Agent Anaphors in Nepali

Andreas Pregla & Andreas Hölzl

University of Potsdam, SFB 1287

23–24 July 2024, SLW IX, Lima

Frame Title

Agent anaphors

Nepali has agent anaphors.

FRAME TITLE

Agent anaphors

Nepali has agent anaphors.

Analysis of agent anaphors

Surface agent anaphors are logophors. They are coreferential with the viewpoint holder of the current discourse.

"Control Principle" (following Forker 2014, Haspelmath 2023)

There are no agent anaphors (i.e., reflexive or reciprocal pronouns).

Nepali reflexive *aphu*

- selected forms of the Nepali reflexive (e.g. Prasain 2011: 80)
- boldface shows the forms relevant for this talk

	plain	emphatic
nominative	**aphu**	**aph-əi**
ergative	**aphu-le**	**aph-əi-le**
accusative	**aphu-lai**	**aph-əi-lai**
possessive SG	M aph-no, F aph-ni	aph-n-əi

Nepali reflexives: agent anaphors

(1) Expected: Patient object reflexives

    a.   Ram-le   **aphu-lai**
           Ram-ERG   REFL-ACC

           mar-jo.
           kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

        'Ram killed himself.'

    b.   Ram-le   **aph-əi-lai**
           Ram-ERG   REFL-EMPH-ACC

           mar-jo.
           kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

        'Ram killed himself.'

NEPALI REFLEXIVES: AGENT ANAPHORS

(1) Expected: Patient object reflexives

    a. Ram-le **aphu-lai**
       Ram-ERG **REFL-ACC**

       mar-jo.
       kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

       'Ram killed himself.'

    b. Ram-le **aph-əi-lai**
       Ram-ERG **REFL-EMPH-ACC**

       mar-jo.
       kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

       'Ram killed himself.'

(2) Surprising: Agent subject reflexives

    a. **aphu-le** Ram-lai
       REFL-ERG Ram-ACC

       mar-jo.
       kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

       'Ram killed himself.' or 'He killed Ram.'

    b. **aph-əi-le** Ram-lai
       REFL-EMPH-ERG Ram-ACC

       mar-jo.
       kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

       'Ram killed himself.'

Research question

___ Research question ___

Are Nepali agent anaphors counterexamples to the universal bias against agent anaphors?

Roadmap

1. Research question
2. Background: anaphor universals
3. Nepali agent anaphors
4. Nepali logophoricity
5. Conclusion

Background: anaphor universals

¬Subject anaphors: Example universal formulations

In every ergative language, as in every accusative language, the 'antecedent', i.e. **the controller, of reflexivity is A** *(or S, where it is extended to intransitives). This appears to be a universal and is related to the universal category of subject – that role which semantically controls the activity is also the grammatical controller in a reflexive construction [...]*

(Dixon 1994: 138–139)

(i) Rank scale of syntactic positions
   subject > object > oblique > within nominal, within embedded clause
(ii) Antecedent-reflexive asymmetry
   The antecedent must be higher on the rank scale syntactic positions than the reflexive pronoun.

(Haspelmath 2023: 37)

Generative tradition: Binding principles

Condition A (anaphors; following Bruening 2021)
Anaphors have to be coreferential with a local antecedent in an argument position. The antecedent precedes and structurally dominates the anaphor.

⇒ clausemates (locality) + no agent anaphors (argument position + precedence + structural dominance)

(3) a. *The computer said that Bill likes **itself**.
     b. ***Itself** assembled the computer.

Generative tradition: Binding principles

Condition C (full NPs; following Bruening 2021)
A full NP is *not* coreferential with any (pro-)nominal that precedes and structurally dominates the full NP.

$\Rightarrow$ no agent anaphors (precedence + strucural dominance)

(4) a. *Itself assembled **the computer**.

   b. *The computer/it assembled **the computer**.

