

Serial Verbs and the VP shell in Vurës (Vanuatu)

Bill Palmer, University of Newcastle

Daniel Krauß, Goethe University Frankfurt, University of Newcastle

Catriona Malau, University of Newcastle



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



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Serial verb construction (SVC)

- Descriptive term.
- Two or more verbs in succession acting together as a single predicate.
- All verbs in an SVC must be able to occur independently in predicate position.
- In languages with TAMP marking, all verbs share same TAMP (marked once or continuously).
- Key literature:
 - Foley & Olson (1985) propose a distinction between core-layer and nuclear-layer serialization
 - Durie (1997) lists several criteria for an SVC
 - Aikhenvald (2006, 2018) defines SVCs based on her criteria and presents a typology of SVCs
 - Baker & Harvey (2010) present an account of SVCs as complex predicates using LCS
 - Cleary-Kemp (2015) applies the VP shell to SVCs in the Oceanic language Koro
 - Haspelmath (2016) criticises Aikhenvald's criteria of SVCs and provides his own definition
 - Hopperdietzel (2020) applies the VP shell to resultative serial verbs in two Oceanic languages
 - Krauß (2021) compares SVCs and coverbs and applies his VP shell theory of complex predicates to Vurës SVCs

Vurës SVC questions

1. How do we account structurally for
 - a) adjacency of verbs (nothing can intervene)?
 - b) similar behaviour of SVC object argument with an underlying V_2 subject and with an underlying V_2 object?

- (1) a. *Nēk i=da malaklak no.*
2SG 2SG.GNO=make be.happy 1SG
'You make me happy.' (Malau 2016:568)
- b. *Na=siag diar na gë-k.*
1SG.GNO=sit wait.for ART CL.FOOD-1SG.P
'I sat waiting for my food.' (Malau 2016:570)

Vurës SVC questions

1. How do we account structurally for
 - a) adjacency of verbs (nothing can intervene)?
 - b) similar behaviour of SVC object argument with an underlying V_2 subject and with an underlying V_2 object?
 - c) different behaviour of underlying V_2 subject when it is coreferential with the V_1 subject, vs. a switch subject?

(2) a. *Rōrō a=gav qilian̄.*
2DU NSG.GNO=fly be.out.of.sight
'The two of them flew out of sight.' (Malau 2016:602)

b. *Nēk i=da malaklak no.*
2SG 2SG.GNO=make be.happy 1SG
'You make me happy.' (Malau 2016:568)

Vurës SVC questions

2. How do we account for the behaviour of the SVC object argument?

a) any adverbs must intervene between the verb series and the object, separating the object from its verb

(3) a. *Nē ga=da ēs~ēs kēl le nēk.*
3SG IPFV=**make** DUR~live **again** **able** **2sg**
'He can make you live again.' (Malau 2016:568)

Vurës SVC questions

2. How do we account for the behaviour of the SVC object argument?

- a) any adverbs must intervene between the verb series and the object, separating the object from its verb
- b) objects may occur before or after some adjuncts

(3) a. *Nē ga=da ēs~ēs kēl le nēk.*
3SG IPFV=make DUR~live again able 2SG
'He can make you live again.' (Malau 2016:568)

b. **Le tēqēl gamlöt me min no o tībiar.**
transfer go.down **quickly hither** DAT 1SG ART **basket**
'Pass down quickly hither to me the basket!'

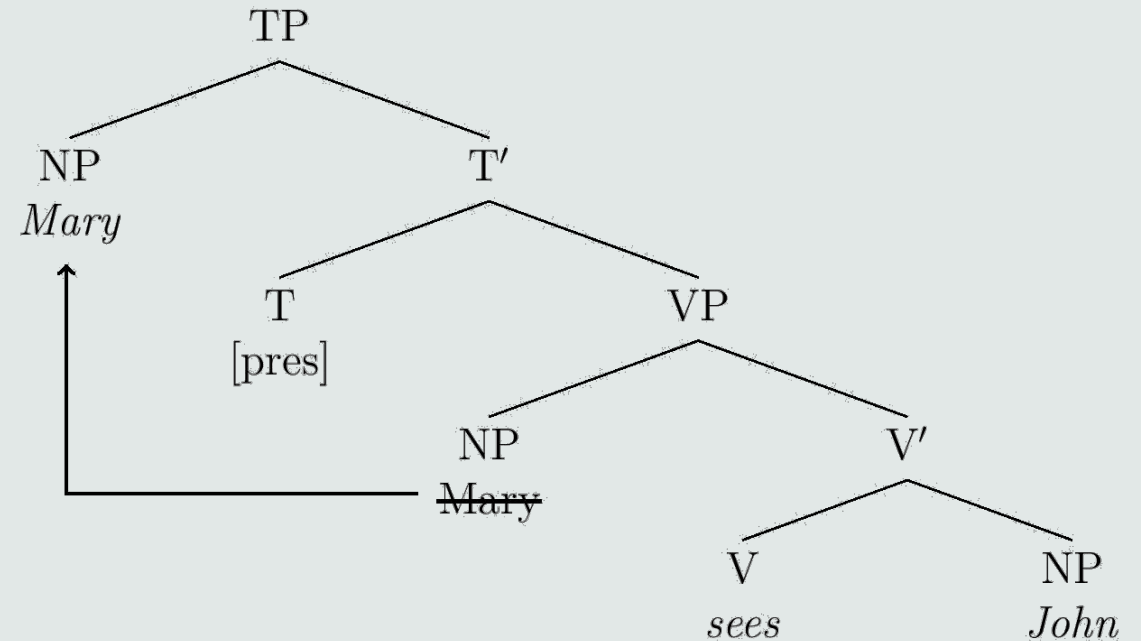
c. **Le tēqēl gamlöt me o tībiar min no.**
transfer go.down **quickly hither** ART **basket** DAT 1SG
'Pass down quickly hither to me the basket!'

Vurës SVC questions

3. How can theoretical linguistics (minimalism) help us understand terms from descriptive linguistics (a serial verb construction)?

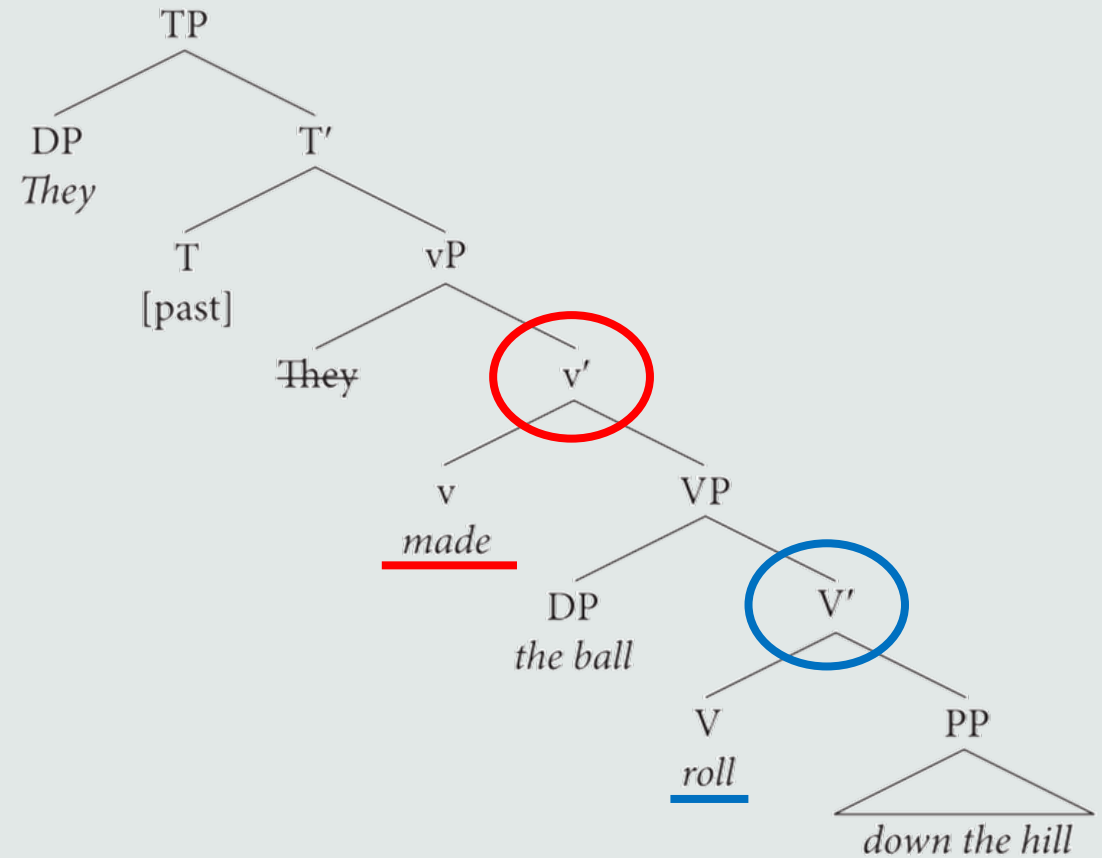
Assumptions: VPISH

- Evidence that subject is generated in a VP-internal position
- e.g. evidence from quantifier float
- VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis (VPISH), (cf. Kitagawa 1986; Koopman & Sportiche 1991:246; van Gelderen 2013:14)
- Subject is generated in SPEC-VP and moves up into SPEC-TP



