

Lexical expressions in narrative discourse from Vera'a and Teop

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0. Introduction

Preliminaries:

- original hypothesis: Du Bois' (1987, 2003) "preferred argument structure"
 - constraints on newness / lexical expression:
 - Avoid new / lexical A
 - S and P are "open" -> discourse ergativity
 - motivated by info management functions of different roles
- relevance: discourse basis of ergativity in human languages

newness of referents -> lexicality profile of core arguments -> grammatical argument encoding

criticism

(Haspelmath 2006, Kumagai 2006, Everett 2009, Haig & Schnell submitted):

- grammaticalisation path obscure, only imaginable for head-marking devices
- accusative/split-S rather than ergative alignment of newness / lexicality
 - low lexicality of A found epiphenomenal of humanness and topicality
- Haig & Schnell (submitted) conclude: "Human subjects are rarely lexical."

distinct perspectives on form-function correlations:

1. proportion of A, S and P arguments among all new/lexical arguments
2. proportion of new/lexical arguments in each individual function A, S and P

aims of this paper

determining association of newness/givenness with particular functions

determining the relationship between newness and lexicality "constraints"

Do any syntactic functions serve discourse-structural purposes, so that they are associated with particular referential statuses and/or forms that do not follow from more basic principles?

preliminary outcome

- no syntactic function has a parallel function as "entry point" for new referents
- attested pattern may follow from IS considerations rather than humanness (??)

Corpus data and procedure

Vera'a: 4 traditional narratives, ~1300 clause units

Teop: 4 traditional narratives, ~1300 clause units

- variables
 - form: lexical (common, pers. NP) vs. non-lexical (pronominal, zero)
 - humanness: +/-HUM (+hum includes spirits)
 - functions: A, S, P, (l, g, obl, pred, other, Id)
 - info status: discourse-new vs. discourse-given

corpus annotation with GRAID (Haig & Schnell 2014)

restriction to 3rd persons, since 1st and 2nd person cannot be lexical

1. “Entry point” functions of syntactic arguments

- human and non-human discourse referents in the two corpora:

Table 1: Human and non-human discourse referents in Vera'a and Teop narratives

	+HUM	-HUM	TOTALS
Vera'a	54	216	270
Teop	53	192	245

Which functions are used to what extent for the introduction of referents?
 (“Where do new referents go?”)

○ Vera'a:

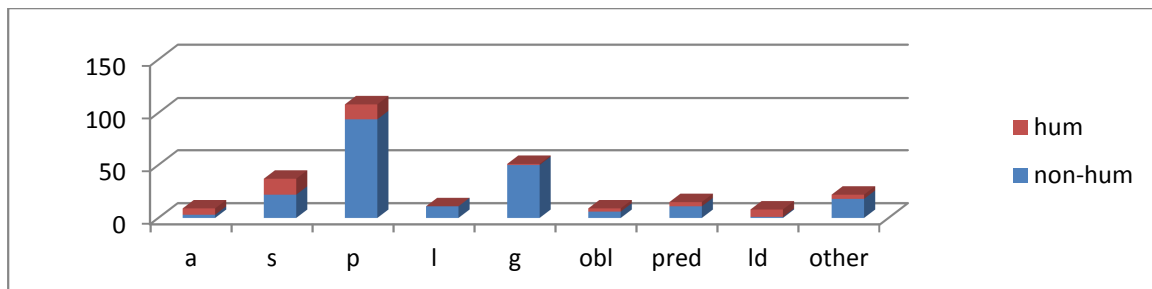


Figure 1: Distribution of human and non-human discourse referents across argument functions in Vera'a

○ Teop:

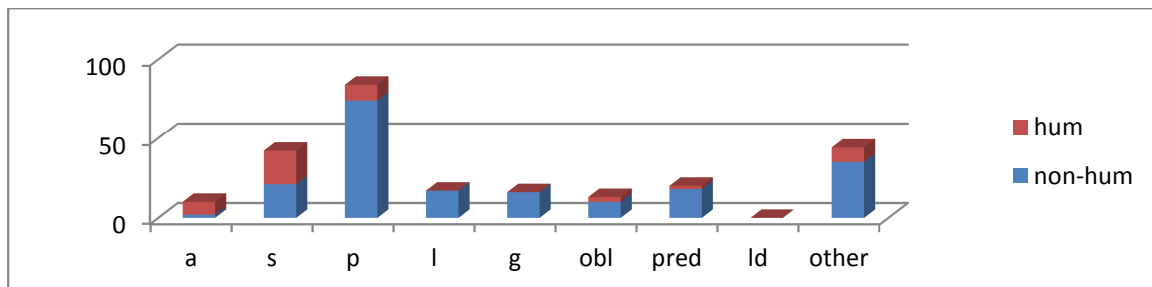


Figure 2: Distribution of human and non-human discourse referents across argument functions in Teop

- approximately 40% of all discourse referents introduced in non-core function
- P arguments, but not S arguments, preferred entry points for new referents
- S arguments seem attract new human referents

specialised presentational constructions in both languages with new referent in predicate:

(1) Vera'a

qōñ ne vō-wal e ruwa mē gunu-ruō
 night NUM.ART NUM-one PERS.ART two.people DAT spouse-3DL

'One day, (there was) a couple.'

1.PALA.001

(2) Teop

a peha otei ei ahiki ta kave teve
 ART2.SG INDEF.A man DEM2 not.exist NSPEC1.SG kave PREP.3SG.PRON

'(There is) this man (here) who does not have a net.'

Sii.128

2. "Preferred argument structure" and newness in Vera'a and Teop

- typical pattern of lexical / new argument realisation in the two corpora from Vera'a and Teop
- mirrors many other languages (Everett 2009; Kumagai 2006; Haig & Schnell submitted)

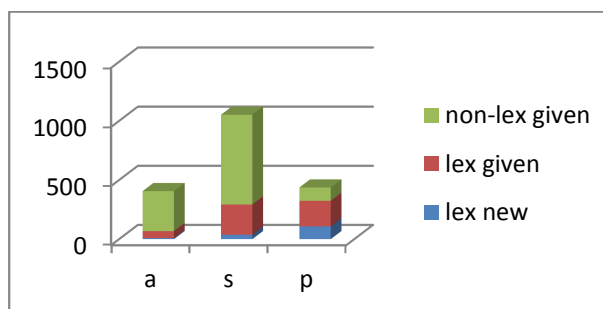


Figure 3: 3rd person core arguments in Vera'a narratives

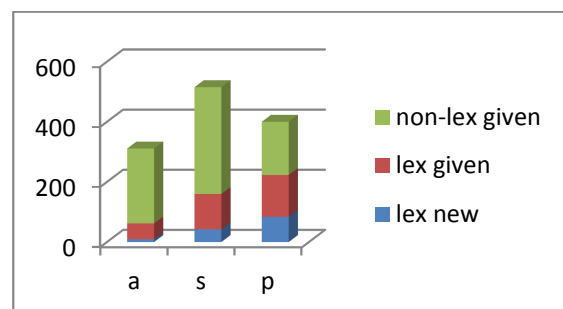


Figure 4: 3rd person core arguments in Teop

- all new referents considered here are expressed with lexical form
- lexical arguments have either new or given referents, huge majority is given (cf. §3 below)

Questions:

- What are these "discourse-new" referents like in different roles?
- Do human and non-human referents differ from each other?

