

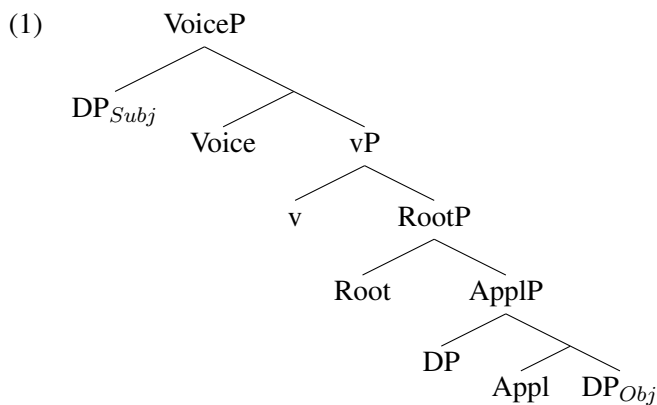
Recipients are syntactically and semantically distinct from benefactives

Evidence from the O’dam language of Durango, Mexico

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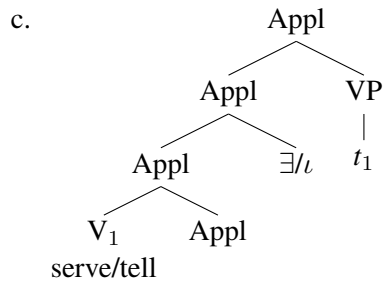
- A major question in work on the syntax-semantics interface is the distinction among different types of thematic participants. This especially relates to debates around applicative constructions, and ApplP, and the number of distinct functions such constructions can have (Polinsky 2024).
- Work on applicatives, and ApplP, has often disagreed with the types and number of functions that applicatives can have.
- In particular, recent work has proposed that all dative objects are ApplP complements (Boneh and Nash 2012; Cuervo 2015, 2020).
- For example, Cuervo (2003, 68) and Cuervo (2020) uses the structure in (1) for the source and goal readings of the dative object, in bold, as well as datives of lexical ditransitives like ‘give’, ‘put’, etc.



- (2) a. *Spanish Pablo le rabó la bicicleta a Andreina*
 Pablo CL.DAT stole the bicycle.ACC Andreina.DAT
 ‘Pablo stole the bicycle **from Andreina**’
- b. *Spanish Pablo le pasó la bicicleta a Andreina*
 Pablo CL.DAT pass the bicycle.ACC Andreina.DAT
 ‘Pablo handed the bicycle **to Andreina**’

- Likewise, Bruening (2020) and Bruening (2024) gives a similar proposal for verbs where the Theme can be made implicit along with an explicit non-Theme, as in (3) from Bruening (2020, 1059).
- He contrasts such verbs with *bake*-class verbs, those with a more typical recipient beneficiary that is not entailed by the base verb, where Appl takes VP as its complement.

- (3) a. They are going to serve the guests now, but I don't know what.
 b. A: I have bad news. B: Sandy already told me.



- What unites both approaches is that the non-Theme participant of any ditransitive, derived or not, is semantically introduced by Appl.
- I will argue non-Theme arguments of certain ditrasitives, derived or not, may be syntactically *licensed* by Appl, but cannot be said to be semantically *introduced* by such a head.
- Instead, I will be focusing on recipient-like objects and propose, following Beavers, Everdell, Jerro, Kauhanen, Koontz-Garboden, LeBovidge, and Nichols (2021), that the non-Theme participants of ditransitives differ in whether they are introduced at SpecVP or by Appl.
 - RECIPIENTS are those which are entailed by the base verb and introduced at SpecVP
 - BENEFACTIVE RECIPIENTS are those which are *not* entailed by the base verb and are semantically contributed by Appl.
- I will then propose that instances where the non-Theme cannot be realized (i.e. the verb shows transitive properties) it is introduced by Bruening (2020)'s \exists functional head, with the denotation in (4).

$$(4) \llbracket \exists \rrbracket = \lambda f_{\langle e, st \rangle} \lambda e. \exists x. f(e, x)$$

- I base my argument on the properties of RECIPIENTS and BENEFACTIVE RECIPIENTS in the Uto-Aztecan language O'dam. The data collected here is from my own fieldwork.