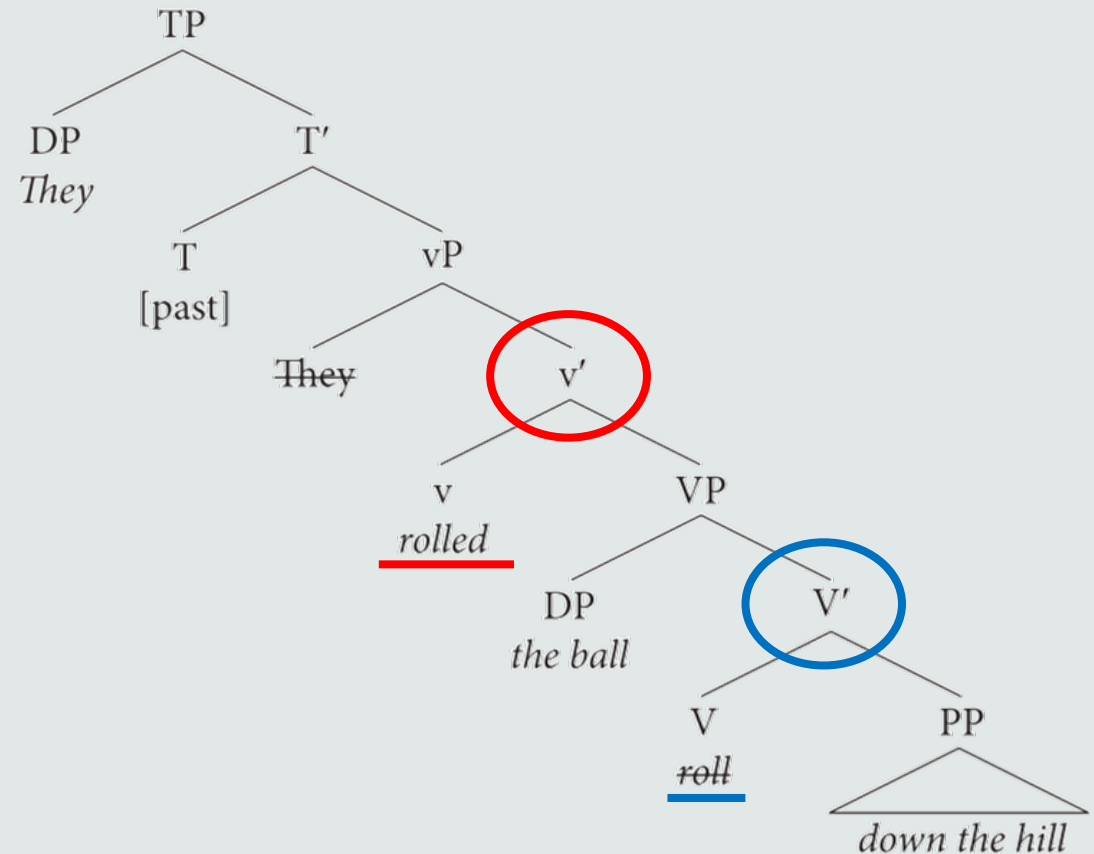
Assumptions: VP shell

- Single verbal phrase level cannot easily account for double object constructions, secondary predicates, causative constructions, etc.
- e.g. *they made the ball roll down the hill*
- In VP shell: causative verb **make** is head of 'vP', intransitive theme verb **roll** is head of 'VP'



Assumptions: VP shell

- Single verbal phrase level not easily account for double object constructions, secondary predicates, causative constructions, etc
- e.g. *they made the ball roll down the hill*
- In VP shell: causative verb **make** is head of 'vP', intransitive theme verb **roll** is head of 'VP'
- Equivalent to: *they rolled the ball down the hill*
- Transitive **roll** includes both the causative (in **v**) and the theme (in **V**).



Vurës

- ~2000 speakers
- South/southwest of Vanua Lava, Vanuatu

Southern Oceanic

North/Central Vanuatu

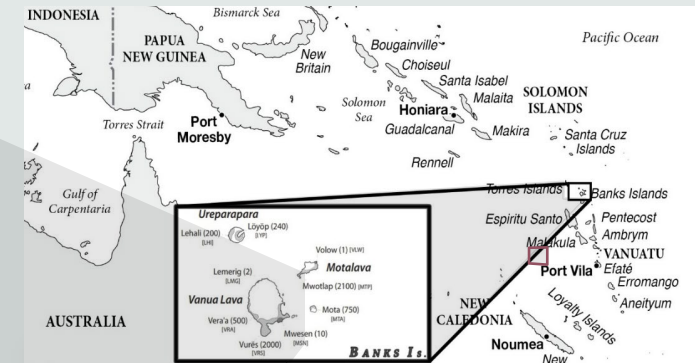
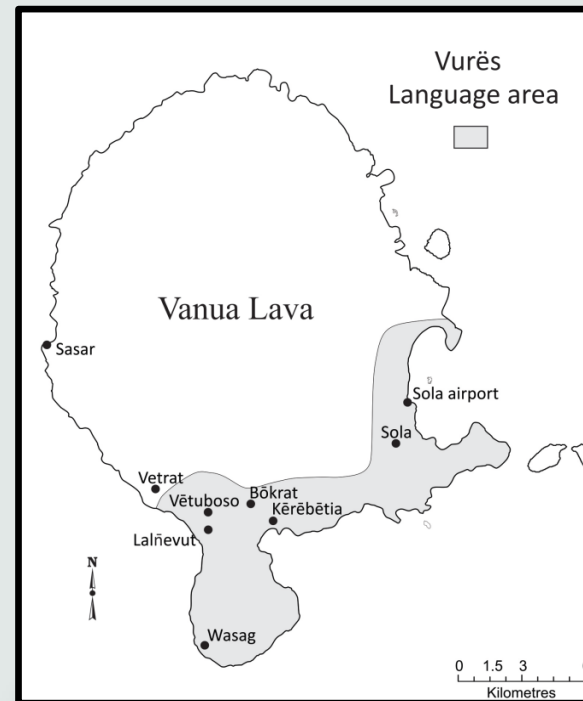
Northern Vanuatu

Torres-Banks

Banks

Vurës/Mwesen

- Fixed SV/AVO order, no case marking, nominative-accusative alignment
- Obligatory aspect & polarity marking through verbal proclitics



(adapted from:
François 2015:143 & Malau 2016:3)

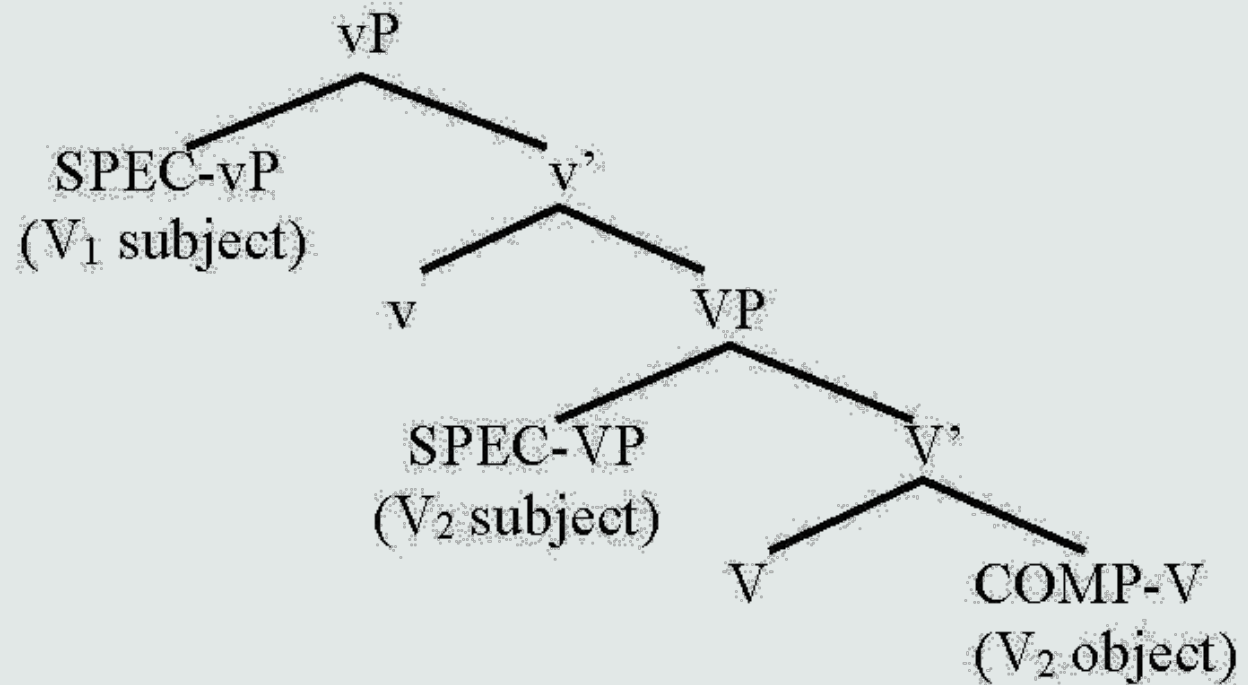
- grammar: Malau (2016)
- dictionary: Malau (2021)
- study of SVCs: Kraußé (2021)

Vurës SVCs in VP shell

- Few attempts to apply VP shell to SVCs, but cf:
 - Aboh (2009): Gungbe (Niger-Congo)
 - Cleary-Kemp (2015): Koro (Oceanic, PNG)
 - Pearce (2016): Unua (Oceanic, Vanuatu)
 - Hopperdietzel (2020): resultative SVCs in Samoan (Oceanic, Polynesian) and Daakaka (Oceanic, Vanuatu)
 - Krauße (2021): complex predicates including SVCs in Vurës
- We show that the VP shell can account for serialised intransitive, transitive, and causative constructions in Vurës.

