

# Light verb fronting phenomenon in Bangla Compound verbs

Presentation by:

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# Roadmap

- Introduction to Bangla compound verbs
- Existing literature on Hindi compound verbs within HPSG
- Bangla compound verbs as verbal clusters
- Possible reverse constructions of Bangla compound verbs with light verbs [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ and [jawa] meaning ‘to go’
- Light verb fronting phenomenon with such constructions
- VP complement formation with semantically opaque N+ MV constructions as well as transparent constructions
- VP embedded constructions
- head movement constructions
- Pragmatically nuanced constructions

# Introduction

- “Linguistic area” popularized by M.B. Emeneau (1956) was conceptualized as “an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not belonging to other members of (at least) one of the families.”
- The four different language families in India including Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman have several linguistic traits in common. Some of these features are the SOV word order, retroflex sounds, echo formations, explicator compound verbs among others (Abbi 1991).
- Compound verb constructions within Indo-Aryan languages are a form of complex predicate (Butt 1995, 2003, 2010); Verma (1993); Paul (2003) which are constructions that are primarily multi-headed.
- These constructions project an argument structure as a monoclausal unit (Butt, 1995). In Bangla, the compound verbs consist of a polar verb or main verb which is responsible for putting forth the event information along with bringing in the predicative elements (the argument structure).

1. mošaTa      ure      gelo  
mosquito-CL fly-CP go-3P-Pst  
The mosquito flew away.

2. buro lokTa morte bošeche.

old man-CL die-inf sit-3P-Prst

The old man is about to die.

(Paul, 2003: 1)

- Paul (2003) advocates that the unification of the polar and light verb is promulgated by the semantic principle of compounding where the semantic content of the light verb structure shares with at least a part of the content of the polar verb and that the unification has to meet the selectional requirements on semantic grounds to form compound verbs.
- One key feature to note in these constructions is a semantic compatibility between the polar verb and the vector verb (Paul, 2003; Poornima 2012). The compound verb constructions do not need to completely saturate the subcategorization frame of the light verb where the aspectual compound verbs have their arguments brought into the construction by the polar verb. The compound verb is a lexical variant of the main verb.
- Butt and Lahiri (2013) note that light verbs enter into a co-predicational domain with the main verb. The main verb and the light verb come together to function as the predicate of the clause and consider a single subject and object.

## Existing Literature

- Poornima and Koenig (2009) and Poornima (2012) posit an analysis of Hindi compound verbs and reverse compound verbs within HPSG.
- The V-V sequences may be ambiguous between complex predicate and embedded adverbial structure or serial verbs.
- Standard and reverse compound verbs in Hindi are monoclausal and comprise of a verbal complex which does not include the arguments of the main verb. In their analysis, Poornima and Koenig (2009) posit an analysis of Hindi complex predicates.
- While the Hindi compound verbs are undertaken as a verbal cluster constituent consisting of the light verb as a head, the reverse compound verbs in Hindi appear to have the main verb as its head owing to the agreement and case assignment patterns. The reverse compound verbs in Hindi are also noted to not allow separation by inserting any element between the polar verb and vector verb Poornima and Koenig (2009).