1 Some background on the O'dam language

- O'dam¹ (Glottocode: sout2976 ISO 639-3: stp) is a Uto-Aztecan language spoken in the Mexican states of Durango, Nayarit and Zacatecas, shown in Figure 1.
- The language is part of the Southern Tepehuan sub-branch of Tepiman. Altogether, the Southern Tepehuan languages have around ~44,000 speakers (INEGI 2020), although the actual vitality is difficult to ascertain, see García Salido and Everdell (2020) and Torres (2018) for further discussion.

¹This language has also been called Southeastern Tepehuan, which I do not use in my work. While that name does not appear to be viewed as derogatory, my consultants prefer the endonym O'dam. For anyone interested, the name *tepehuan* is of Nahuatl origin, *tepe-wan* composed of *tepe-tl* 'mountain' + *-wan* 'owners, dwellers' likely meaning 'mountain dwellers/owners,' referring to where most Tepehuan peoples lived and continue to live.

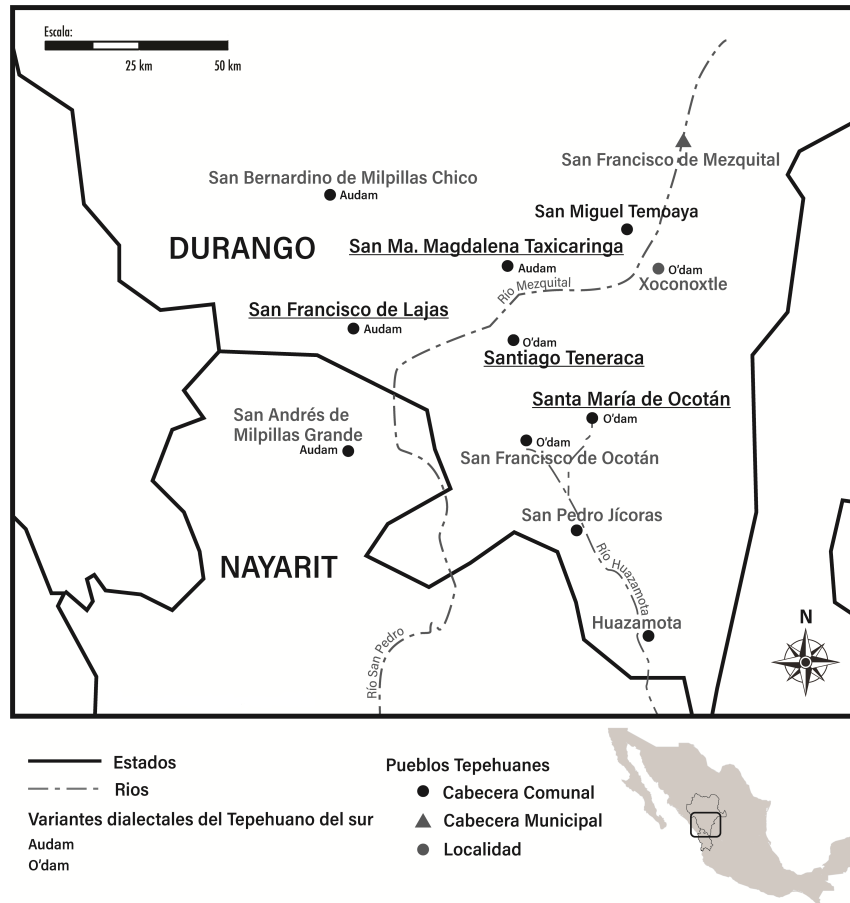


Figure 1: Map of Southern Tepehuan communities (from García Salido and Everdell 2020, modified from Reyes Valdez 2007)

