauses are inanimate. As in (14):

- (14) a. *ṭaeks beṛe giye* *anek jiniser daam*
 tax increase-CP many thing-G price
beṛe giyeche
 has-increased
 'Taxes have gone up and the prices of many
 things have increased'
- b. *ottodhik baroph pore* *samosto sosso nasto*
 excessive snow fall-CP entire crop ruined
hoye giyeche 'Heavy snow has fallen and all
 has become the crops have been destroyed'
- c. *ghare bristi prabes* *kore kaather mejhe*
 room-L rain entrance do-CP wood-G floor
nasto holo 'The rain entered the room and
 ruined became the wooden floor was ruined'

By contrast, in many sentences which violate the SSC and which are unacceptable, the subjects of the various component clauses are animate; as in (15):

- (15) a. **aalaauddin diper* *upore haat buliye ekṭi jin*
 Aladdin lamp-G upon hand rub-CP one genie
beriyē uthlo
 go out-CP rōse
 'Aladdin stroked the lamp with his hand and a
 genie came out'
- b. **Jodu thele* *modhu pore gaelo* (=10a)
 Jodu push-CP Modhu fell down
 'Jodu gave a push and Modhu fell down'

There is also a class of counterinstances to the SSC in which one clause has an animate subject. However, the referent of this subject NP does not 'do' the denoted action. Rather, the action happens to him. Illustrations are given in (16):

- (16) a. *bomaa pheṭe* *aekjon maaraa gaelo*
 bomb explōde-CP one-person died
 'A bomb exploded and one person died'
- b. *ceaar bheṅge giye* *modhu pore gaelo* (=12a)
 chair break down-CP Modhu fell off
 'The chair broke and Modhu fell off'

It is possible for even more than one component clause in a CPC to have an animate subject to whom the denoted action 'happens'; and in these instances, too, the SSC may be violated. (17) is an instance in point:

- (17) a. *baabaa maaraa giye* *se anek muskile* *porlo*
 father die-CP he many difficulty-L fell
 'His father died and he fell into many difficulties'

As another class of counterinstances to the SSC, we observe numerous examples in which one of the component clauses is an indirect or 'dative' subject construction. Some illustrations are given in (18):

- (18) a. *taeks beṛe giye* *aneker kasto* *hoyeche*
 tax increase-CP many-G difficulty has-become

'Taxes have increased and many people have had
difficulties'

- b. *bristi pore caasider laabh holo*
rain fall-CP farmers-G profit became
'It rained and the farmers profited'

4. Volitionality

In Bengali, indirect or 'dative' subject predicates tend to contrast with formally and semantically similar direct subject predicates. Indirect subject constructions invariably express activities viewed or spoken of as nonvolitional. Consider (19) and (20):

- (19) a. **se ghum bhaaᅅglo* b. *taar ghum bhaaᅅglo*
he sleep broke his sleep broke
'He awoke' 'He awoke'
- (20) a. *se upos bhaaᅅglo* b. *?*taar upos bhaaᅅglo*
he fast broke his fast broke
'He broke his fast' 'He broke his fast'

In each of these instances the (a) examples show direct subject predicates and the (b) examples exhibit the corresponding indirect subject predicates. The act of waking up denoted in (19) is a nonvolitional act. Notice that an indirect subject expression, (19b), is used to express it; the direct counterpart (19a) is starred. Contrastingly, the act of breaking a fast denoted in (20) is typically a volitional one. It tends to be expressed by the direct subject construction (20a). One speaker has remarked to me that the indirect subject counterpart (20b) is possible only in a situation in which the subject breaks his fast in a nonvolitional way, e.g., by being force-fed. Examples (19) and (20) are cited here as only a small and illustrative part of the total evidence that, in Bengali, the direct/indirect subject distinction at the formal level correlates with a volitional/nonvolitional distinction at the semantic level. For the complete evidence see Klaiman 1980a and 1980b.⁴

In light of these facts we may take note that (18a,b) contrast with (21a,b) respectively:

- (21) a. **taeks beᅇ giye aneke kasto peyeche*
tax increase-CP many trouble have-found
'Taxes have increased and many people have
taken trouble'
- b. **bristi pore caasiraa laabh korlo*
rain fall-CP farmers profit have-made
'It rained and the farmers have taken advantage'

The indirect subject clauses that we observe in (18a,b) are replaced in (21a,b) by their respective direct subject counterparts. The results differ slightly in meaning; compare the reading assigned to (21a) with that assigned to (18a), and also compare the reading assigned to (21b) with that assigned to (18b). In each of the examples in (21), the finite clause expresses an action which

is viewed as deliberate or volitional from the standpoint of the subject's involvement. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the contrast in acceptability between the corresponding examples of (18) and (21) is due to the factor of volitionality. In all the acceptable counterinstances to the SSC which have been presented so far in this paper--exes. (14), (16), (17) and (18)--each subjoined clause expresses a nonvolitional activity. Therefore it would seem that the SSC only applies in CPCs in which at least one component clause expresses a volitional act. Now let us look at some additional data.

5. Refining the Hypothesis

Consider the examples in (22):

- (22) a. *tinte begun bheje samosto tel phuriye gaelo*
 3-pc eggplant fry-CP entire oil was-used-up
 'All the oil was used up frying three eggplants'
- b. *apaarsaan koreo omuk baa'clo naa*
 operation do-CP-although so-and-so survived not
 'Although an operation was performed, so-and-so did not survive'
- c. *oasaartaa bodliye kaltaa thik hoye gaelo*
 the-washer change-CP the-tap okay became
 'By changing the washer the tap became all right'

All these CPCs violate the SSC. Moreover, in each instance the reduced (leftmost) clause expresses a volitional action. However, no NP denoting the doer of that action is specified in any instance. It is interesting that, in all examples of this type, unacceptability arises if any doer subject is specified. Thus compare (22a-c) respectively with (23a-c):

- (23) a. **raadhuni tin'ce begun bheje samosto tel*
 cook 3-pc eggplant fry-CP entire oil
 phuriye gaelo 'The cook fried three eggplants
 was-used-up and all the oil was used up'
- b. **daaktaar bos apaarsaan koreo omuk*
 Doctor Bose operation do-CP-although so-and-so
 baa'clo naa 'Although Dr. Bose performed an
 survived not operation, so-and-so did not
 survive'
- c. **mistri oasaartaa bodliye kaltaa thik*
 plumber the-washer change the-tap okay
 hoye gaelo 'The plumber changed the washer and
 became the tap became all right'

Why should the specification of the doer subject affect the acceptability of these CPCs? To achieve some insight into the matter, let's consider the following examples:

- (24) a. *bomaa phete aekjon maaraa gaelo (=16a)*
 bomb explode-itr.-CP 1-person died
 'A bomb exploded and one person died'
- b. **Plo'raa bomaa phaatiye aekjon maaraa gaelo*
 PLOs bomb explode-tr.-CP 1-person died
 'The PLOs exploded a bomb and one person died'

- c. PLOraa bomaa phaatiye jan smithke maarlo
 PLOs bomb explode-tr.-CP John Smith-O killed
 'The PLOs exploded a bomb and killed John Smith'

In (24a), each of the component clauses in the CPC expresses a nonvolitional activity. The sentence is acceptable even though it violates the SSC. (24b) also violates the SSC, but it is unacceptable. Notice that the reduced (leftmost) clause denotes a volitional activity and has a specified subject. Without altering this clause, the only way to make the sentence acceptable is as shown in (24c); namely, to modify the finite clause so that the specified subject of the reduced clause becomes the common subject of both clauses.