3. Ram Vishu ke kadamo pe **gir** **gaya**. [Hindi compound verb]

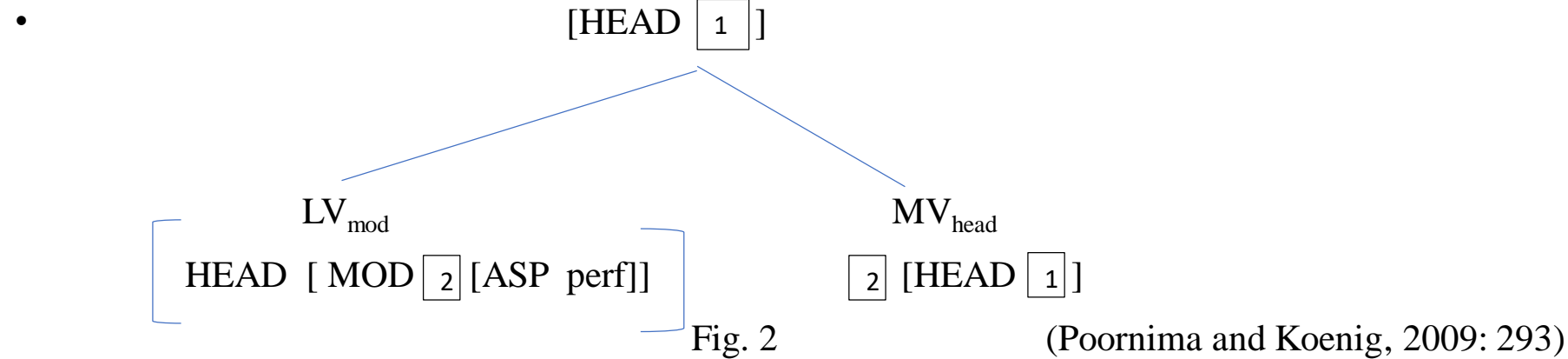
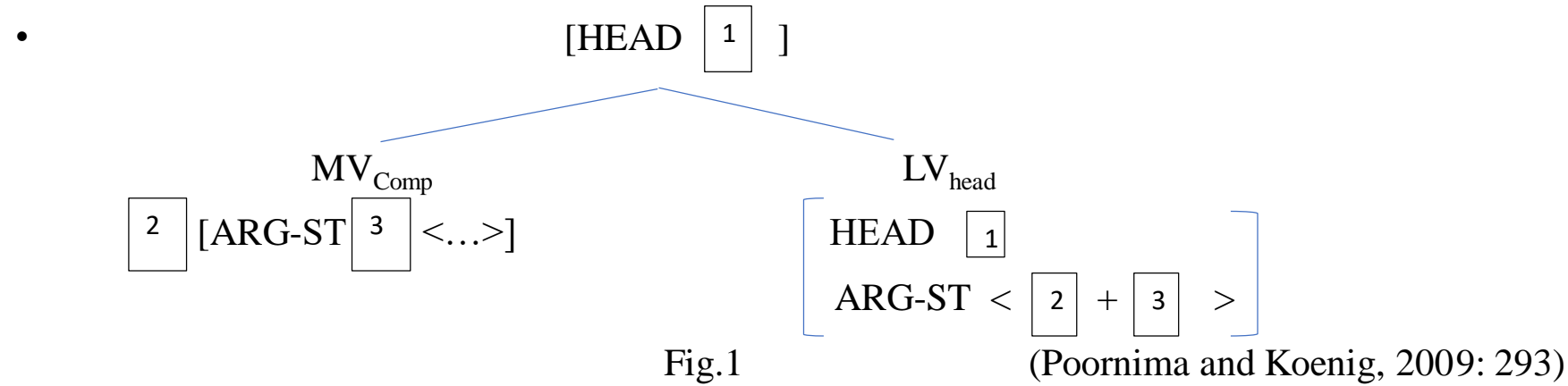
Ram-3P-M Vishu Acc feet-Pl Loc fall go-3P-M-Pst

Ram fell at Vishu's feet.

4. Ram Vishu ke kadamo pe **ja gira**. [Hindi reverse compound verb]

Ram-3P-M Vishu Acc feet Loc fall go-3P-M-Pst

Ram fell at Vishu's feet.



## Bangla compound verbs and their reverse constructions

- Basu and Wilbur (2010) show that the Bangla compound verbs function as verbal clusters in comparison to Serial verb constructions with respect to syntactic tests like intervening object NPs, intervening adverbs, intervening inflections, intervention and scope of negation and question formation.

- amar      mon      **gelo**      **bhenge** ,      joRa      lagano      gelo      na.  
1Sg-gen   heart   go-Pst   break-CP   attach-VN   put-VN   go-Pst   neg

My heart was broken, [and] it could not be put together. (David, 2015: 272)

- S. Mahapatra (2024) notes that the compound verbs may be reversed, forming VP complements

5. Mohini      Akaš      ke      **chimTi**      **keTe**      **dilo**.      [Bangla compound verb]

Mohini      Akash      Acc      pinch-N      cut-CP      give-PST

Mohini      pinched      Akash.

6. Mohini      Akaš      ke      **dilo**      **chimTi**      **keTe**. [Reverse construction of Bangla CV]

Mohini      Akash      Acc      give-PST      pinch-N      give-CP

Mohini      pinched      Akash.

- Constituency Tests for Bangla Compound verbs

7. Ram Akash ke guli **mere dilo** .

Ram-Nom Akash Acc bullet hit-CP give-PST

Ram shot a bullet at Akash.

8. Akash ke Ram guli **mere dilo**.

Akash Acc Ram-Nom bullet hit-CP give-PST

Ram shot a bullet at Akash.

9. a. \*Akash ke guli mere Ram dilo.

b. \*Ram mere Akash ke guli dilo.



10. Akash ke guli Ram hoTat kore mere dilo.

Akash Acc bullet Ram-Nom suddenly kill-CP give-PST

Ram shot a bullet at Akash suddenly.

11. \*Jodu Ravi ke mach kine aar diye dilo.

Jodu-Nom Ravi Acc fish buy-CP and give-CP give-PST

Jodu bought and gave a fish to Ravi. (Intended)

12. Trishna Ravi ke hoTat kore t<sup>h</sup>appoṭ mere dilo.

Trishna-Nom Ravi Acc suddenly slap hit-CP give-PST

Trishna slapped Ravi suddenly.