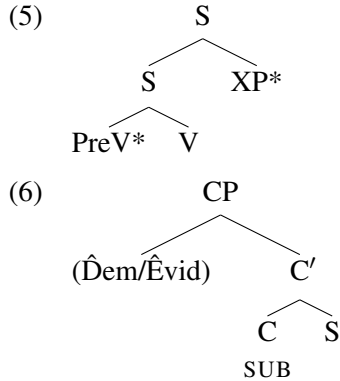
1.1 Some basic features of the O'dam language

- O'dam as a language shows many properties of other highly agglutinating languages and polysynthetic languages. The only obligatory element in a clause is the verb and the relative ordering of larger phrases (DPs, PPs, and CPs) is free, although the internal ordering of those phrases, except CPs, is rigid.
- Those familiar with Ken Hale's work on O'odham (Hale 1992, 2000, 2002; Hale and Keyser 1993, 1997, 2002) will see many syntactic similarities between the two closely related languages.
- The verb is the only obligatory element of a clause.
- Word order is essentially free, although XPs (specifically, DPs, PP, and CPs) must remain continuous). In this sense there is VP constituent containing a verb and any XP dependent.
- DPs lack any sort of case marking, although verbal head-marking shows a nominative-accusative split.
- While there is a reference grammar (Willett 1991) and dictionary (Willett and Willett 2015) of the language,² there is much to be desired in our understanding of the syntax of the language.

²Although both of these focus entirely on the town of Juktir (Santa María de Ocotán) so we are still learning about dialectal variability across different towns.

- That being said, the language has essentially two types of clauses. Main clauses, shown in (5), and Subordinate clauses, shown in (6). The difference between the two is just the CP projection in the subordinate clause. In all other ways they are identical.

– I use the S-node here as a place holder, and the V-node here is really just representative of the verbal word, I frankly have no idea where the TP or IP nodes might be because everything is so free outside of the verbal word.



- I will not get too much into the structure of clauses, although, the Preverbal position essentially consists of elements of the clausal spine (Ramchand and Svenonius 2014), such as various clause level modifiers (e.g. evidentials, clausal negation, topics, etc.), while the postverbal XP position consists of all non-topic XP dependents.
- Subjects and objects are head-marked on the verb using the markers shown in Table 1 and middle marking (reflexive, reciprocal, and middle) is indicated through the prefixes in Table 2.

	Subject free form	Subject suffix	Primary object prefix
1 SG	(a)ñ	-’iñ, -(a)ñ	(ji)ñ-
2 SG	(a)p	-’ap, -(a)p	(ju)m-
3 SG	∅	-∅	∅-
1 PL	(a)ch	-’ich, -(a)ch	(ji)ch-
2 PL	(a)pim	-’(a)pim	jam-
3 PL	am	-’(a)m	ja-

Table 1: Subject and primary object markers

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	(ji)ñ-	(ji)ch-
Non-1st	(ju)m-	(ju)m-

Table 2: Middle markers in O’dam

- Verbs in O’dam are limited to one object marker, which includes middle marking. For ditransitives, the head-marked object is the PRIMARY OBJECT and the non-head marked on is the SECONDARY OBJECT. Because all XPs are optional in the language, secondary objects can lack an overt clausal exponent entirely (although they are still present in the syntax).

- (7) {*Jam/ja*}-*maa*=*čhi-ch* *gu ta~tooxkolh*
 2PL.OBJ/3PL.OBJ-give.PFV=1 PL.SBJ-PFV DET PL~pig
 ‘We gave you.PL pigs’
- (8) *jum-maa*=*mi-t* *gu ta~tooxkolh*
 2PL.OBJ/3PL.OBJ-give.PFV=1 PL.SBJ-PFV DET PL~pig
 ‘Pigs are given out’
 ‘They are given pigs’
 ‘Pigs give’

- Primary and secondary objecthood only refers to the head-marking on the verb, Everdell (2023) shows that their hierarchical relationship is not related to their head-marked status.

