

Quotative Clauses in Telugu¹

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Goal: to examine *ani* (quotative-marked) domains to determine whether they are true exceptions to the ‘single p/n/g-marked verb rule’ or whether they are only apparent exceptions. The ‘single p/n/g-marked verb rule’ is illustrated below in (1). Only the matrix V can show p/n/g features (note that the matrix V is not *obliged* to have overt p/n/g features). This is a well-known across-the-board aspect of Telugu (not limited to Telugu in the Dravidian family). Sentences containing the quotative marker (2) appear to be the exception to this ‘rule.’² The quotative marker *ani* is phonologically identical to the absolutive form of the verb *anu* ‘to say.’

(1) *Sridhar inṭiki veḷḷi/*veḷḷa:ḍu atanu/pro bho:janam tina:ḍu*
sridhar-nom house-dat go-abs/*go-past-3sgm he/pro dinner eat-past-3sgm
‘Sridar went home and ate dinner.’

(2) *Sridhar inṭiki *veḷḷi/veḷḷa:ḍu ani Pallavi ceppindi*
sridhar-nom house-dat *go-abs/go-past-3sgm quot-ptc Pallavi tell-past-3sgf/n
‘Pallavi said “Sridar went home”.’

Characteristics of quotatives

- Marker *ani* be omitted under certain circumstances. These circumstances range from when the matrix verb is *anu* or *anukonu* to a variety of less constrained environments depending upon speaker and dialect. An example from Bossé and Bossé (1990) (p.262, XI-5(2) but parens and glosses mine, French translation theirs) illustrates this (as well as some other properties which we will come back to later).

(3) *ma: celli re:pu pa:ḍata:nu (ani) anto:ndi*
our younger-sister tomorrow sing-fut-1sg quot-ptc say-pres-3sgf/n
ma soeur dit qu’elle chantera demain/ma soeur dit: “je chanterai demain.”
My sister says that she’ll sing tomorrow./My sister says “I’ll sing tomorrow”

Note that a true absolutive participle, in contrast, cannot be omitted, as in the example below.

¹I would like to thank my Telugu consultants for all their valuable input, especially Divya Srikantam. I am also grateful to Concordia University for its Research Support grant.

²So-called correlatives, not identical structurally to the well-known Hindi type, also look like a possible exception but, as I argue in a forthcoming work, turn out not to be for some of the same reasons put forth for the quotative marker here.

(4) *pro oka mu:du ma:talu *(ceppi) Sridhar paḍukonna:ḍu*
 pro one 3 word-pl tell-abs Sridhar sleep-past-3sgm
 ‘After saying just 3 words, Sridhar went to sleep./Sridhar said 3 words and went to sleep.’

- Marker *ani* appears semantically bleached – it no longer has ‘say’ content nor the argument structure that accompanies a ‘say’ predicate. In clauses introduced by an absolutive (or other) participle, the participial V is the predicate of its clause and that clause includes arguments appropriate to that predicate (as can be seen when comparing dative subject to nominative subject cases). The quotative marker appears to have nothing to contribute in the way of argument structure or predication.

(5) *Sridhar ini mi:ni maini mo: ani ceppi (*ceppi ani) pro*
 sridhar-nom eeny meeny miney mo quot. tell-abs (*tell-abs say-abs) pro
inṭiki vell:a:ḍu
 hous-dat go-past-3sg
 ‘After saying eeny...mo, Sridhar went home./Sridhar said eeny...mo and went home.’

In the above example, we would have no explanation for the differing behavior of the sequences *ani ceppi/ceppi ani* if they were both absolutives – either both orders should be licit or else both orders should be out (potentially because of redundancy or argument structure issues).

- Quotative Clause may be postposed to position following matrix verb – this is subject to considerable dialect and age variation. Some consultants routinely displace the quotative material to final position. This is unpredicted in a language which is very strictly V-final.
- It has been noted in the literature that indirect speech and clauses introduced by complementizers (‘whether/if/etc’) are ungrammatical with Force elements such as interrogative and imperative markers (see Rizzi 1997, for example, for matrix CP elements).