- human new A arguments:

(3) Vera'a

a. dir =k vilvil ēn nak mu-re
 3PL =TAM2 RED:tie.up ART canoe POSS.GEN-3PL

ge 'ew'i ne rev sur ēn nak mu-gi [...]
 THINGY other TAM2:3SG drag down ART canoe POSS.GEN-3SG

wo =n n ko-gi ne 'ul
 and =ART ART POSS.VES-3SG TAM2:3SG sink

‘They tied up their canoes, and one dragged out is canoe, [went down to the sea with it], and the canoe sank. [Then another one...]’ JJQ.032-033

b. *den so no =k mul kel [...]*
 ABL CPL 1SG =TAM2 go back

e raga =k keskes no
 PERS.ART people =TAM2 RED:tease 1SG

‘Not good I go back home, and then everybody will tease me, [and I will be reminded of you being dead.]’ ANV.076-077

(4) Teop

b. *ta tavaan re tara bari*
 NSP1.SG people CONSEC see 4PL.PRON

‘[Then they took her out] so that everybody could see her.’ Iar.097

b. *e beera, e beera vai koma-n =a vaan*
 ART1.SG chief ART1.SG chief DEM6 inside-3SG.POSS =ART2.SG village

na susu bono karamusu
 TAM2 beat OBJ.ART3.SG ganamut.drum

‘Then the chief, the chief of this village beat the *garamut* drum.’ Iar.137

- non-human new A arguments:

(5) Vera’a

ru-ruv ēn naw asenē =n rer 'alēn naw anē
 RED-suck ART seawater MAN.DEM1.A =ART current ASS seawater DEM1.A

ne rēv kēl ēn nak su-suō anē
 TAM2:3SG drag back ART canoe RED-paddle DEM1.A

‘He sucked in the seawater so that the current of the sea would drag back the canoe.’ 2.PALA.090

(6) Teop

to nana maa =na a roava
REL warm hither = 3SG.IPFV ART2.SG sun

‘[...] where the sun was shining (heating) (it).’

Viv.016

- human new S arguments

(7) Vera’a

a. *e raga 'aklē-gi =k 'ēqēl lik ma*
PERS.ART people some-3SG = TAM2 descend more hither

‘Some more people then came down.’

HHAK.022

b. *e raga nō-gi =k 'isiwē*
PERS.ART people POSS.DOM-3SG = TAM2 dismount

=n mōa 'isi-gi m row qēl
= ART first same.sex.older.sibl-3SG TAM1 jump descend

‘His men all dismounted. The first of his brothers jumped down, [hen the next ..]

JJQ.772-473

(8) Teop

a. *a maa moon re= paa nao tea gogi*
ART2.SG PLM woman CONSEC = TAM3 go COMP1 fish

‘[When we get back,] the women will go fishing.’

Sii.165

b. *te =o peho vuri a peha otei na teitei roho*
PREP = ART3.SG INDEF.O time ART2 INDEF.A man TAM2 RED:stay before

‘Once upon a time, there lived a man.’

Viv.001

b. *a peha otei vaa koma-n =o vaagum hivi vai*
ART2.SG one.A man LNK inside-3SG = ART3.SG group ask now

‘One man inside the group asked:’

Sii.168-169

- non-human new S arguments:

(9) Vera’a

a. *n tōo ne tōrtōrōk*
ART fowl TAM2:3SG crow

‘And the fowls crowed. [i.e. daylight broke]’ ANV.037

b. *ē* = *n* *vin* *va'al* *ne* *sal* *ma*
DISC =ART skin banana TAM2:3SG float hither

‘[...] and then peel of (that) banana floated by.’ JJQ.221

(10) Teop

a. *o* *pea* *naono* *na* *hoa* *vo* = *maa* = *na*
ART3 branch tree TAM2 arise GOAL= hither =3SG.IPFV

koma-n = *a* *hanana*
inside-3SG =ART2.SG track

‘One branch of the tree reached over the track.’ Viv.090

b. *me* = *o* *puhana* *paa* *beera* *maa*
and =ART3.SG high.tide TAM3 big hither

‘And then tide became high [big].’ Iar.269

- human new P arguments:

(11) Vera'a

a. *ne* *visis* *ēn* *ni'i* *reñe*
TAM2:3SG give.birth ART small-female

‘[The woman got pregnant] and then gave birth to a little girl.’ ANV.003

b. *ne* *'ēn* *e* *tētē* *ne* *vō-ruō* = *s* *kalkal* *'i*
TAM2:3SG see pers.ART infant NUM.ART NUM-two =SIM RED:crawl DEL

‘[...] and saw two babies crawling there.’ ANV.017

(12) Teop

me = *paa* *ma* *vurahe* *ri* *bono* *tobara* *otei*
and =TAM3 come find OBJM OBJ.ART2.SG group man

‘[...] and he came and found a group of men [sitting on the beach].’ Sii.009

- non-human new P arguments:

(13) Vera'a

a. *e* *'es* *ēn* *mu-ru* = *n* *vus*
DISC carve ART POSS.GEN-3DL =ART bow

‘So, (he) cut them a gait of bow and arrow.’

HHAK.060

b. *di =m 'ēv ēn 'erē dudu vada*
3SG =TAM1 cut ART PL leaf panadus

‘[She went up bushwards], and she cut a number of panadus leaves.’ 2.PALA.069

(14) Teop

c. *Me ori paa neba bona mohina*
and4 3PL.PRON TAM3 plant OBJ.ART2 garden

‘And they planted a garden.’

Iar.111

b. *are paa mosi maa ta maa raviana*
1pl.in.pron tam3 cuthither nsp1.sg plm raviana.vine

‘[We will go into the bush] to cut some *raviana* vine.’

Sii.021-022

Conclusions:

- only P serves to introduce clearly new referents
- “new” referents in both A and S function either non-specific (‘everybody’), uniquely identifiable or set members of previously established referents (type of bridging)

Specific individual referents are apparently introduced in P function, often with a verb of perception, creation, or obtaining.

3. Distribution of lexical arguments with given human and non-human referents

- motivations for deployment of lexical NPs with discourse-given referents:
 - activation, accessibility (Chafe 1976; Ariel 1988, 1990; Givon 1983)
antecedent distance, function switch between antecedent and anaphor
 - establishment of prominent discourse participants (Himmelmann 1996; Lichtenberk 1996)
2nd-mention immediate lexical anaphors
(thematic “node” marking etc. (cp Givon’s “wizard”))
 - information structure (Krifka 2008; Lambrecht 1994)
different types of focus constructions
contrastive, additive topics

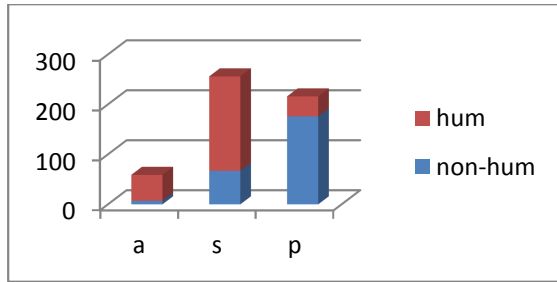


Figure 5: Given human and non-human referents in different functions in Vera'a

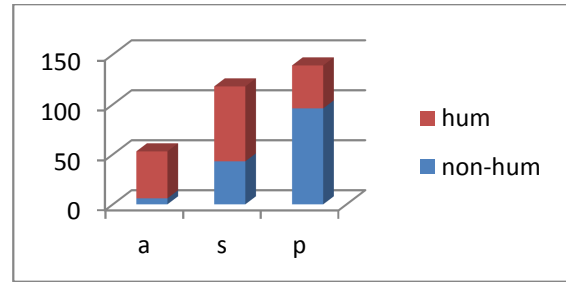


Figure 6: Given human and non-human referents in different functions in Teop

- bulk of lexical S and P are given
- distribution of +/-hum referents reflects roughly their general proportion in different roles
- given human and non-human referents in A function:

(15) Vera'a

a. *'anti mu-ru anē ne 'ēn gōr duruō*
 aunt POSS.GEN-3DL DEM1.A TAM2:3SG see secure 3DL

‘[The two gave them (two) new clothes and washed them (two) clean.] And now their (two) aunt looked after them (two).’ ANV.027

b. *di ne sor vē'e =n magala*
 3SG TAM2:3SG spill out =ART ant

magal ne da di
 ant TAM2:3SG do 3SG

‘He spilled out some ants, and the ants gave him a hard time.’ JJQ.459-460

(16) Teop

a. *kaokahi vaha vai bana ri =e roosuu*
 leave again now again OBJM =ART1.SG giant

‘[... and they carried (them), and they scraped (them), and they finished scraping (them), and they prepared (them), put (them) in the sun again, dried (them), and then] the giant left them again.’ Sii.066

b. *o tagu-one na paku bona beiko*
 ART3.SG lump-clay TAM2 make OBJ.ART2.SG child

‘The clay lump made a child.’ Iar.083

- given human and non-human lexical S arguments:

(17) Vera'a

a. *qē' 'uwaṁēre ne sag lē =n qi'i nak su-suō*
 finish first.born TAM2:3SG sit LOC =ART head canoe RED-paddle

=n 'ama' ne sag lē =n vene-gi
 =ART spirit TAM2:3SG sit LOC =ART middle-3SG

alē =n 'isiṁēre ne sag 'irwur
 alright =ART second.born TAM2:3SG sit behind

‘At the end, the first born sat in the front of the canoe, the devil sat in its middle, and the second born sat in the back.’
 1.PALA.091-093

b. *no me da =n wede =n wede ne wede*
 1SG FUT do =ART rain =ART rain TAM2:3SG rain

ne 'ō' lu =n nak mu-k
 TAM2:3SG carry out =ART canoe POSS.GEN-1SG

‘“I will make rain, and then the rain will rain and take my canoe out in the sea.”’
 JJQ.088

(18) Teop

a. *A otei na hio rakaha maa =na*
 ART2.SG man TAM2 sit very hither = 3SG.IPFV

te =o kopuru n= o naono
 PREP =ART3 top 3SG.POSS = ART3.SG tree

‘[Rottennose (a giant) climbed and climbed], and the boy was sitting up in the tree top.’
 Viv.122

- given human and non-human P arguments

(19) Vera'a

a. *[...] 'amēn di ne kur sa e raga ē*
 ASS 3SG TAM2:3SG devour EMPH PERS.ART people DEM3

‘[They went into the stone oven to sleep. And the devil went to his house, and after a while he thought: “Right, these people should be asleep now. I shall go and check on them.” But he came to see them] in order to eat these very people (our heroes).’
 JJQ.266

b. *duru* =*m* *le* =*n* *ko-ru* =*n* *nak*
 3DL =TAM1 transfer =ART POSS.VES-3DL =ART canoe

‘[Alright, made them a canoe. Then one day they said: [...] (7 clauses)] So they took their canoe, [took their bow-and-arrow, and off they went.]’ HHAK.071

- very preliminary:
 - S and A are often lexical due to topic shifts
 - this appears much more frequent in the S role than...
 - P arguments often lexical due to reactivation, in particular of non-human referents

4. Preliminary conclusions

- newness does not play a major role in determining form of A, S and P
- A and S are more commonalities than S and P (accusativity)

trivial preliminary account: speakers introduce new referents in relation to already established ones, and transitive constructions establish a link between an already established subject referent and the new object referent (perception); often this follows naturally from expression of agent-patient interaction (creation, obtaining)

- information structure and referent tracking more important
- possibly systematic differences between all three roles

Cognitive demands resulting from (high) information pressure (Du Bois 2003; Kumagai 2006; Haig & Schnell submitted) may be connected to use of lexical expressions (topic shift, re-activation, contrastive focus, etc), but probably not to newness

- intermediate lexicality status of S not explained

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