2 The Applicatives

- The O’dam language has two applicative suffixes, shown in (9) and (10). Historically speaking, these morphemes were distinct (Langacker 1977) with *-tuda* acting primarily as a causative and *-dha* acting primarily as an applicative.
- In the modern O’dam language, these suffixes are suppletive allomorphs, roots lexically select for the applicative they combine with (Everdell and García Salido 2022; Everdell 2023).

(9) *-dha*

(10) *-tuda*

- The applicatives have three broad functions, where each is conditioned based on the valency of the base verb.

(11) Intransitive > ‘Causative’

miiya’ > *mii-dha’*
 ‘burn.INTR’ ‘make burn’

(12) Transitive >

a. ‘Promotion’

ga’ra’ > *ga’lhi-dha’*
 ‘sell (ag,th)’ ‘sell (ag,th,rec)’

b. ‘Benefactive’

i. Deputative

baissina’ > *baissin-dha’*
 ‘stretch.TR’ ‘stretch s.th. for someone’

ii. Plain

jikpata’ > *jipax-dha’*
 ‘braid (hair)’ ‘braid (hair) for someone’

iii. Recipient

kua’gia’ > *kua’ñ-dha’*
 ‘cut firewood’ ‘cut firewood to give to someone’

(13) Ditransitive > *

makia' > **mak-dha'*
 'give (ag,th,rec) *****

• The applicatives in O'dam have several properties that are important to the analysis here:

1. **Applicativization in unambiguous:** The applicativization of a given root has exactly 1 function
2. **Applicativization is not stackable:**

(14) *miiya'* > *mii-dha'* > **mii-dha-dha'*
 'burn.INTR' 'make burn' *make burn for someone

- (15) a. *daa* 'be sitting'
 b. *daibu* 'sit down'
 c. *daasa* 'sit someone/thing down'
 d. *daax-dha* 'leave something for someone else'

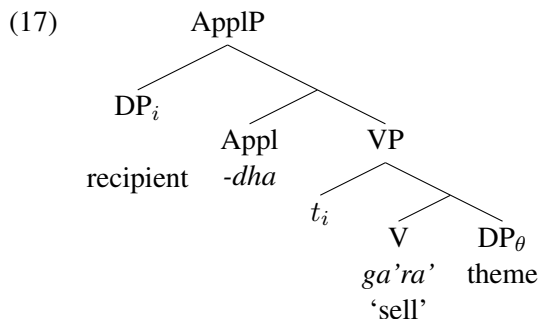
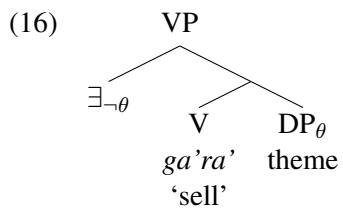
3. **Applicativization must license a new syntactic object:** Note that this contrasts with applicatives in Bantu languages, among others, where applicativization need not introduce a new syntactic argument (Jerro 2021, 2023).

2.1 Use what you've got

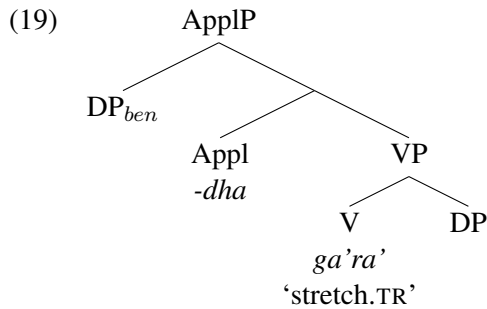
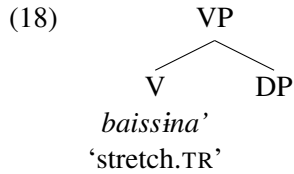
• Everdell (2023) argues that benefactive introduction is an elsewhere function. This is to say, the verbs that gain a beneficiary through applicativization do so because they:

1. Lack a non-licensed semantic participant.
2. Their non-licensed participant is not compatible with the thematic properties of object licensing in O'dam.

• I propose that verbs which undergo object-promotion through applicativization generate their promotable object at SpecVP with the $\exists_{-\theta}$ functional head from Bruening (2020), as in (44). The applicative then licenses that participant as a full DP in SpecAppIP, as in (45).