(6) Susy told the dog that he should go home./*Susy told the dog that “Go home!”/Susy told the dog “Go home!”

ani clauses do not display such constraints, including those that are interpreted as indirect speech as the examples below indicate – one of an imperative and one of an interrogative.³ Example (8) is Krishnamurti and Gwynn’s (1985:364 ex 4(b))

(7) *ne:nu Raviki inṭiki vellu (ani) ceppa:vu*
 1sg-nom Ravi-dat house-dat go-imp quot-ptc tell-past-2sg
 ‘I told Ravi ‘Go home!’/I told Ravi to go home.’

³Special forms of the imperative, with an -m- from a historic imperative singular (Krishnamurti and Gwynn 1985), may be used specifically with *ani*, not included here.

(8) *ne:nu nuvvu re:pu vasta:va: ani adiga:nu*
 1st-nom 2sg-nom tomorrow come-fut-2sg-interrog quot. ask-past-1sg
 ‘I asked “Will you come tomorrow?”/I asked if you would come tomorrow.’

- Quoted material itself is neither affected by nor does it affect grammaticality of string as whole. For the purposes of the syntax, quoted material (not limited, necessarily, to material introduced by a quotative marker or similar) is opaque to the syntax. Direct/quoted speech may range from nonsense words, to onomatopoeic sounds, to word salad – it is entirely outside any domain of grammaticality. (See Aikenwald & Dixon 2011 and citations therein for comparable cross-linguistic data and the many similarities with Vedic Sanskrit *iti* clauses.).⁴

(9) *Nenu i:ni mi:ni maini mo:/telugu ist franse ani tfeppa:nu*
 1sg-nom eeny meeny miney mo/Telugu ist francais quot. say-past-1sg
 ‘I said (*that) “eeny meeny miney mo/Telugu ist francais”

- The Quotative ‘clause’ appears to satisfy the argument requirements of the matrix V (a verb of speaking, thinking, believing, etc.). This suggests that it is dominated by either D/N or C categorial features. Multiple NP/DP objects are ungrammatical, including when one of those is an *ani* clause, as below.

(10) **Sridhar Pallaviki mu:du ma:talu oka katha ceppa:du*
 Sridhar Pallavi-dat 3 word-pl one story tell-past-3sgm
 ‘Sridhar said [3 words] [a story] to Pallavi.’

(11) **Sridhar Pallaviki mu:du ma:talu nuvvu infiki vell:a:li ani*
 Sridhar Pallavi-dat 3 word-pl you-sg house-dat go-oblig quot-ptc
ceppa:du
 tell-past-3sgm
 ‘Sridhar said ‘you should go home’ three words to Pallavi.’

- While quotative domains are said to allow some cases of indirect speech, not just direct/quoted speech, this matter remains unclear for several reasons. Example (3) illustrates the most frequent case where the quotative domain is translated as representing either direct or indirect. (In (3), that is ‘My sister said that she will sing tomorrow/My sister said “I will sing tomorrow.”).
- Most surprisingly, the quotative domain allows featural mismatch between subject and p/n/g on a verb (specifically between the 1st and 3rd persons). The first example below is what is predicted. Only a direct speech interpretation is possible. The optional brackets around ‘Sridhar’ are used to indicate that the position of Sridhar may precede or follow the quotative clause.

⁴This and other properties make quoted material completely different from parentheticals. Unlike quoted material, parentheticals cannot fill argument positions and, moreover, have the same internal grammaticality requirements as regular clauses which, when violated induce ungrammaticality for the string as a whole.

- (12) (Sridhar) *ne:nu inʃiki veʃʃta:nu ani (Sridhar) ceppa:du*
 sridhar-nom I house-dat go-fut-1sg quot-ptc Sridhar-nom tell-past-3sgm
 ‘Sridhar said “I’ll go home.”’

In Example (13), a third singular pronominal form, lacking deixis, is combined with the first singular p/n/g on the verb. This is interpreted as indirect speech only.

- (13) (Sridhar) *tanu inʃiki veʃʃta:nu ani (Sridhar) ceppa:du*
 sridhar-nom 3rdsgm/f house-dat go-fut-1sg quot-ptc sridhar-nom tell-past-3sgm
 ‘Sridhar said he would go home.’