13. Trishna Ravi ke t<sup>h</sup>appoṭ hoTat kore mere dilo.

Trishna-Nom Ravi-Acc slap suddenly hit-CP give-PST

Trishna slapped Ravi suddenly.

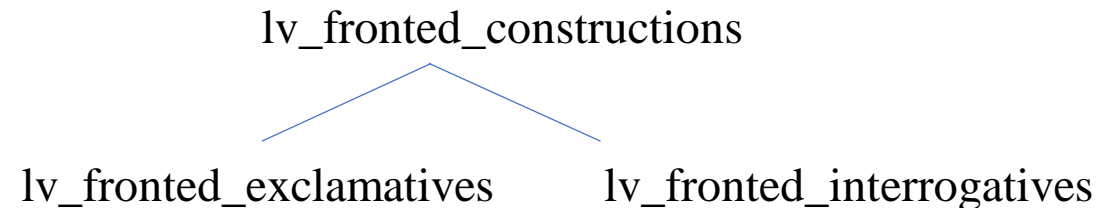
14. \*Trishna Ravi ke t<sup>h</sup>appoṭ mere hoTatkore dilo

Trishna-Nom Ravi Acc slap hit-CP suddenly give-PST

- **Light Verb Fronting Phenomenon**

- Paul (2003) situates around 16 light verbs in Bangla compound verbs formation, amongst which very few light verbs undergo reversal of these constructions.
- While [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ and [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ appear to be most illustrious in terms of reverse construction of Bangla compound verbs, not all the light verbs in Bangla allow such reversal and light-verb fronting phenomenon. Both these verbs are driven by directional semantics and signal underlying pragmatic nuances.
- [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ as a light verb associates notions of “other- benefaction” and imply agentivity. Reverse constructions with these verbs thus bring attention to the directed action of an event which renders such marked interpretations.
- [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ may appear with transitive main verbs that describe a change of state or location or unaccusative main verbs (e.g. [poRe] meaning ‘fall’ or [bhenge] meaning ‘to break’).
- These reverse constructions attribute pragmatic nuances that express blame, frustration, anger, and intentionality. These pragmatic contexts appear on the part of the speaker for the subject. The pragmatic-rel undertakes all these context-dependent pragmatic notions, which are encoded within the feature background (bgrnd).

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## SHIFT IN SEMANTICS

- Abbi and Gopalkrishnan (1991) propose distinct categories of semantic differentiations in their typological study of light verbs across India.
- The three categories are the aspectual category which notes the perfective aspect or the completive action; attitudinal category demarcating attitudes like ‘regret’ through light verbs like [bosha] meaning ‘to sit’ and adverbial category which show how the action is done- easily, suddenly, violently.
- While the light verbs [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ and [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ generally demarcate the aspectual notions in Bangla compound verbs, the light verb fronted constructions show the shift in prominence to the adverbial category in addition to the aspectual category.
- Tinku        kaaj        korlo  
Tinku-Nom work    do-Pst  
Tinku    did   the   work.
- Tinku        kaaj        kore    dilo.  
Tinku-Nom work    do-CP   do-Pst  
Tinku    did   the   work. (completive)
- dilo        Tinku        sob   kaaj   kore!  
give-Pst Tinku-Nom all    work do-CP  
Tinku    did   all the   work!

15. rupa            sobar        samne        **heche**    **dilo.**

Rupa-3P-Sg everyone-Gen in front sneeze-CP give-3P-Pst

Rupa sneezed in front of everyone.

16. **dilo**            rupa        sobar        samne            **heche!**        [exclamative/unintentional - blame]

Give-3P-Pst Rupa everyone-Gen in front sneeze-CP

Rupa sneezed in front of everyone.

17. meyeTa    nodite    **dube**            **gelo.**

girl-Cl    river-Loc drown-CP go-Pst

The girl drowned in the river.

18. **gelo**        meyeTa    nodite    **dube!**            [exclamative/suddenness]

go-3P-Pst girl-CL river-Loc drown-CP

The girl drowned in the river!

19. ora        kaaj        **kore**    **p<sup>h</sup>elbe.**

They-3P work do-CP fall-Fut

They will finish the work.

20. \***p<sup>h</sup>elbe**    ora    kaaj    **kore!**

do-Fut They work do-CP

They will finish the work!            [Intended]

21. **dilo** to Mohima sob misTi p<sup>h</sup>ele? [interrogative]

Give-3P-pst EMP Mahima all-Adj sweet-N drop-CP

Mahima dropped all the sweets?