Forker (2014): Explaining counterexamples away

languages with attested subject anaphors:

- Albanian, Toba Batak
- Modern Greek, Basque, Georgian
- Samoan, Tuvaluan
- Nakh-Daghestanian

Forker (2014): Explaining counterexamples away

1. denying genuine subject status ⇒ only agent subjects
2. denying genuine anaphor status ⇒ only special, pronominal reflexive form

- Albanian, Toba Batak – derived subjects (not agents)
- Modern Greek, Basque, Georgian – derived subjects / no anaphors
- Samoan, Tuvaluan – no anaphors
- Nakh-Daghestanian: Lezgian, Tsakhur, Sanzhi Dargwa, ... – logophoricity

1. denying genuine subject status ⇒ only agent subjects
2. denying genuine anaphor status ⇒ only special, pronominal reflexive form

- Albanian, Toba Batak – derived subjects (not agents)
- Modern Greek, Basque, Georgian – derived subjects / no anaphors
- Samoan, Tuvaluan – no anaphors
- Nakh-Daghestanian: Lezgian, Tsakhur, Sanzhi Dargwa, ... – logophoricity

⇒ **Nepali has "genuine subjects" and anaphors** (section 3)
⇒ like Nakh-Daghestanian, Nepali has **logophoric anaphors** (section 4)

Nepali agent reflexives

Forker (2014): Many attested subject anaphors are "derived"

	"derived subjects"	"genuine subjects" (A)
common feature	flagging (NOM/ERG), indexing/agreement	
different features	nominative experiencer ergative stimuli promoted themes (passive)	transitive agents

Nepali subject anaphors are not derived

(5) **Aphu-le**   Ram-lai   mar-jo.
    REFL-ERG   Ram-ACC   kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
    'Ram killed himself.' or 'He killed Ram.'

Contradiction to the Control Principle

- prototypical agentive telic verb *to kill*
- indexing of the A on the verb (next slide)
- ergative on agent anaphor
- accusative on full NP patient
  ⇒ subject agent anaphor; patient object antecedent

Nepali subject anaphors are not derived

(5) **Aphu-le**   Ram-lai   mar-jo.
    REFL-ERG   Ram-ACC   kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
    'Ram killed himself.' or 'He killed Ram.'

Contradiction to the Control Principle

- prototypical agentive telic verb *to kill*
- indexing of the A on the verb (next slide)
- ergative on agent anaphor
- accusative on full NP patient
  ⇒ subject agent anaphor; patient object antecedent

Double contradiction to Binding Theory

- Principle A: antecedent does *not* precede and dominate anaphor
- Principle C: full NP is coreferential with preceding and dominating nominal

Aphu controls indexing: feminine antecedents

- indexing for a 3sg feminine antecedent removes reflexive reading (6 vs. 7)
  ⇒ anaphoric *aphu* triggers masculine indexing

- possibly related to its etymological origin (Turner 1931)

(6)   Feminine index and antecedent

*aphu-le Sita-lai   mar-in
REFL-ERG Sita-ACC kill-PST.3SG.F.H

int. 'Sita killed herself.'

(7)   Masculine index and antecedent

aphu-le Ram-lai   mar-jo.
REFL-ERG Ram-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

'Ram killed himself.' (= 5)

Nepali anaphors are genuine anaphors

reflexive	3sg/demonstrative	2sg	1sg
aphu	tjo, jo, u	tə, timi	mə

Table 1. Uninflected pronoun forms per function following Prasain (2011: 69ff.). Different forms in the same column are due to proximality and honoroficity. Every pronoun has an emphatic form.

- seperate form that does not inflect for person (however: possible in other dialects)
- seperate form is a *pronoun* (no determiners, no attributive modification)

Nepali anaphors are genuine anaphors

(8) Antecedent has to be in argument position
   #**aph-əi-le**   [ram-ko   darhi] phal-i   di-jo.
   REFL-EMPH-ERG Ram-POSS beard shave-PTCP give-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
   int. 'Ram shaved his beard.'

Nepali anaphors are not just 3sg pronouns

- the non-honorific 3sg pronoun *u-* cannot be coreferential with a clausemate
  ⇒ clear distributional and functional difference to *aphu*
  ⇒ *aphu* is not just another non-anaphoric 3sg pronoun

(9) Ram-le **us-lai** mar-jo.
Ram-ERG 3SG.NH.OBL-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

'Ram killed him (other person).'
not 'Ram killed himself.'