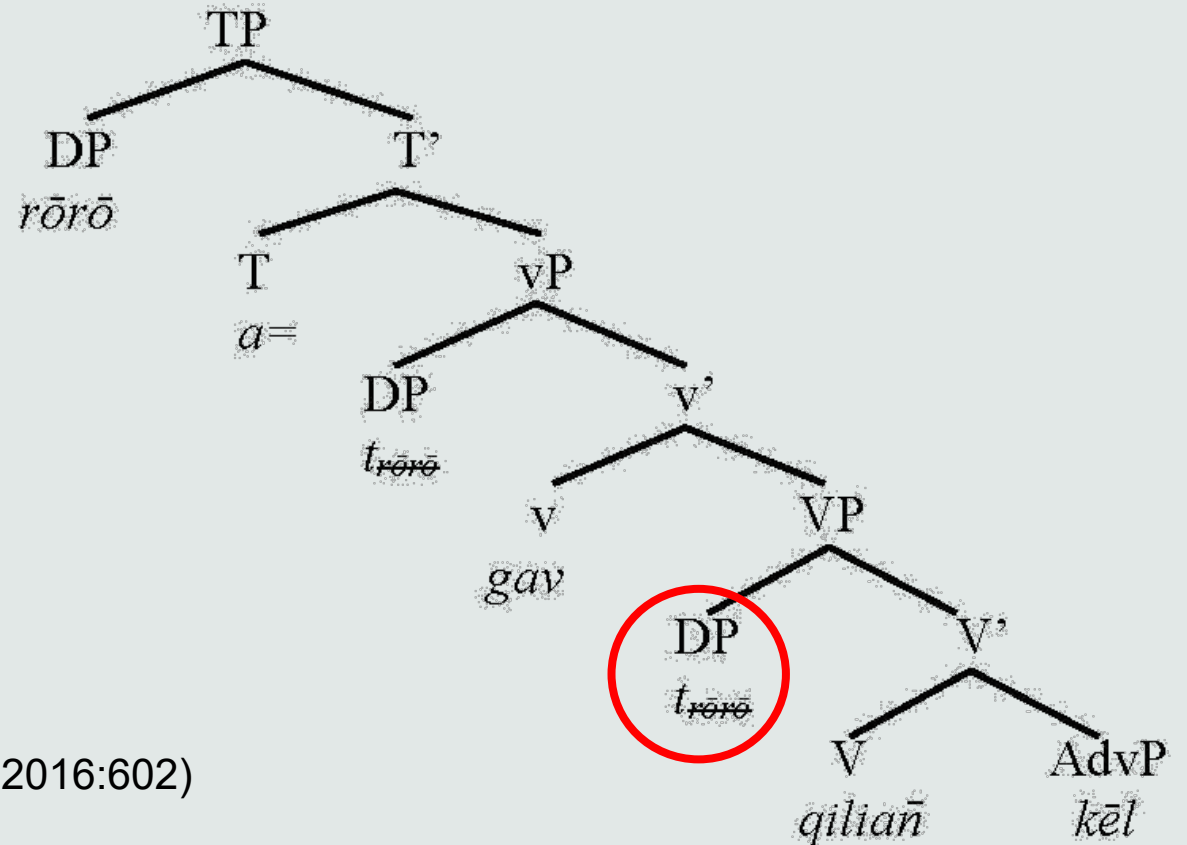
Vurës SVCs in VP shell: assumptions

- (this type of) SVC = complementation (not adjunction)
- VPISH
- VP shell
- V_1 subject: SPEC-vP
- V_2 subject: SPEC-VP
- V_2 object: COMP-V



V₂ subject equi-deletion

- V₂ subject = V₁ subject
- V₂ subject:
 - generated in SPEC-VP
 - equi-deleted
- V_{itr} + V_{itr}

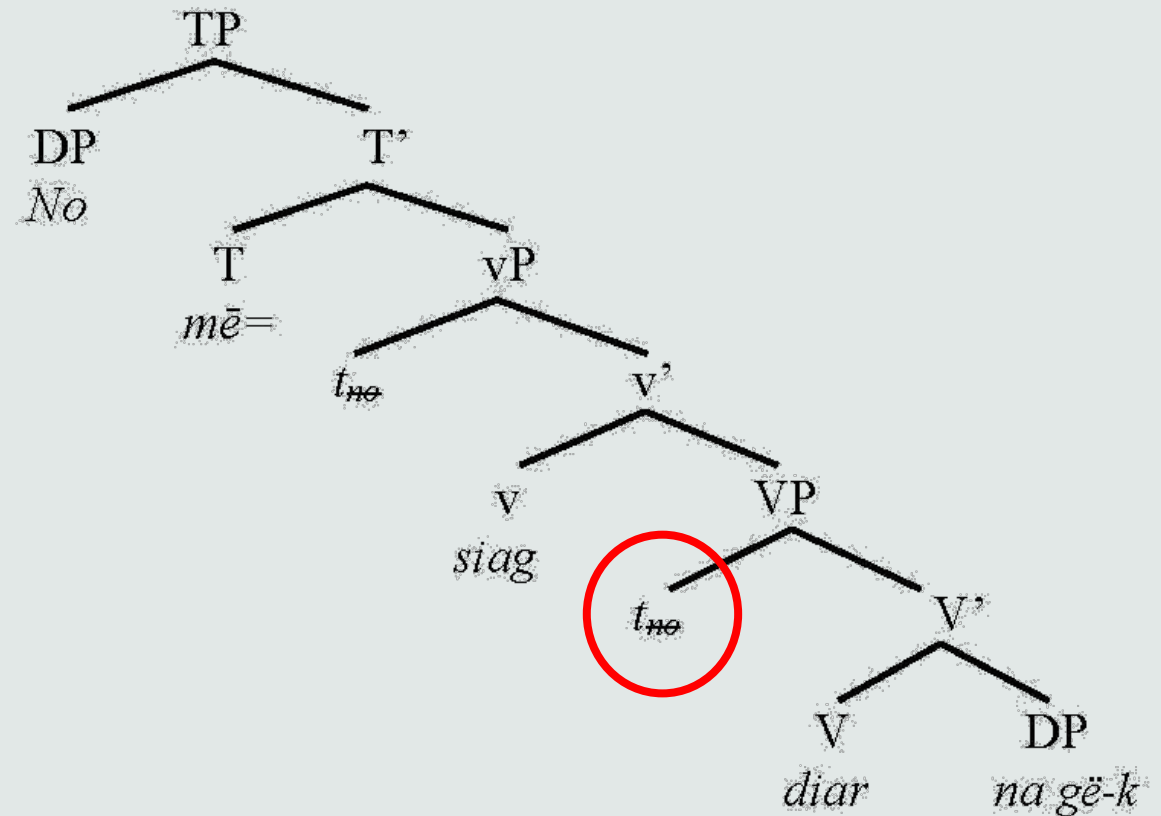


- (4) *Rōrō a=gav qilian̄ kēl.*
 3DU NSG.GNO=fly **be.out.of.sight** again
 'The two of them flew out of sight again.' (Malau 2016:602)

V₂ subject equi-deletion

- V₂ subject = V₁ subject
- V₂ subject:
 - generated in SPEC-VP
 - equi-deleted
- V_{itr} + V_{tr}