This would seem to indicate that, when a specified subject can be assigned to a clause denoting volitional activity, then that same subject must also serve as the subject of the other component clauses in the CPC. Consider (25):

- (25) a. aajkaal praay pet keṭe baacchaa
 these days often stomach cut-CP child
 prasob hay 'These days children are often
 childbirth becomes born by Caesarian section'
 b. *peṭ keṭe se ekṭi baacchaa prosob korlo
 stomach cut-CP she one child childbirth did
 'She had a child by Caesarian section'

(25a) is similar to the examples shown earlier in (22), and is acceptable. The reduced or leftmost clause expresses a volitional act and the finite or rightmost clause is an indirect subject construction. However, neither clause has a specified subject. But consider (25b). This sentence is unacceptable because it must be interpreted as if the unspecified subject of the leftmost clause were deleted under identity to the subject of the rightmost clause. In other words, the sentence must be interpreted to mean that the subject both performed the Caesarian operation and gave birth to the child. The sentence is starred because its meaning is nonsensical.

From this piece of evidence and from the earlier data, we can deduce that the presence or absence of a specified volitional subject in a Bengali CPC is significant. In other words, what counts in determining clausal compatibility is not whether all component clauses have coreferential subjects, but whether any one component clause denotes volitional action and can be interpreted as having a specified subject.

6. Conclusion

In light of these facts it is proposed that the putative SSC on the formation of CPCs be replaced by a different constraint as given in (26):

- (26) The No Double-Agent Condition (NDAC)
 Any specified, volitional subject in a CPC
 is construed as the subject of each component
 clause.

The NDAC accounts for the same range of CPCs whose acceptability

is accounted for by the SSC. At the same time, the NDAC is more adequate in that it also accounts for numerous CPCs whose acceptability is ruled out under the SSC. All the acceptable counterinstances to the SSC that have been cited in this paper are accounted for under the NDAC. So far I am not aware of any firm exceptions to it.

This does not mean that the NDAC accounts completely for clausal compatibility in Bengali CPCs; i.e., how speakers determine whether two or more given clauses can be united within one sentential matrix. The fact that sentence (11) is unacceptable could not be accounted for under the SSC, as we indicated earlier; but it cannot be accounted for under the NDAC either. We have not discovered all the conditions on the formation of conjunctive participle constructions. Rather, the NDAC is a partial step forward in our progress toward that goal and an improvement over our previous understanding.

Footnotes

* I am indebted to the Center for Asian Studies at Arizona State University for providing its assistance and to Betty Parker of the Center for producing the typed version of this paper. Errors are my sole responsibility. The paper is based on a chapter of my dissertation (Klaiman 1980a). Abbreviations: CP=conjunctive participle, CPC=conjunctive participle construction, itr.=intransitive, G=genitive case, L=locative case, NDAC=No Double-Agent Condition, O=objective case, SSC=same subject condition, tr.=transitive.

¹Bengali is a modern Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Indian state of West Bengal (population: nearly 45 million) and in neighboring Bangladesh (population: nearly 80 million) (figures taken from Sen 1978:435). Except where otherwise indicated, all examples in the present paper are taken from the standard colloquial dialect of the language, which is the form of Bengali spoken in Calcutta and its environs.

²According to Masica 1976:108, CPC formation is often seen as a process of sentence conjunction. But in Bengali there is formal evidence that the process is really one of subordination. (This is the reason the individual clauses are bracketed as they are in (2).) The formal evidence in question arises from the fact that subordinate and nonsubordinate clauses in the language differ in their behavior in several ways. For instance, sentential negative particles are placed preverbally in the former and postverbally in the latter. Also, some verbs (e.g., existential *aach-/thaak-* 'be, exist' and the negative verb *na-/naa ha-* 'not become') have separate allomorphs, one of which occurs in nonsubordinate clauses, the other in subordinate. In these and some other respects, Bengali CP clauses behave like subordinate clauses, while true conjoined clauses behave otherwise.

³In the grammatical descriptions of many languages, the term 'dative subject' is applied to the oblique case NP which is, typically, said to 'experience' (as opposed to 'do') the actions denoted by some class of verbs. The term 'dative' is used because the 'dative subject' is typically marked with the 'dative' case, i.e., the case of the indirect object. But in modern Bengali, the case markings of the indirect object and the 'dative' subject differ; the former is

the Objective case and the latter the Genitive case. Hence the term 'indirect subject'.

⁴For evidence of similar patterning in Georgian, Russian and Japanese, see Klaiman 1981.

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