(10) **Us-le** Ram-lai mar-jo.
3SG.NH.OBL-ERG Ram-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH

'He (some other person, not Ram) killed Ram.'
not 'Ram killed himself.'

Principle C is generally obeyed

(11) **Us-le**   Ram-lai   mar-jo.
3SG.NH.OBL-ERG Ram-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
'He (some other person, not Ram) killed Ram.'
not 'Ram killed himself.' (= 10)

(12) Ram-le   Ram-lai   mar-jo.
Ram-ERG Ram-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
'One Ram killed the other Ram.'

⇒ Principle C generally there, violations only with *aphu*

Nepali logophors: Does logophoricity lead to apparent agent reflexives?

- logophors: pronominal elements that refer to a logophoric centre:
    - attitude holder, from whose viewpoint utterance is reported
    - prototypical case: subjects of verba dicendi
- logophors: often same form as reflexives, but they don't behave like anaphors, esp. clause mate condition
- Nakh-Daghestanian: agent anaphors + **reflexives are complex pronouns containing logophors**
- Lyutikova (2000): Tshakhur "reflexives" are logophors referring to attitude holder

$\Rightarrow$ **Nepali agent anaphora due to logophoricity?**

Example: Tshakhur

(13) Tshakur: locally embedded logophoric anaphor (Lyutikova 2000: 239)
bajram   razira-wo-r [čoẑ-e: **wuẑ**   sıRoca?-as].
Bajram:ɴᴏᴍ agree-ᴄᴏᴘ-ɪ brother-ᴇʀɢ self:ɪ:ɴᴏᴍ ɪ:awake-ᴘᴏᴛ
'Bajram agrees that (his) brother wakes him (Bajram).'

(14) Tshakur: logophoric anaphor from discourse (Lyutikova 2000: 239)
C: In Dagestanian Pedagogical University the Tsaxur language department is established.

či-nčei   c'a|X-ni   miz-e-n   ma|?allim-a:-r   Go:k-a.
self:4:ᴏʙʟ-ᴇʟ Tsaxur-ᴀ.ᴏʙʟ language-ᴏʙʟ-ᴀ.ᴘʟ teacher-ᴘʟ-ɴᴏᴍ.ᴘʟ ʜᴘʟ:turn.out-ɪᴘꜰ
'From it Tsaxur teachers are being turned out (graduated).'

#1 *APHU* LOGOPHORICITY

- obligatory coindexiation of *aphu* with logophoric centre ⇒ reflexive meaning is lost

(15) Factive complement: strong logophoric context

    a. [hidzo   **aphu-le** Krsna-lai   mar-jo   bhənerə] Ram-le
        yesterday REFL-ERG Krishna-ACC kill-PST.NH.3SG.MASC COMP   ram-ERG

        ahilē bhan-tshə
        now say-NPST.3SG.NH.MASC

    'Ram now says that he (Ram) killed Krishna yesterday.'
    not 'Ram now says that Krishna killed himself yesterday.'

    b. Ram-le   ahilē bhan-tshə   [ki   hidzo   **aphu-le** Krsna-lai
        ram-ERG now say-NPST.3SG.NH.MASC COMP yesterday REFL-ERG Krishna-ACC

        mar-jo]
        kill-PST.NH.3SG.MASC

    'Ram now says that he (Ram) killed Krishna yesterday.'
    not 'Ram now says that Krishna killed himself yesterday.'

#2 *Aphu* SAP antecedents

- alternatively perhaps not a real anaphor?
- indexing for speech act participants (uncommon in isolation, but possible)

(16) a. (mə) aphu-le ram-lai mar-**tshu**
     1SG REFL-ERG ram-ACC kill-NPST.1SG
     'I myself kill Ram.'

   b. (tə)   aphu-le ram-lai mar-**tshəu**
     2SG.NH REFL-ERG ram-ACC kill-NPST.2SG
     'You yourself kill Ram.'

⇒ null pronouns might determine indexing; does *aphu* always have a null pronoun?

#3 *Aphu* is not just a 3sg pronoun

(17) Context sentence
Hidzo   Ram-le   bhai-lai   nuwa-i   di-jo.
yesterday ram-ERG y.brother-ACC bath-OBL give-PST.3SG.M.NH
'Yesterday Ram bathed his little brother.'