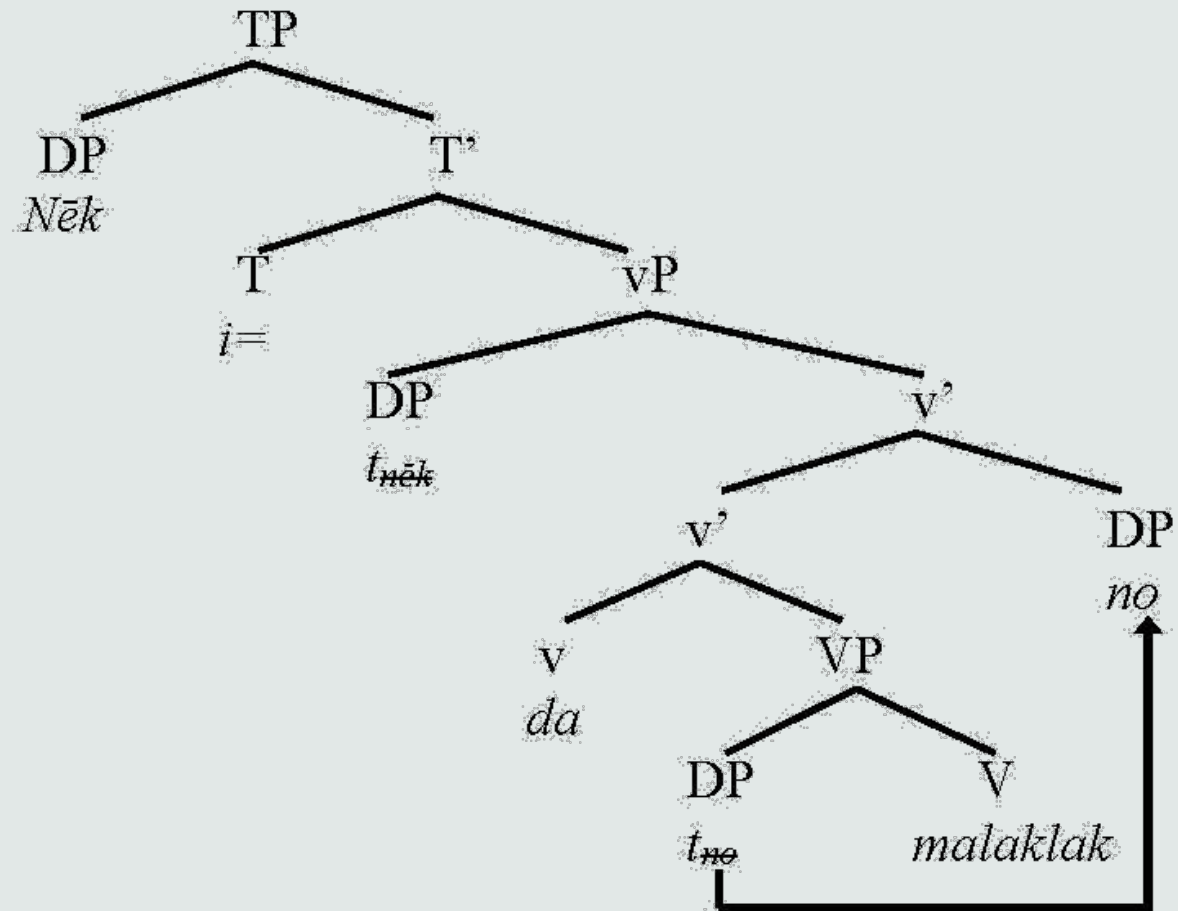
(5) *No mē=siag diar na gē-k.*
 1SG PRF=**sit** **wait.for** ART CL.FOOD-1SG.P
 'I sat [and] waited for my food.'



V₂ subject extraction

- V_{tr} + V_{itr}
- V₂ subject ≠ V₁ subject
- V₂ subject:
 - generated in SPEC-VP
 - extracted to right periphery

(6) *Nēk* *i=da* *malaklak* *no*.
 2SG 2SG.GNO=**make** **be.happy** 1SG
 'You make me happy.' (Malau 2016:568)

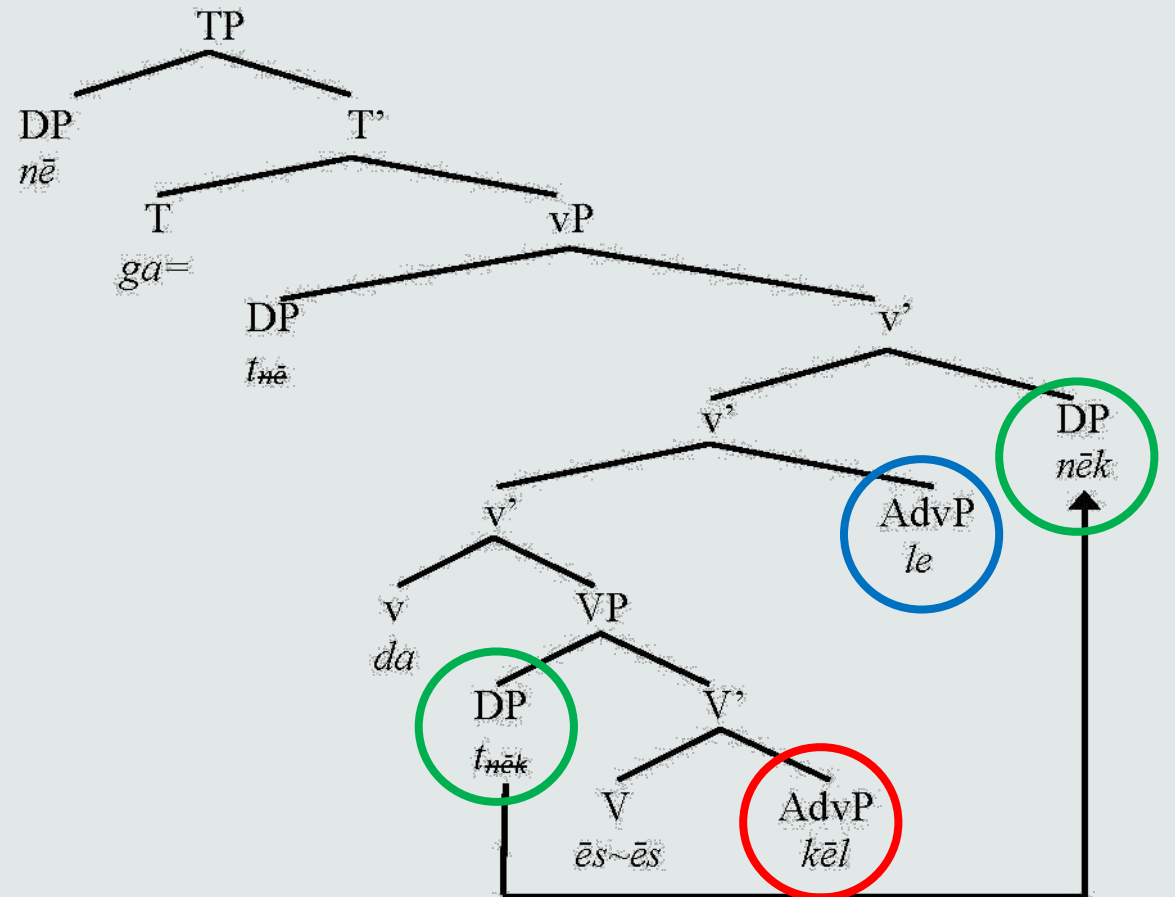


V₂ subject extraction

- Why extraction to right-periphery?
- Not in COMP-V
- Intervention of VP and vP adjuncts

(7) *Nē ga=da ēs~ēs kēl le nēk.*
 3SG IPFV=**make** DUR~live **again** **able** 2SG
 'He can make you live again.' (Malau 2016:568)

- *kēl* has scope over *ēs~ēs*: VP-level adjunct
- *le* has scope over *da*: vP-level adjunct
- Subject extraction to right-periphery of vP

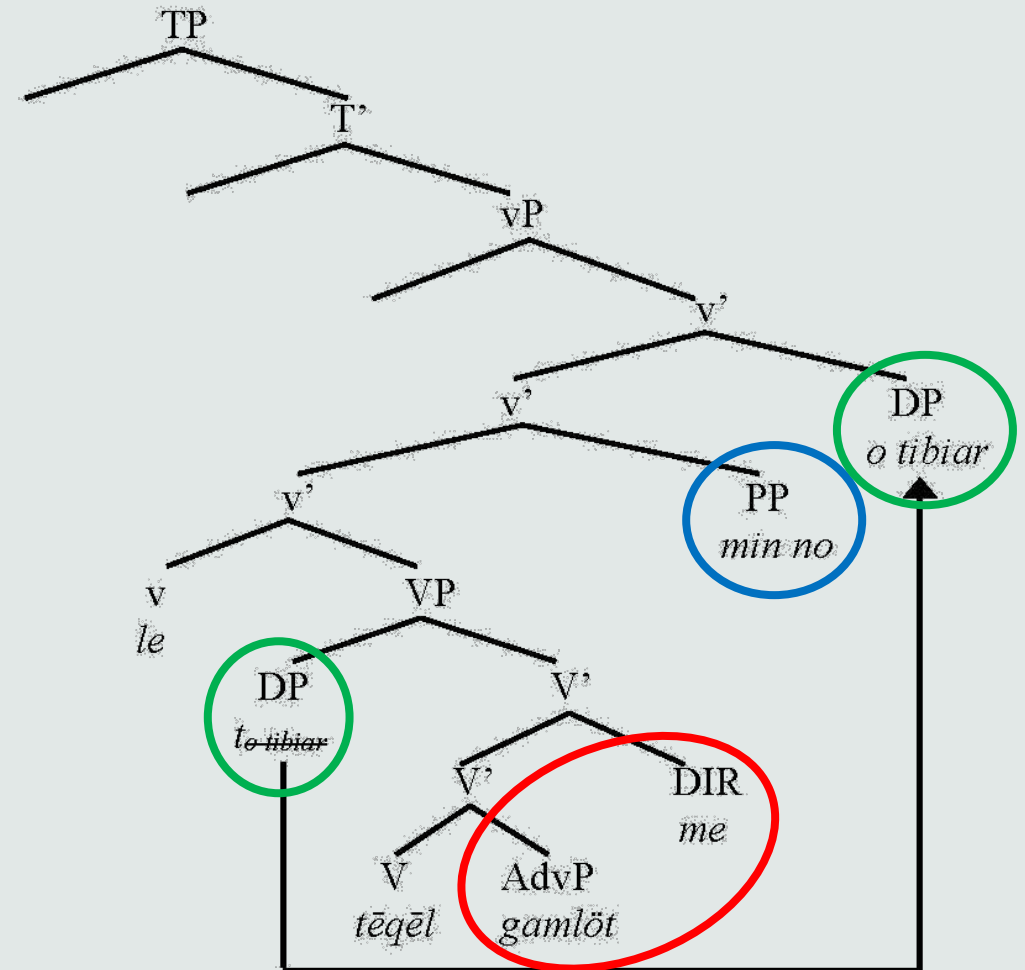


V₂ subject extraction: VP and vP

- Subject extracts to right periphery of vP

(8) *Le tēqēl **gamlöt me** min no o tibir.*
 transfer go.down **quickly hither** DAT 1SG ART basket
 'Pass down quickly hither to me the basket!'