- In contrast, verbs which do not undergo promotion through applicativization do not generate a participant at SpecVP, as in (18).



- This will do three things for us:
 1. The verbs that generate their object at SpecVP entail that object, regardless of applicativization.
 2. The object generated at SpecVP will have meaning that is idiosyncratic to the verb.
 3. Because the \exists functional head introduces a, for all intents and purposes, normal syntactic object. Any thematic types of participants that *cannot* be licensed by the verbal syntax cannot affect applicativization.

3 The promoted object is entailed and (somewhat) idiosyncratic

- One full verb class that undergoes promotion-to-object from applicativization is verbs of selling. In each case, the base is transitive, with an agent subject and a theme object. The applicative then licenses the recipient/buyer as the new object

(20) *ga'ra'* ‘sell (ag,th) > *ga'lhi-dha'* ‘sell (ag,th,rec)

(21) *afiaru'* ‘sell on credit (ag,th) > *afialh-dha'* ‘sell on credit (ag,th,rec)’

- Crucially, for promotion verbs, the applied object is entailed by the base. For example, the base verb *ga'ra'* ‘sell’ is commonly found in texts in cases where the buyer is implied, and

(22) *Ii ku=ñ moo tu-ga'ra-ra-' gu ka~karbax I'gokcham kat*
 RET SUB=1SG.SBJ doubt DUR-sell-MOV-IRR DET PL~goat Huejuquilla lay.down.INAN
jañ chi ji'k mi'=p ba-tigi-a'
 1SG.SBJ possible some DIR=IT CMP-see-IRR

‘I’m going to go to Huejuquilla to sell goats, I hope I get enough (money) there.’ [Voy a ir a Huejuquilla a vender chivas. Ojalá que obtenga suficiente dinero] (Willett and Willett 2015, 62)

- (23) **Context:** You point to a mountain peak where there is no road to and difficult to access (i.e. there is no chance of someone coming to buy your mezcal)

#Bhammi-ñi ga'ra-'-iñ bix dhi biiñ
 DIST.HIGHER-VIZ sell-IRR-1SG.SBJ all DEM.PROX mezcäl

Intended: I am going to sell all this mezcäl up over there.

- In addition to recipient-like thematic roles, applicativization promotes a range of different types of thematic roles.
- For example, the verb *ixcho* 'hide (inanimate patient)' promotes the person the object is being hidden from, as in (24).
- As with the sell verbs, a hiding event entails that the object is being hidden *from* someone, so that the applied object in (24) is simply licensed by the applicative, it is not newly introduced.

(24) *ixcho* 'hide.INAN' > *ixchoi-dha* 'hide s.th. **from someone**

ixchoi-dha-'-iñ gu biiñ gu=ñ jüikulh na=pai'dhuk koxi-a'
 hide.INAN-APPL-IRR-1SG.SBJ DET mezcäl DET=1SG.POSS uncle SUB=when sleep-IRR
 mi' pi cham ka-jai'ch-ka-'
 DIR MIR NEG PERF-EXIST-ST-IRR SUB=when wake.up-IRR

'I am going to hide the mezcäl **from my uncle** while he sleeps so that it isn't there when he wakes up' [Voy a esconder el mezcäl de mi tío cuando se duerma y cuando se despierte, ya no habrá] (Willett and Willett 2015, 73)

- One notable property of these promotion verbs is that the promoted object necessarily gains an animate entailment. The applied objects mentioned earlier must have an animate referent.