Note that the pronominal form ‘tanu’ is ungrammatical in a non-quotative clause with 1st person agreement on the verb. (Use of ‘tanu’ in place of other 3rd person pronominals is common.)

- (14) *tanu inʃiki *veʃʃta:nu/veʃʃta:du*
 he/she house-dat go-fut-1sg
 he/she/I will go home.

The final option with a 1st person marking on the verb is *pro* as subject. This format may be interpreted as either direct or indirect speech.

- (15) *pro inʃiki veʃʃta:nu ani Sridhar ceppa:du*
 pro house-dat go-fut-1sg quot-ptc Sridhar tell-past-3sgm
 ‘Sridhar said he would go home.’

Analysis

A number of these characteristics can be productively grouped together under a single explanation. For example:

- If the function of the quotative marker is to introduce a domain that is *opaque* to the derivation, then we have an explanation for the acceptability not only of ungrammatical strings but of non-linguistic material. For convenience, we can label this the ‘Quot domain’ (QuotP) with *ani* as its head.⁵
- Assuming the above, we cannot treat an agreement mismatch or other apparent grammatical violation within the QuotP as anomalous because it does not, in some sense, occupy any position in the syntactic structure/derivation.
- Following up on this, we need an explanation for the QuotP’s ability to satisfy the argument structure/categorial requirements of the matrix predicate. Here, it is worthwhile noting several commonly found properties of quoted material

⁵Partee (1973) proposed something similar to the extent that she treated the quoted material as a completely separate entity/sentence, although for purposes of a particular semantic analysis.

- There are cases, like English and French, where the quoted material must be ‘bare’ – no quotative particle or other introductory element.
- The term ‘quoted material’ (or ‘direct speech’) turns out to describe just one type of material that occupies an ‘opaque’ domain. Virtually any content Lexical Item (LI) seems to be able to host an opaque domain – adjectives, nouns, etc – without any connection to a direct speech event. The opaque domain may include visual stimuli as well as non-linguistic auditory stimuli. Note that these domains fulfill the categorial requirements in each of the following sentences and so must be associated in some way with the relevant syntactic category features.

(16) I saw [Eeh What’s Up Doc] crossing the street.

(17) The (furious finger tapping) lady waited on me again today.

(18) Do you want to drive the Beep! Beep! car?

Given this, I propose that the Telugu case is just one of a number of parallel structures where there is a null lexical head (N, Adj, etc.) that takes the opaque domain (QuotP in this case) as its complement. Only this combination will allow the categorial requirements to be satisfied.

- It seems likely that the step of grammaticalization will involve only a difference in a few features. We would, therefore, expect the new, functional LI to behave in most ways like its ‘original’ counterpart because most of its features have likely stayed the same. What you might expect morphologically/phonologically in this case is that the form is no longer derived but is stored as a single morpheme. (The morphology on participles is transparent and productive.)
- There are many cases of this type, where the LI acts, in some sense, just like the ‘original’ unchanged counterpart from a surface syntactic point of view. English expletive negation illustrates a case where all the features of NEG remain except the actual negation semantics. Syntactically, it is still acting like negation but it has become semantically vacuous (or significantly different, at least).

(19) And so didn’t he go and walk down those stairs anyway?

There is no negative interpretation of the above string (nor interrogative, as it happens). It is infelicitous to answer ‘Yes/No’ and the correct interpretation is affirmative – he walked down the stairs.

- In the case of *ani*, we have noted that indirect speech interpretations are often offered. At the same time, however, we note that there are significant syntactic constraints on indirect speech (complement clauses) that are not present with direct speech. Telugu *ani* behaves very much like English expletive negatives. The *syntax* of *ani* is completely that of a marker of direct/quoted speech (of an opaque domain) but the *semantics* ranges over both direct and indirect interpretations.

Conclusion

This more in-depth exploration of the quotative marker and its domain reveals that we should view material marked by the quotative particle as 'outside' the domain of the sentence, for syntactic purposes. Assuming the analysis of a null lexical head with a QuotP as its complement, the quotative clauses just collapse with other NP/DP arguments rather than representing an additional clause. As such, the unexpected presence of p/n/g agreement on predicates within the quotative phrase does not constitute an exception to the 'single p/n/g-marked verb rule'.

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