- gamlöt* 'quickly' and *me* 'hither' have scope over *tēqēl* 'go.down', so VP-level
- min no* 'to me' has scope over *le* 'transfer', so vP-level

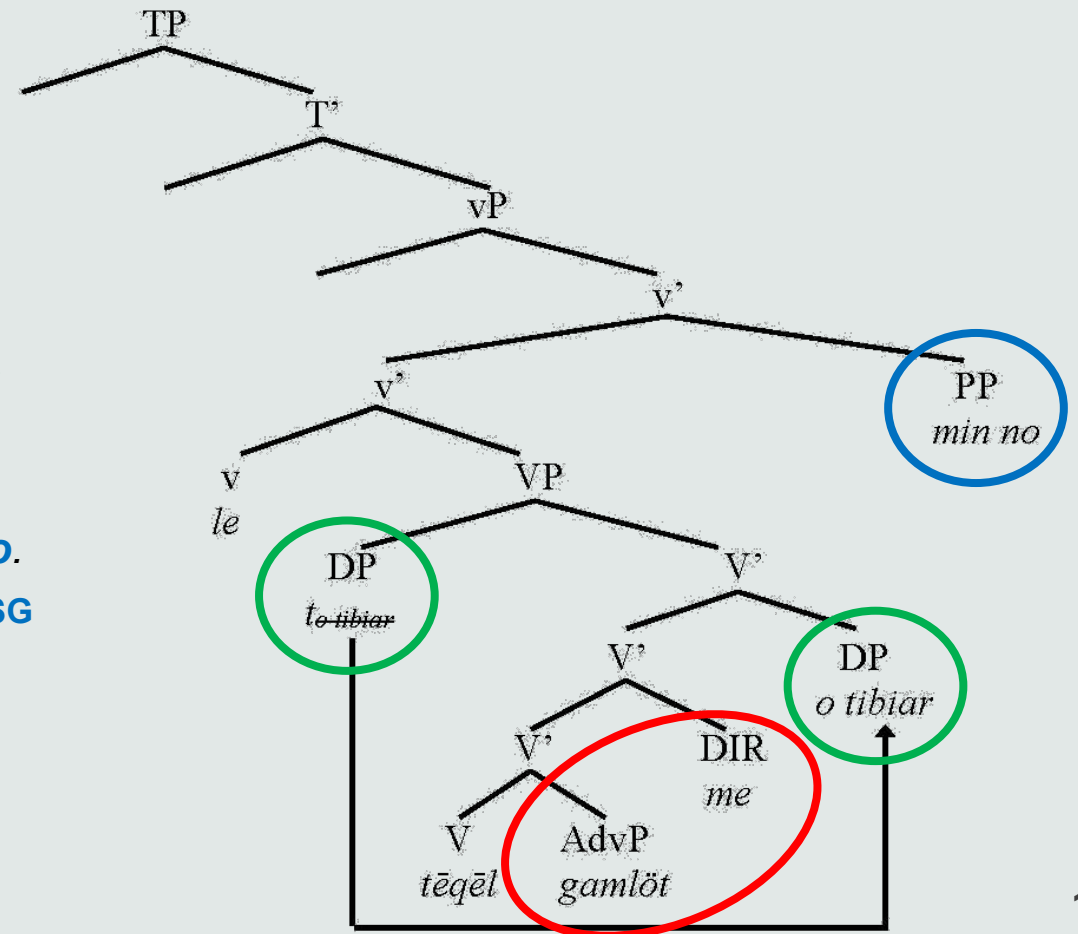


V₂ subject extraction: VP and vP

- But subject can also extract to right periphery of VP

(8) *Le tēqēl **gamlöt me** min no o tibir.*
 transfer go.down **quickly hither** DAT 1SG ART basket
 'Pass down quickly hither to me the basket!'

(9) *Le tēqēl **gamlöt me** o tibir min no.*
 transfer go.down **quickly hither** ART basket DAT 1SG
 'Pass down quickly hither to me the basket!'



Object locus

- Vurës $V_{itr}+V_{tr}$ SVCs have V_2 object
- Not in COMP-V
- Adjuncts intervene between verbs and object:

(10)a. *Na=sig~siag* *gen~gen mölumlum* *na* *gë-k* *o* *qiat.*
1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~eat slowly ART CL.FOOD-1SGP ART taro
'I'm sitting slowly eating my taro.'

b. *Na=sig~siag* *rëv~rëv ti* *min nē* *o* *lëtes.*
1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~write EVENT DAT 3SG ART letter
'I was sitting writing a letter to him...'

- Where is V_2 object?

Object locus: English particle verbs

- Consider English particle verbs

(11) *He cut the branch (right) off.*

He cut it (right) off.

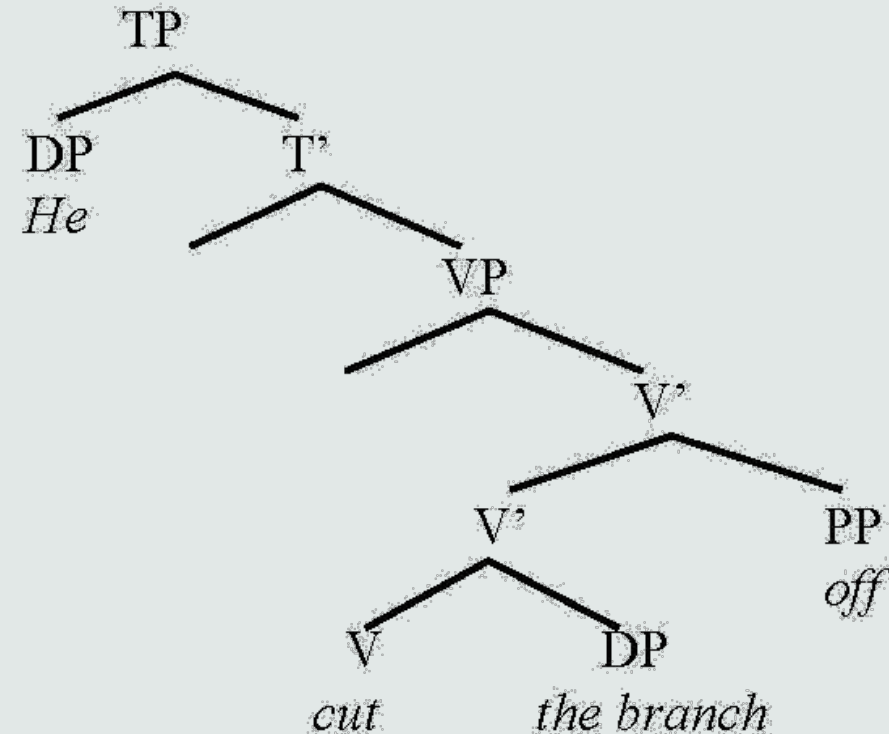
*He cut **off** the branch.*

**He cut right off the branch.*

**He cut off it.*

- Intervention of particle between verb and object resembles Vurës

Underlying structure:



Object locus: English particle verbs

- Consider English particle verbs

(11) *He cut the branch (right) off.*

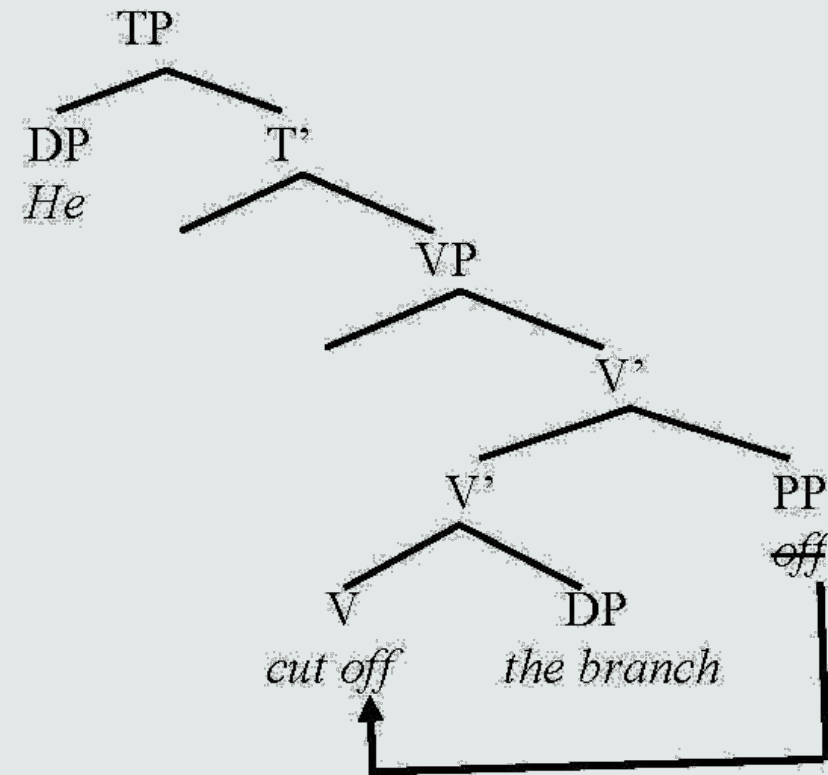
He cut it (right) off.