- Constituency Test for the VP complement upon light verb fronting

22. **dilo** nib<sup>h</sup>a mita ke **chimTi keTe!**

Give-3P-Pst Nibha Mita Acc pinch-N cut-CP

Nibha pinched Mita!

23. **dilo** mita ke nib<sup>h</sup>a **chimTi keTe!**

Give-3P-Pst Mita Acc Nibha pinch-N cut-CP

Nibha pinched Mita!

24. **dilo** **chimTi keTe** nib<sup>h</sup>a mita ke!

Give-3P-Pst pinch-N cut-CP Nibha Mita Acc

Nibha pinched Mita!

25. \***dilo** chimTi nib<sup>h</sup>a mita ke keTe

Give-3P-Pst pinch Nibha Mita Acc cut-CP

Nibha pinched Mita! [Intended]

26. \***dilo** nib<sup>h</sup>a chimTi mita ke keTe!

give-3P-Pst Nibha pinch-N Mita Acc cut-CP

Nibha pinched Mita. [Intended]

27. \*dilo nitin promila ke guli mere aar kore.

Dilo-3P-Pst Nitin Promila Acc bullet hit-CP CONJ give-CP

Nitin shot a bullet at Promila. [Intended]

28. dilo rajib pinki ke hoTatkore **d<sup>h</sup>akka mere!**

Give-3P-Pst Rajiv Pinky Acc suddenly-Adv push-N hit-CP

Rajiv suddenly pushed Pinky!

29. ?dilo rajib pinki ke d<sup>h</sup>akka **hoTatkore** mere!

Give-3P-Pst Rajiv Pinky Acc push-N suddenly-Adv hit-CP

Rajiv suddenly pushed Pinky! [Intended]

30. **debe na** to ora pinkir kaaj kore?

Give-fut NEG Emp 3P-Pl-Pron Pinky-Gen work do-CP

They will not do Pinky's work, right?

31. dilo pinki ke choRTa akash mere!

give-Fut Pinky Acc slap-Cl Akash-Nom mere-CP

Akash slapped Pinky!

## SEMANTICALLY TRANSPARENT MV FORMING VP COMPLEMENT

32. dilo angshuman glas bhenge!

give-Pst angshuman glass break-CP

Angshuman broke the glass!

33. ? dilo glas angshuman bhenge!

give-Pst glass angshuman break-CP

Angshuman broke the glass!

34. ??dilo angshuman glas bhul-kore bhenge!

give-Pst angshuman glass by mistake break-CP

Angshuman broke the glass by mistake!

35. dilo angshuman bhul-kore glas bhenge!

give-Pst angshuman mistake-do-CP glass break-CP

Angshuman broke the glass by mistake!

36. dilo angshuman glas chuRe aar baTi bhenge!

give-Pst angshuman glass throw-CP CONJ bowl break-CP

Angshuman threw the glass and broke the bowl!

## DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE READING

- Simpson and Biswas (2016) show that in addition to the frequently analysed bare classifier noun phrases, definite noun phrases in Bangla can also be represented through bare nouns without classifier. The latter has not attracted careful study in the literature.
- ekTa    chabi  
one-Cl   key  
a   key/ one key
- chabi-Ta  
key-Cl  
the   key
- chabi  
key  
a   key, keys, or the key
- In Bangla, thus far, Simpson and Biswas's account is one of the few till now dealing with the alternations between bare classifier and definite bare noun forms, which establishes the conditions under which these patterns occur, and speakers of Bangla, when asked, the authors note, are themselves frequently unclear about why they select one or the other pattern to refer to definite entities.



- Uniqueness and identifiability play a role in the use of bare classifier and bare noun patterns. The selection of which form is used relates to the level of activation of the referent in the minds of the participants in the discourse.
- “Situational uniques” often make use of a bare noun pattern (Simpson and Biswas, 2016). In the situational uniques, the speaker and hearer are aware of the unique referent of a certain type in the particular situation which is not licensed by a particular linguistic link or visibility/pointing (where bare classifier pattern will occur).
- With a bare noun occurring, uniqueness and identifiability are key notions of consideration. With the bare nouns in situational uniques, indeed, only one referent of the type presented in the situation is there.

## ARGUMENT STRUCTURE POSSIBILITIES

37. Jon            kobita        porlo.

John-Nom poem-N read-Pst

John read a poem.

38. \*jon            akash    ke    kobita    porlo.

John-Nom Akash Acc poem-N read-Pst

John read a poem to Akash. [Intended]

39. jon            akash    ke    kobita    poRe    dilo.

John-Nom Akash Dat poem-N read-CP give-Pst

John read a poem to Akash.

40. jon            akash    ke    shei    kothaTa    bol-lo.