– Note that recipients are classically animate (Beavers 2010)

- This is consequential for locatives, because they are typically adjuncts. The base form of *baabu* 'take out (from under)' takes an agent subject and a theme object. While it entails a source, that source is not a syntactic argument of the verb (Everdell 2023).
- We see in (25b) that the applied object is similar to the source of the base form, but it is obligatorily animate and has possession of the object (see Beavers 2010; Beavers and Nishida 2010 for some suggesting evidence that the possession here is simply an implication from the animacy).³

(25) *baabu* 'take out (from under something)' > *baabui-dha* 'take away (from someone else)'

a. Añ baabu-' gu muñek-ga-'n gu alhii bita'ndir
 1SG.SBJ take.out-IRR DET doll-AL-3SG.POSS DET child under
 na=ñ-pai' bopto'
 SUB=1SG.POSS-where bed

'I'm going to take the child's doll from under the bed'

Speaker comment: You are taking the doll out to help the girl because she can't reach it.'

b. Añ baabui-dha-' gu muñek-ga-'n gu alhii bita'ndir
 1SG.SBJ take.out-APPL-IRR DET doll-AL-3SG.POSS DET child under
 na=ñ-pai' bopto'
 SUB=1SG.POSS-where bed

³Note that while in (25), there is a change from a benefactive to a malefactive reading, both forms are entirely compatible with neutral or the reverse readings.

'I'm going to take the child's doll from under the bed'

Speaker comment: The girl is under the bed and you are taking the doll from

- This animacy entailment is also consequential for instruments because they are a) never promoted, as we see in Table 3 and b) are not compatible with an animate interpretation.

Base verb	Gloss	Introduced beneficiary	Non-promoted participant
<i>bulhia'</i>	'tie, fasten'	Deputative	Instrument
<i>da'biña'</i>	'knead, mix with water'	Deputative	Instrument
<i>kua'gia'</i>	'cut firewood'	Recipient	Instrument
<i>saasbia'</i>	'play music'	Recipient	Instrument
<i>sooma'</i>	'sew'	Deputative	Instrument
<i>suulhga'</i>	'make tortillas'	Deputative	Instrument

Table 3: Verbs that do not have an entailed participant promoted

(26) **Tu-ba'k-ch-im-iñ* [jiñ-tujuan-dam-ki'n]_{PP}

DUR-house-VBLZ-PROG-1SG.SBJ 1SG.POSS-work-NMLZ-with

Intended: I am using my workers to build the house

Speaker comment: it sounds like you are using your workers as the adobe

(27) **Gu magu u'uan gu libro chio'ñ-ki'n*

DET wizard write.PRES DET book man-with

Intended: The wizard makes the man write the book (by controlling him)

- Thus, while many languages have instrument applicatives, the incompatibility of the instrument thematic role with an animate interpretation disallows them from being promoted.
- Instead, such verbs gain a beneficiary through applicativization.
- So we have seen:
 - Objects that are promoted by applicativization are entailed by the verbal root.
 - The thematic properties of the promoted object are idiosyncratic to the verb (i.e. they cannot be severed).
 - Thematic participants that are systematically adjuncts in the language *cannot* be promoted (i.e. no promoting instruments).

4 Discontinuous quantification

- O'dam has essentially one diagnostic for object asymmetry: preverbal quantification.
- Head-marking is restricted to co-referencing 1 object. I do not entirely know the factors governing primary object marking, but crucially, they are pragmatic in nature and primary and secondary objects behave symmetrically in their objecthood properties.
- So for example, the base ditransitive verb *makia'* 'give' can have either its theme or recipient as its primary object and the preverbal quantifier *gok* 'two' can quantify either thematic role, regardless of

which one is the primary object.⁴ Note that nothing changes if there is an overt DP referring to the recipient or theme.

- (28) *Gok ja-maak-iñ*
 two 3PL.PO-give-1SG.SBJ
 ‘I give them to two (people)’
 ‘I give (any ϕ -feature combination) to two (people)’
 ‘I give two (things) to them’
 ‘I give two (things) to (any ϕ -feature combination)’

- Everdell (2023, §4.2.2.3) shows that recipients that are licensed by applicativization (i.e. promoted) behave like the base ditransitive *makia* ‘give.’ We see in (29) that the base form entails a location and that location is promoted to object in the applicativized form in (29b). Importantly, the preverbal quantifier *ji’k* ‘some’ can quantify over either the theme or the licensed recipient.