*He cut **off** the branch.*

**He cut right off the branch.*

**He cut off it.*

- Many analyses – two relevant here
- Both problematic for English
 - Particle incorporation



Object locus: English particle verbs

- Consider English particle verbs

(11) *He cut the branch (right) off.*

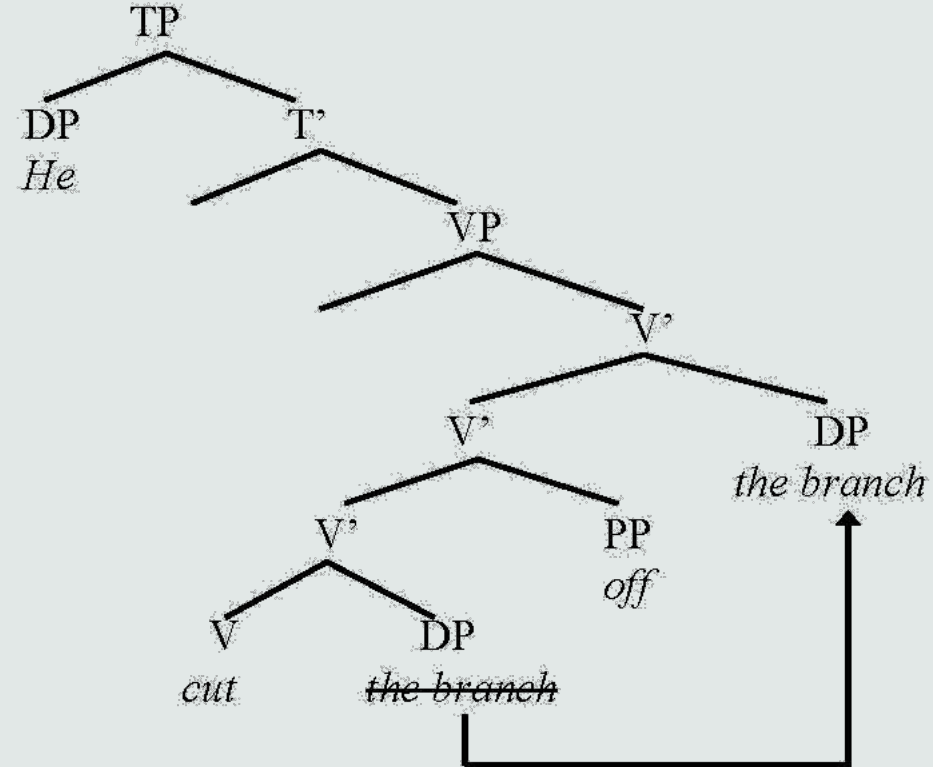
He cut it (right) off.

*He cut **off** the branch.*

He cut **right off the branch.*

He cut **off it.*

- Many analyses – two relevant here
- Both problematic for English
 - Object extraction



Object locus: single V_{tr}

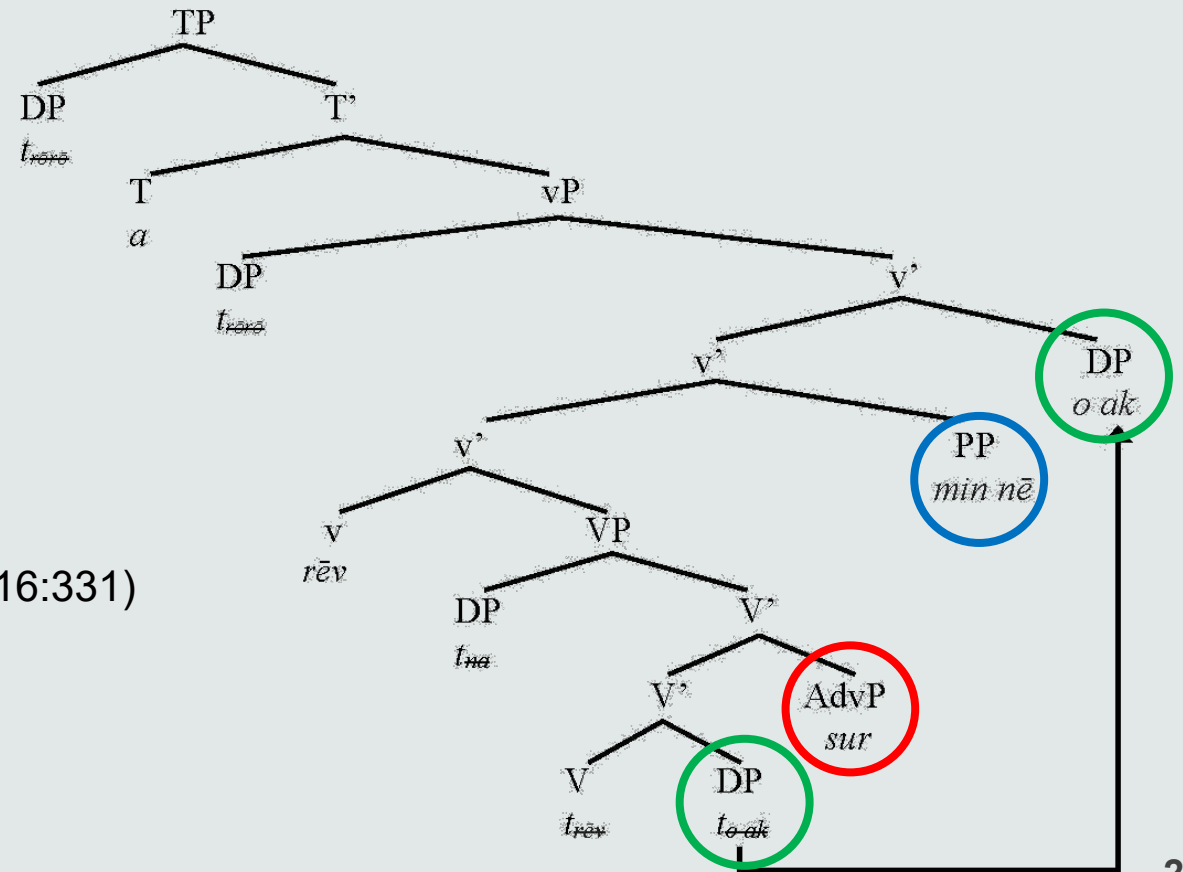
- Vurës object locus either:
 - adjunct incorporation
 - V_2 object extraction to right periphery
- Incorporation implausible: incorporation of **lexical adverbs**; **multiple adjuncts**; **PPs**

(12)a. ...a=rēv **sur** **min** **nē** **o** **ak**...
NSG=pull **down** **DAT** **3SG** **ART** **canoe**
'...[they] pulled down a canoe for him...' (Malau 2016:331)

Object locus: extraction to vP periphery

- Object:
 - generated in COMP-V
 - extracted to right periphery
- Extraction to right periphery of vP

(12)a. ...a=rēv **sur** **min** **nē** **o** **ak**...
 NSG=pull **down** **DAT** **3SG** **ART** **canoe**
 ‘...[they] pulled down a canoe for him...’ (Malau 2016:331)