John-Nom Akash Dat that thing-Cl tell-Pst

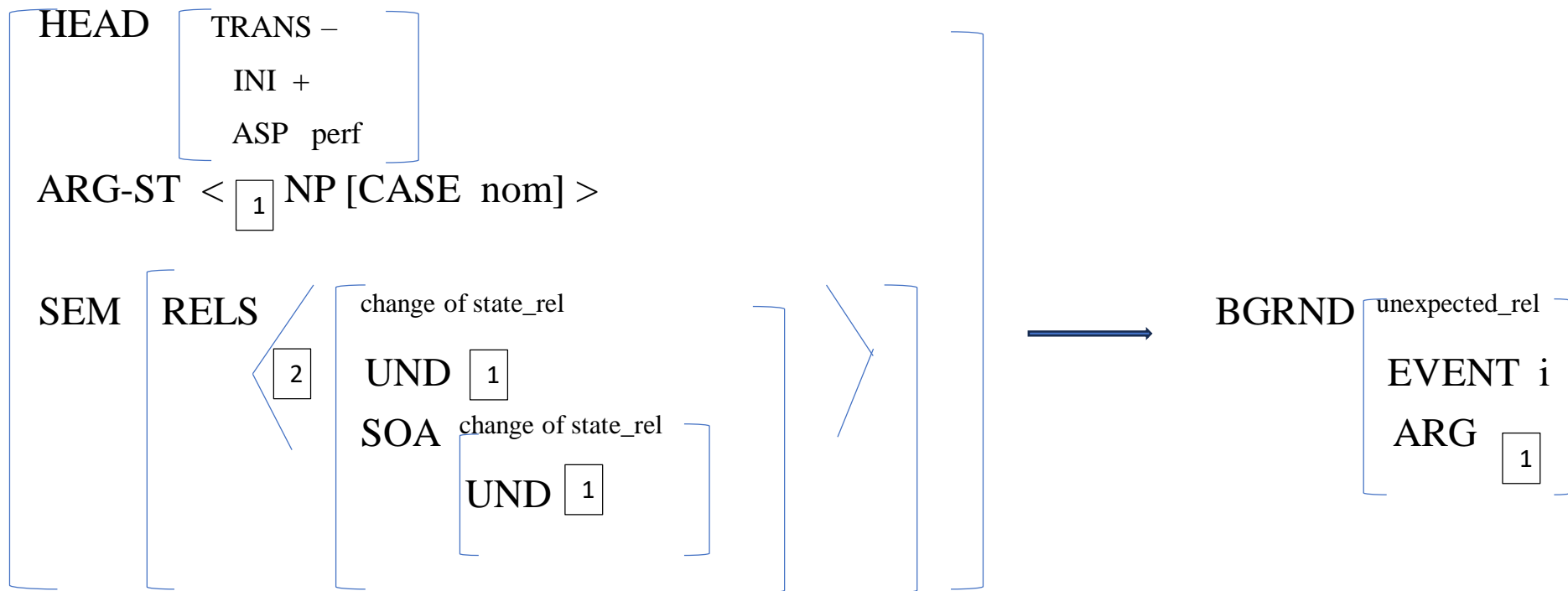
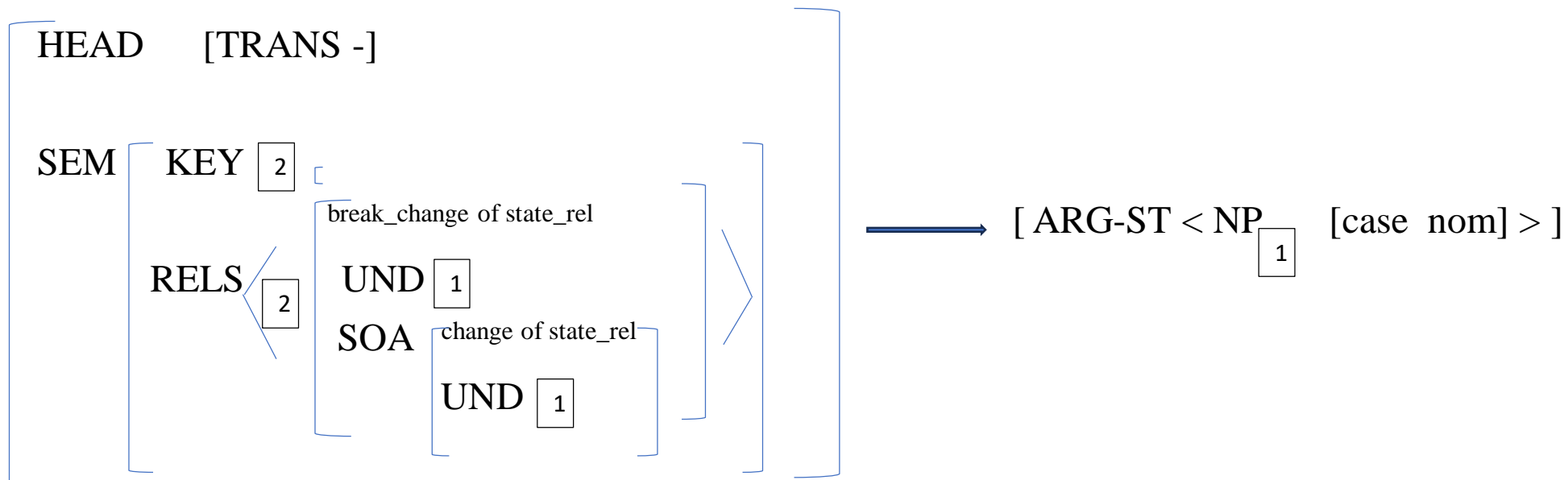
John told Akash about that thing.