(18) *Aphu*: Cross-clausal subject antecedent
Ahilē **aphu(-le)** bahirə khel-nə paũ-tshə.
now   REFL-ERG   outside play-INF get-NPST.3SG.M
'Now he can play outside.' *he* = only Ram, not little brother

(19) *U*: simple 3sg pronoun
Ahilē **u(s-le)**   bahirə khel-nə paũ-tshə.
now   3SG.OBL-ERG outside play-INF get-NPST.3SG.M
'Now he can play outside.' *he* = Ram or little brother

⇒ *aphu* is not just an intensified null 3SG pronoun

Logophoricity enables surface subject anaphora

1 **with context:**
- explicity established logophoric centre
- *aphu* refers to logophoric centre
  ⇒ *aphu* looks like agent 3sɢ pronoun

2 **without context:**
- no explicit logophoric centre
- **accomodation of logophoric centre: overt patient as logophoric centre**
  ⇒ *aphu* looks like agent reflexive

3 prediction: agent *aphu* only works with sentient/animate antecedent

Conclusion

- *aphu* is reflexive **and** logophoric
- analysis:
    - *aphu* outside of object position is always logophoric
    - "agent anaphor" = agent logophor with patient as established logophoric centre
    - logophoric centre is accomodated without explicit context
- future research:
    - checking the frequency of such constructions with corpora
    - *aphu* as an intensifier: the role of radical pro-drop
    - binding with quantified nouns
    - split antecedents as test for "true anaphora"

Thank you for your attention!

Andreas Pregla <andrea06@uni-potsdam.de>

Appendix

Nepali reciprocals: agent anaphors

(20) Expected: Patient object reciprocal

Keṭa	rə	keṭi-le	**ek ərka-lai**
boy	and	girl-ERG	RECIP-ACC

bigar-e
spoil-PST.3PL.NH

'The boy and the girl spoiled each other.'

(21) Surprising: Agent subject reciprocal

ek ərka-le	keṭa	rə	keṭi-lai
RECIP-ERG	boy	and	girl-ACC

bigar-e
spoil-PST.3PL.NH

'The boy and the girl spoiled each other.'
(or: some plurality spoiled the boy and girl)

Principle C violations with intensifying as in English

- violation of Principle C with contrastive focus, e.g., using intensifying reflexives

(22) a. Only SHE (HERSELF) thinks that Mary is nice. (Cable 2008, 3)

    b. A: I heard Andreas killed Ram.
        B: No, RAM HIMSELF killed Ram!
        B': No, RAM HIMSELF killed him!
        B": No, HE HIMSELF killed him!

- same in Nepali ⇒ Are all agent anaphors headed by an empty pronoun?

(23) **Ram aphəi-le** us-lai mar-jo.
    ram REFL.EMPH-ERG 3SG.NH.OBL-ACC kill-PST.3SG.MASC.NH
    'Ram himself killed him (someone else).'
    or 'Ram himself killed himself.'

📄 Bruening, B. 2021. Generalizing the presuppositional approach to the binding conditions. *Syntax* 24(4). 417–461.

📄 Dixon, R. M. W. 1994. *Ergativity*. R. M. W. Dixon (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 271.

📄 Forker, D. 2014. Are there subject anaphors? *Linguistic Typology*. 51–81.

📄 Haspelmath, M. 2023. Comparing reflexive constructions in the world's languages. In K. Janic, N. Puddu & M. Haspelmath (eds.), *Reflexive constructions in the world's languages*, 19–62. Berlin: Language Science Press.

📄 Lyutikova, E. A. 2000. Reflexives and emphasis in Tsaxur (Nakh-Dagestanian). In Z. Frajzyngier & T. Curl (eds.), *Reflexives. Forms and functions*, 227–256. Amsterdam : John Benjamins.

📄 Prasain, B. 2011. *A computational analysis of Nepali morphology. A model for natural language processing*. Tribhuvan University, dissertation.

📄 Turner, R. L. 1931. *A comparative and etymological dictionary of the Nepali language.* London: Kegan Paul.