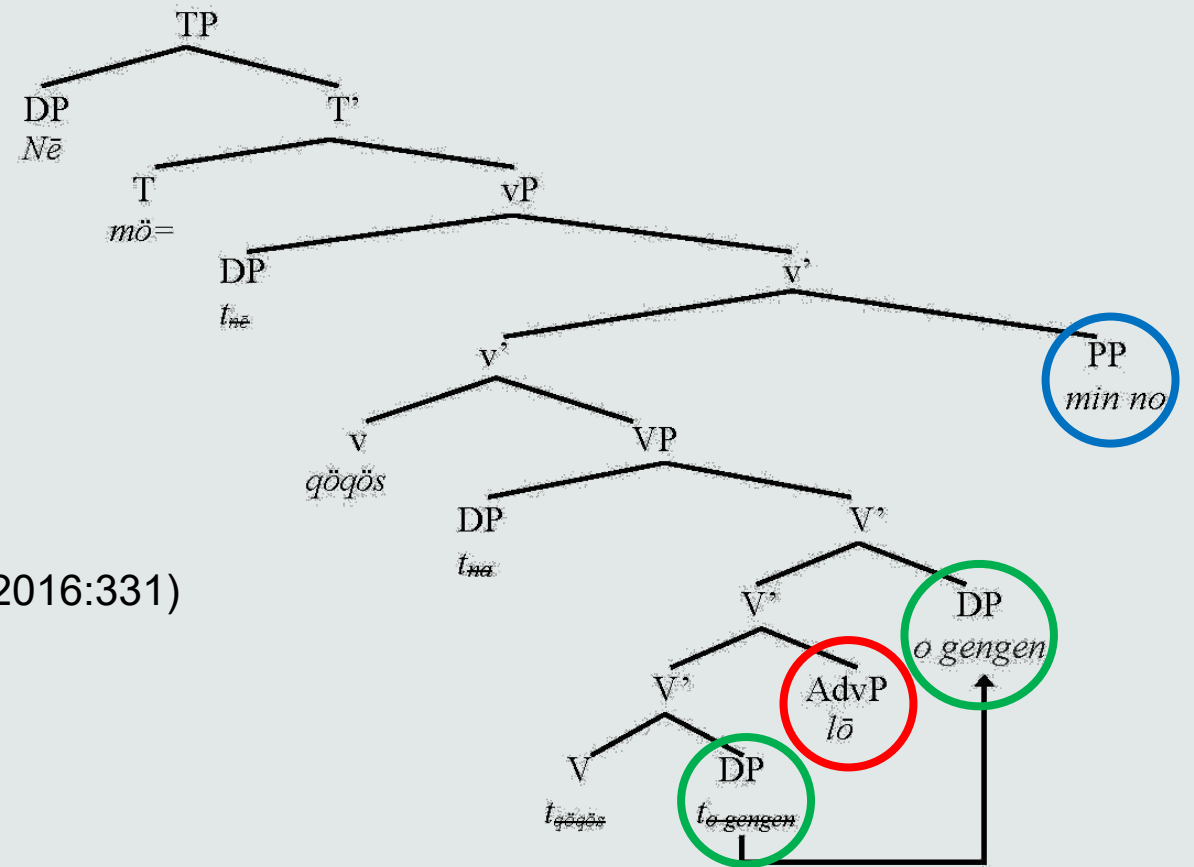


Object locus: extraction to VP periphery

- Object:
 - generated in COMP-V
 - extracted to right periphery
- Extraction to right periphery of vP
- Extraction to right periphery of VP also possible

(12)a. ...a=rēv **sur** **min** **nē** **o** **ak**...
 NSG=pull **down** **DAT** **3SG** **ART** **canoe**
 ‘...[they] pulled down a canoe for him...’ (Malau 2016:331)

b. *Nē* *mō=qōqōs* **lō** **o** **gengen** **min** **no**.
 3SG PRF=spit **out** **ART** **food** **DAT** **3SG**
 ‘S/he spat out food onto me.’ (Malau 2016:333)



Object locus: SVCs

- Most SVCs: object of SVC = V_2 subject
- One SVC type has V_2 object
- Object of transitive V_2 extracts like single V object

Table 42: Argument Structure and Alignment of Vurës SVC Types

Type	Arguments of V_1	Restriction on V_1	Restriction on V_2	Arguments of V_2	Valency of clause	Alignment
cause-effect ₁	A+O	V_{TR}	V_{UE} or V_{UA}	S	TR	switch
cause-effect ₂	S	V_{UA}	V_{UE} or V_{UA}	S	TR	cf. §8.3.2
causative	A+O	<i>da</i> ‘make’	V_{UA}	S	TR	switch
positional ₁	S	V_{UA}	V_{TR}	A+O	TR	same
positional ₂	S	V_{UA}	V_{UE} or V_{UA}	S	INTR	same
directional ₁	A+O	V_{TR}	V_{UE}	S	TR	switch
directional ₂	S	V_{UE} or V_{UA}	V_{UE}	S	INTR	same
manner ₁	A+O	V_{TR}	V_{UA}	Ø	TR	switch
manner ₂	S	V_{UE} or V_{UA}	V_{UA}	Ø	INTR	switch
modal	A+O	V_{tr}	none	A/S	TR/INTR	same

(13)a. *Na=sig~siag* *rēv~rēv* **ti** *min* *nē* *o* *lētes*.
 1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~write **EVENT** **DAT** **3SG** **ART** **letter**
 ‘I was sitting writing a letter to him...’

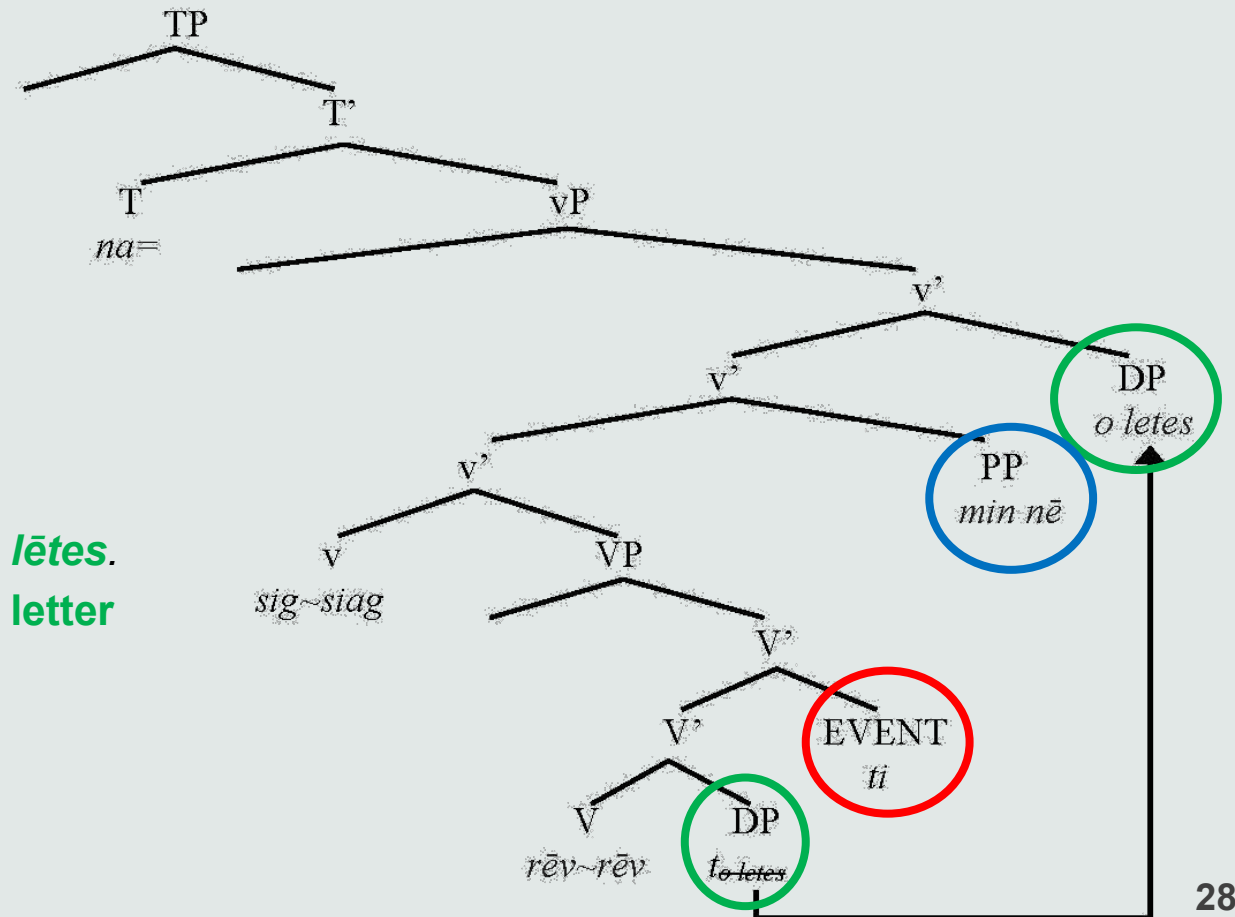
(Krauße 2021:254)

b. *Na=sig~siag* *rēv~rēv* **ti** *o* *lētes* *min* *nē*.
 1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~write **EVENT** **ART** **letter** **DAT** **3SG**
 ‘I was sitting writing a letter to him...’