- (29) a. *jotsa* ‘send (to location)’
 b. *Ji’k pix ja-jotxi-dha-’-iñ* (*gu=ñ* *a’~alh-chuk*)
 some MIR 3PL.PO-send-APPL-IRR-1SG.SBJ DET=1SG.POSS PL~child-POSSD
 (*bhammi Jalisco*)
 DIST.HIGHER Jalisco
 ‘I am going to send my kids to **some (people)** in Jalisco’
 ‘I am going to send **some of my kids** to them in Jalisco’

- In contrast, when applicativization introduces a recipient-beneficiary (i.e. it is not an entailed participant of the base verb), preverbal quantifiers cannot quantify over the introduced beneficiary.

- (30) *ba’k-cha* ‘build house(s)’ > *ba’k-tuda* ‘build house(s) for someone’

Makob ja-ba’k-chuda-’-am *gu ta~karui*
 four 3PL.PO-house-APPL-IRR-3PL.SBJ DET PL~chicken

‘**Four (people)** are going to build coops/a coop for the chickens’
 ‘They are going to build **four coops** for the chickens’
 *They are going to build a coop **for the four chickens**

- (31) *jidhoora* ‘stew.TR’ > *saba’nxi-dha* ‘stew s.th. **for someone**’

Gok ja-jidholh-dha-’-ich *gu ta~tkarui*
 two 3PL.PO-cook.broth-APPL-IRR-1PL.SBJ DET PL~chicken

‘**Two of us** are cooking chickens for people’
 ‘We are cooking **two chickens** for people’
 *We are cooking chickens for **two (other) people**

- Note that this object asymmetry seems to be exclusively a feature of recipient-beneficiaries. Preverbal quantification does not diagnose any kind of asymmetry for other beneficiaries, for example the deputative beneficiary in (32).

- (32) *Bix ja-ua’ñxi-dha-’-iñ* *gu correos ya’ pue’mlo*
 all 3PL.PO-write-APPL-IRR-1SG.SBJ DET letters PROX town
 ‘I am going to write **all of the letters** for them in this town (because they cannot)’
 ‘I am going to write letters for **everyone in this town (because they cannot)**’

⁴Preverbal quantifiers can also quantify subjects.

5 The weirdness of beneficiaries

- Benefactives are a particularly weird type of thematic role in that they are not an actual participant of the event expressed by the verb.

(33) **Deputative:** John opened the door for Mary

(34) **Plain:** John lit a candle for his ancestors

(35) **Recipient:** John baked a cake for Mary

- For all three types of benefactives the actual benefitting part of the clause can be canceled

(36) Robin baked a cake for Sandy

a. Recipient benefactive: [to give it to her]

‘...but she knew Sandy would never come by to pick it up.’

b. Plain benefactive: [to show her she could do it, to amuse her, etc.]

‘...and she knew that Sandy would never know’

c. Deputative benefactive: [so that she wouldn’t have to]

‘...but she knew Sandy was always going to bake one herself’ (van Valin and LaPolla 1997, 384)

- Instead, benefactive roles are essentially motivations for the event.
- Recipient benefactives are particularly odd as thematic roles because they come in with their own entirely separate (prospective) event. Notice in (37) that there are two events e_1 and e_2 linked by, what van Valin and LaPolla (1997) calls a *PURP* operator. Additionally, the x participant is only part of e_1 and the z participant is only part of e_2 .

(37) $\lambda x \lambda y \lambda z \lambda e_1 \lambda e_2 [bake'(e_1) \wedge ag'(e_1, x) \wedge pat'(e_1, y) \dots PURP[have(e_2) \wedge ag'(e_2, z) \wedge th'(e_2, y)]]$

- In contrast, recipients are always essential parts of the event. For *giving* events, the recipient is not cancellable. Beavers (2010) points out that recipients of *sending* events are prospective, meaning they share the cancellability of the benefactive-recipient.

(38) I gave John a package, #but he never got it.

(39) I sent John a package but he never got it.