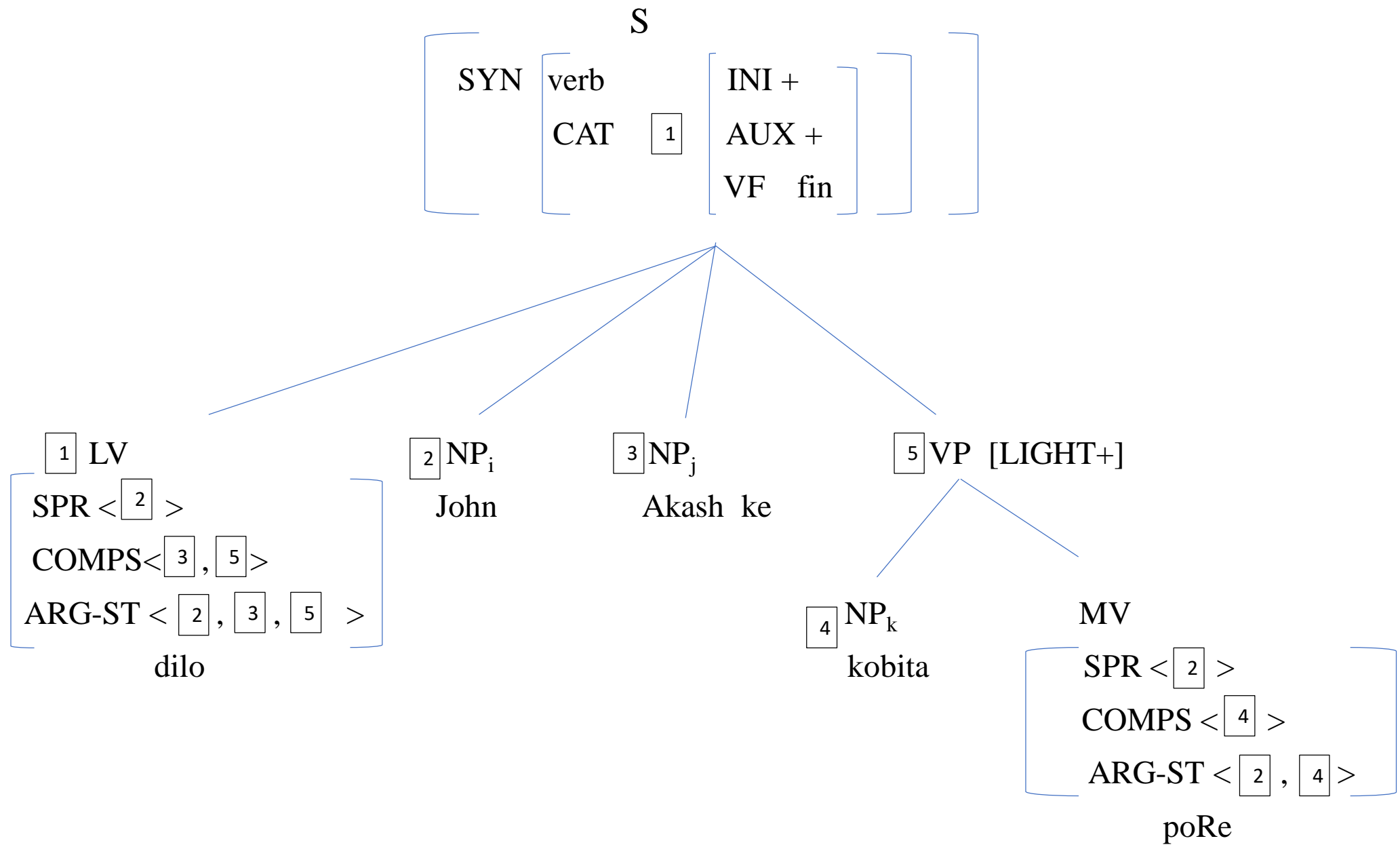
41. jon            akash    ke    shei    kothaTa        bole    dilo.  
john-Nom Akash    Dat    that    thing-Cl        tell-CP give-Fut  
John   told   Akash   about   that   thing.