- However, recipients of *sending* verbs are part of the core event denoted by the verb because they are both the recipient and the goal of the event. In other words, the recipient of a *sending* event is part of both the motion event and the change of possession event.

(40) $\lambda x \lambda y \lambda z \lambda e [give'(e) \wedge ag'(e, x) \wedge th'(e, y) \wedge rec'(e, z)]$

(41) $\lambda x \lambda y \lambda z \lambda e_1 \lambda e_2 [send'(e_1) \wedge ag'(e_1, x) \wedge th'(e_1, y) \wedge goal'(e_1, z) \rightarrow [have'(e_2) ag'(e_2, z) \wedge th'(e_2, y)]]$

- So while beneficiaries and recipients are often conflated, evidence from O’dam suggests that these two semantically distinct roles should not be conflated.
- Interestingly, the distinction between recipients and recipient beneficiaries in the language allows us to probe a bit into the argument structure of verbs with less determinate argument/event structures.

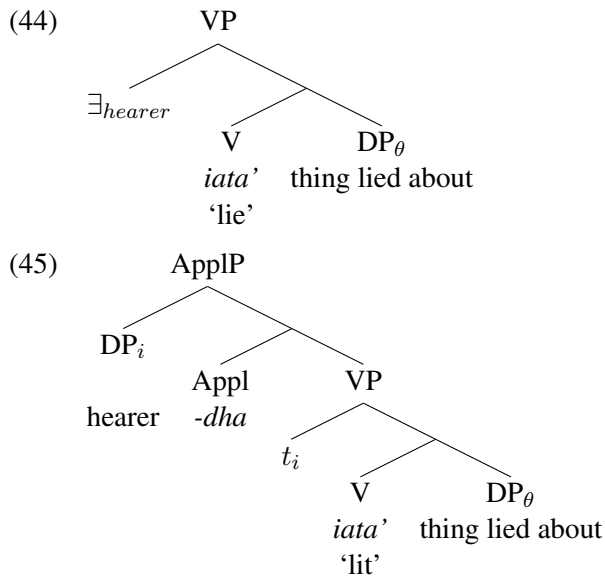
- Verbs of speaking involve an agent (speaker) emitting speech (usually sound). However, I have found no real discussion about whether these verbs entail a goal or recipient for the sound. O'dam suggests that they entail a recipient.
- First we see for *iata* 'lie' that the base verb is transitive and the applicative licensed the hearer as the object, shown in (42).

- (42) a. *Ap mi' ja-iat na gu=ñ ka~kba*
 2SG.SBJ DIR 3PL.PO-lie SUB DET PL~horse
 'You're lying about my horses'
- b. *Añ tii Ø-iatgi dai na=ñi-ch ma'a'n na=r*
 1SG.SBJ INT.NR 3SG.PO-lie-APPL.PFV but SUB=1SG.SBJ-PFV say SUB=COP
silhkam
 true
 'I lied **to him** (poorly), but then I told the truth'

- We then see in (43) that the preverbal quantifier *baik* 'three' can quantify over either the theme (the thing lied about) or the recipient (the hearer) licensed by the verb.

- (43) *Baik tii ja-iatgi-ñi-ch*
 three INT.NR 3PL.PO-lie.PFV-1SG.SBJ-PFV
 'I lied to **three (people)**'
 'I lied to them **about three things**'

- Thus, at least for O'dam, the applicative treats speaking verbs as though they have an implicit hearer (which gets promoted). The applicative does not treat the hearer as if it is a new participant to the event expressed by the base verb (i.e. a beneficiary).



6 Recipients and Benefactive Recipients are different

- To sum up:

- **Recipients**
- Entailed by the base predicate
- Idiosyncratically associated with (di)transitive transfer of possession verbs.
- Generated at SpecVP
 - * Maybe licensed at SpecApplP cross-linguistically, but *not* generated there
- **Benefactive Recipients**
- Not entailed by the base predicate
- Regularly associated with theme-entailing verbs
- Generated and licensed at ApplP.

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