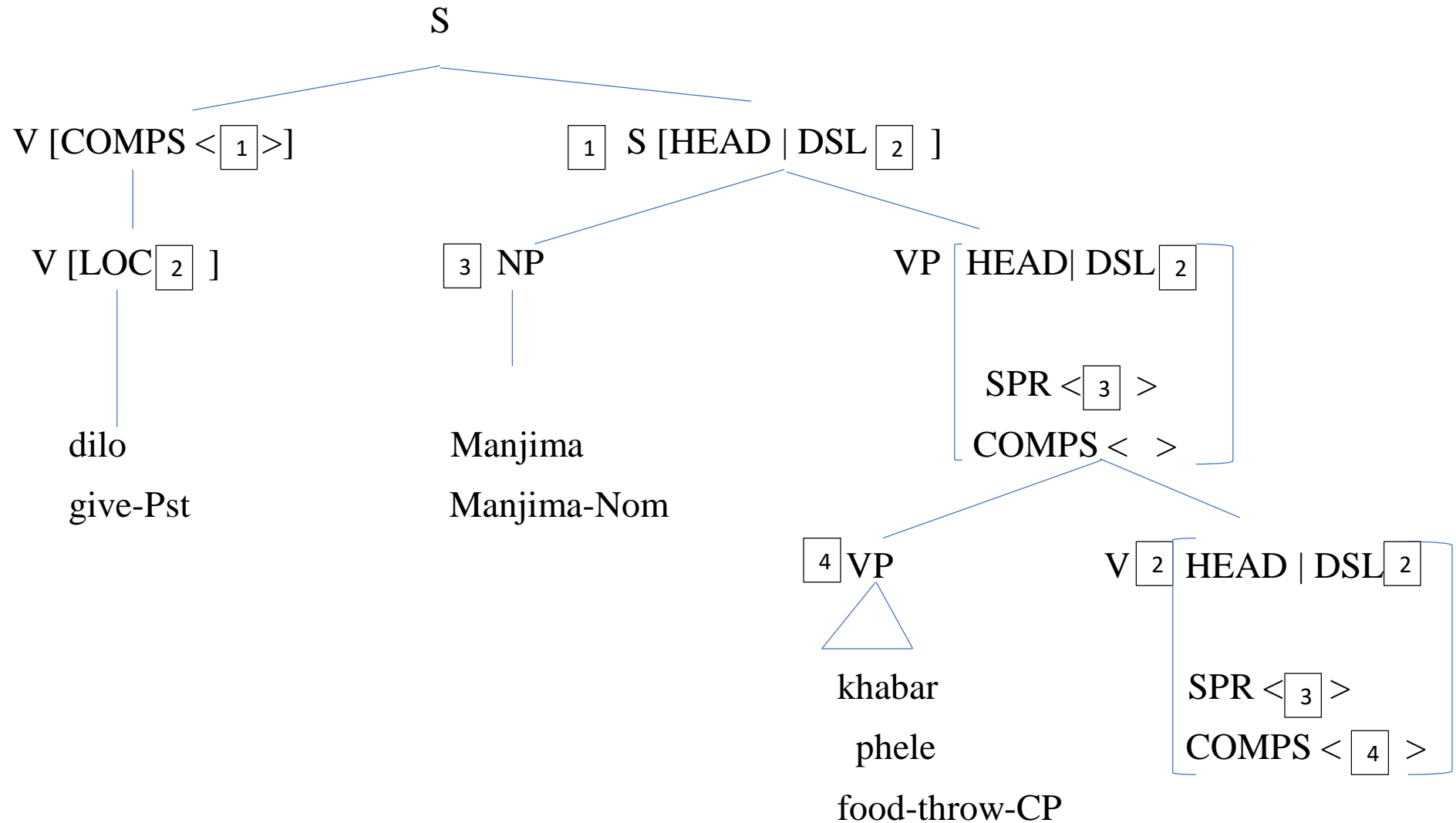
42.dilo        jon            akash    ke    shei    kothaTa        bole!  
give-Pst John-Nom Akash    Dat    that    thing-Cl        tell-CP  
John   told   Akash   about   that   thing.

## DIFFERENCES NOTED FOR TRANSITIVE MAIN VERB AND UNACCUSATIVE MAIN VERBS

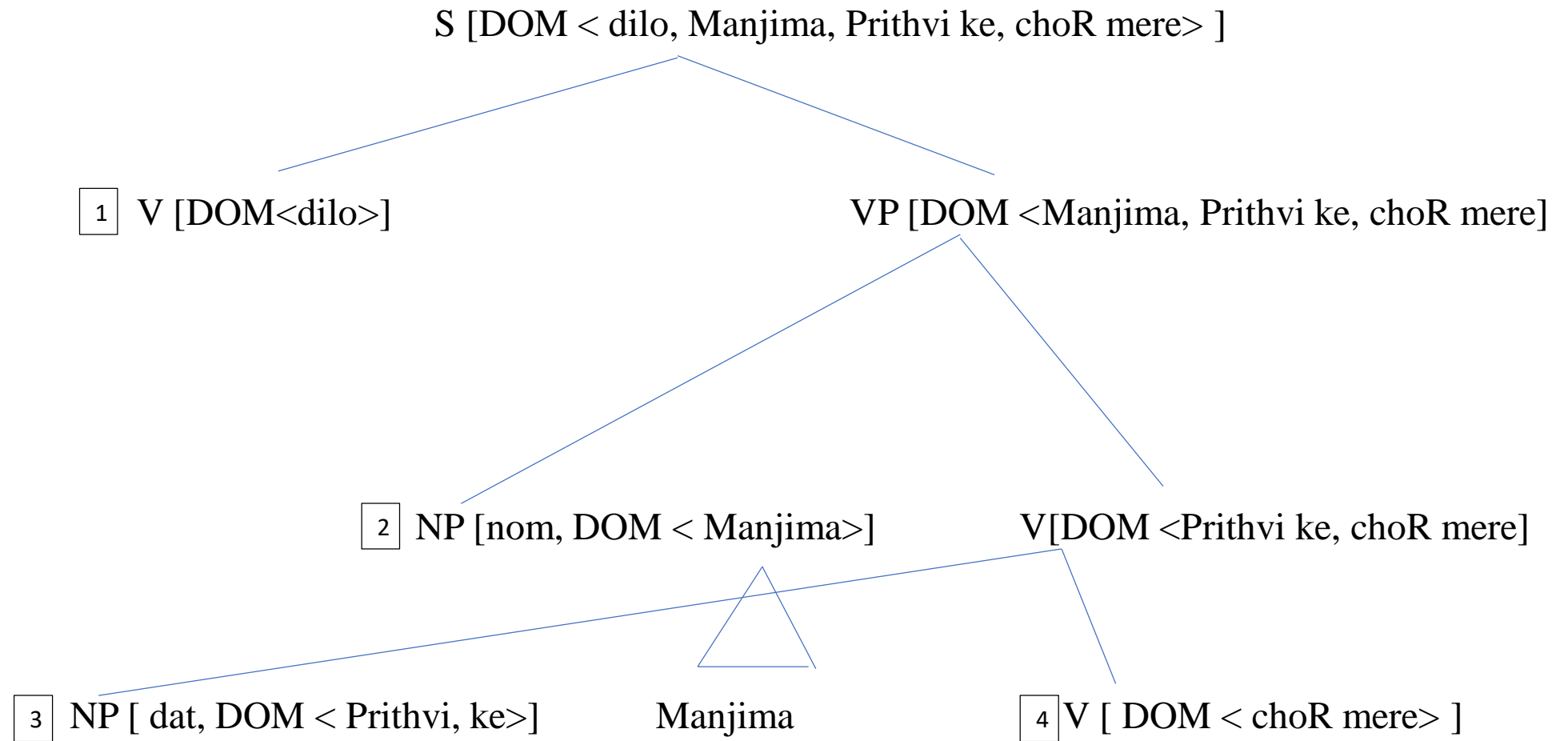
- tak theke poRe glasTa bhenge gelo. (Paul, 2004: 5)  
shelf from fall-CP glass-Cl break-CP go-Pst  
The glass fell off the shelf and broke.
- ami toma-ke kobe theke bole jachchi. (Basu and Wilbur, 2010: 15)  
I-Nom you-Dat when from say-CP go-be-Prst  
I have been telling you for a long time.  
Telic or atelic : endpoint → + or –  
inceptive → -
- jon akash ke shei kothaTa bole dilo.  
john-Nom Akash Acc that thing-Cl tell-CP give-Fut  
John told Akash about that thing.
- Telic : endpoint → + or -  
inceptive → -
- jon glasTa bhenge dilo.  
John-Nom glass-Cl break-CP give-Pst  
John broke the glass.







Following Müller (2021) on English auxiliaries and German discontinuous constituents, we find the above a possibility for Bangla light verb fronted constructions.



- dilo                      Prithvi    ke    Manjima                      choR                      mere  
          give-Pst            Prithvi    dat    Manjima-Nom    slap-N                      hit-CP  
          Manjima    slapped    Prithvi.



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Thank You