Object locus: extraction to vP periphery

- V₂ object:
 - generated in COMP-V
 - extracted to right periphery of vP

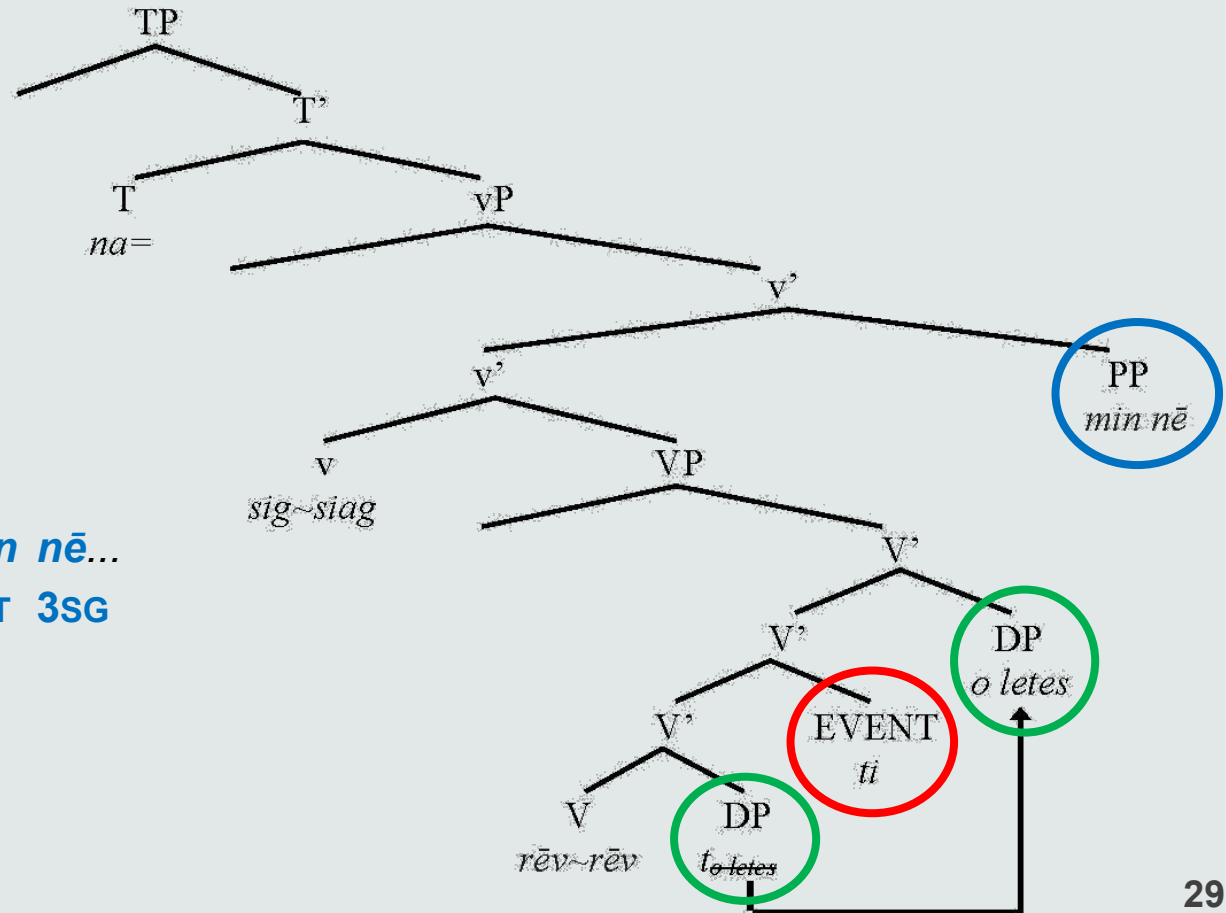
(14) *Na=sig~siag rēv~rēv ti min nē o lētes.*
 1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~write **EVENT** **DAT** **3SG** **ART** **letter**
 'I was sitting writing a letter to him...'



Object locus: extraction to VP periphery

- V₂ object:
 - generated in COMP-V
 - extracted to right periphery of VP

(15) *Na=sig~siag rēv~rēv ti o lētes min nē...*
 1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~write **EVENT** **ART** **letter** **DAT** **3SG**
 'I was sitting writing a letter to him...'



Vurës summary

- Extraction to right periphery – of VP or vP, but not both
- Single V_{tr} – object extraction
- SVC underlying argument loci:
 - V_1 subject: SPEC-vP
 - V_2 subject: SPEC-VP
 - V_2 object: COMP-V
- SVCs:
 - V_2 same subject: equi-deletion
 - V_2 switch subject: extraction
 - V_2 object: extraction
- Extraction of single argument: V_2 switch subject or V_2 object
- Hence prohibition of switch subject transitive V_2

Vurës summary

- VP shell useful in accounting for:
 - similar behaviour of underlying V_2 subject and V_2 object as SVC object argument (extraction to right periphery)
 - different behaviour of underlying V_2 same subject vs switch subject (equi-deletion vs extraction)
 - intervention of adverbs between verb(s) and object (obligatory extraction)
 - occurrence of objects before or after some adjuncts (extraction to right periphery of vP or VP)

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Varian gö luwō, Mam Eli!



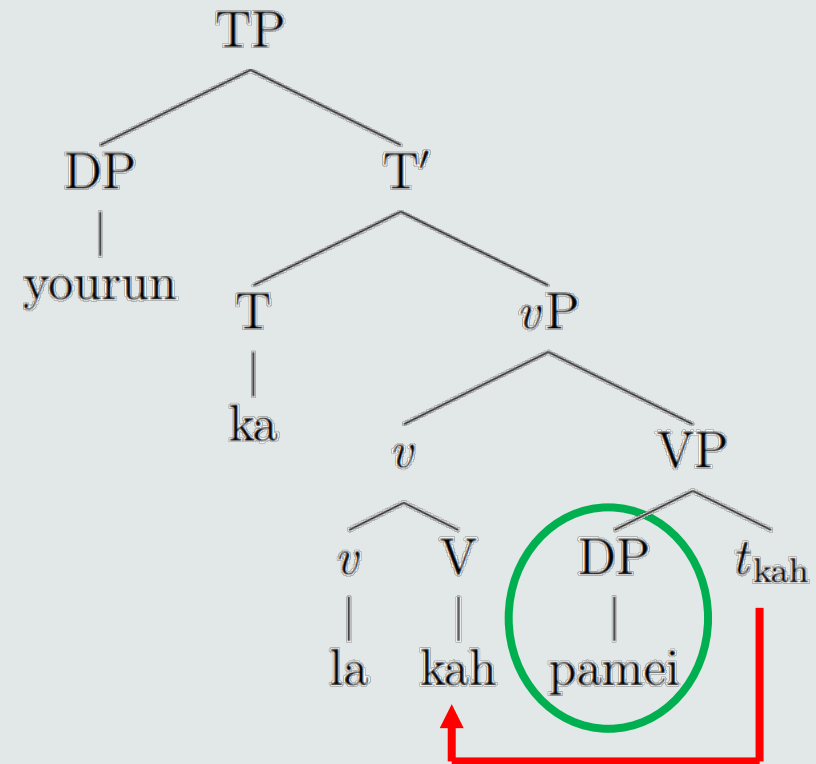
† 25 Sep 2021

Object locus: Koro

- Cleary-Kemp (2015): Koro SVC = VP shell
- Object is generated in SPEC-VP
- “assumes” V moves into v

Yourun *k-a* *la* *kah* *pamei*
1EXCL.PL IRR-NSG go.to find betelnut

‘We were going to go and look for betelnut’ (Cleary-Kemp 2015:244)



(Cleary-Kemp 2015:253)

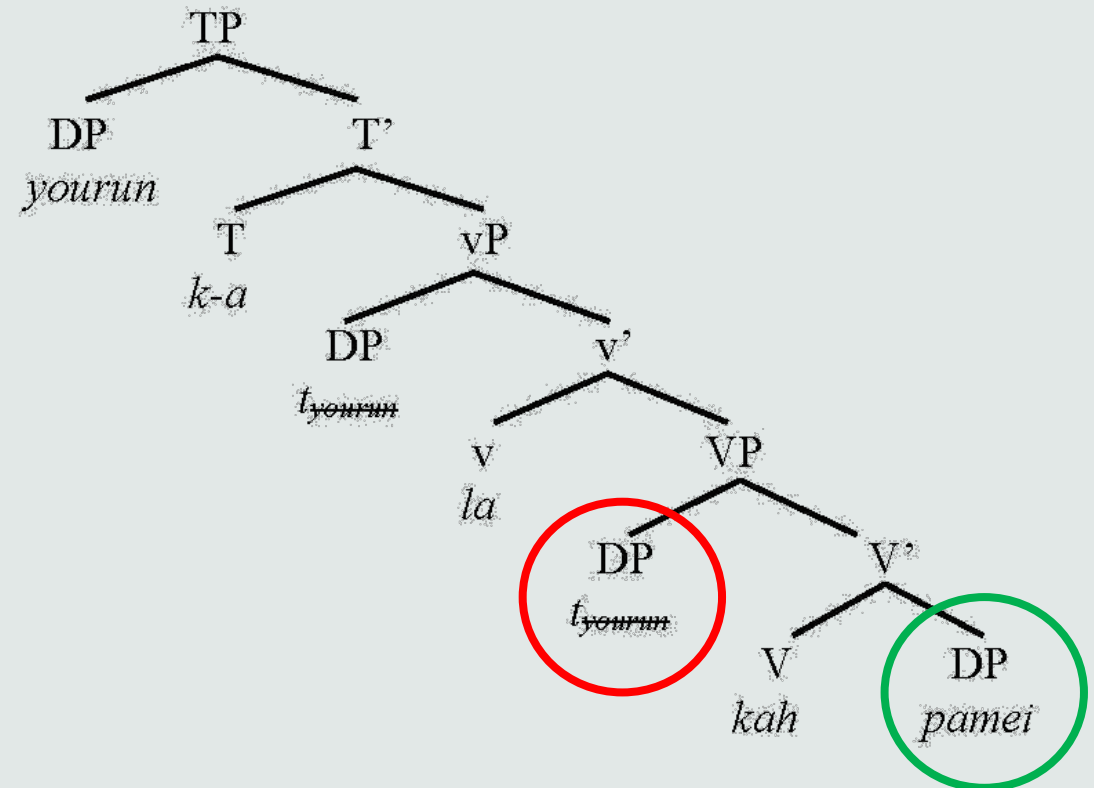
Object locus: Koro

- Cleary-Kemp (2015): Koro SVC = VP shell
- ~~Object is generated in SPEC-VP~~
- ~~“assumes” V moves into v~~

Yourun *k-a* *la* *kah* *pamei*
 1EXCL.PL IRR-NSG go.to find betelnut
 ‘We were going to go and look for betelnut’ (Cleary-Kemp 2015:244)

- But... *kah* is transitive
 - V_2 subject = V_1 subject, so equi-deleted
 - *pamei* is V_2 object so in COMP-V not SPEC-VP
- No movement needed

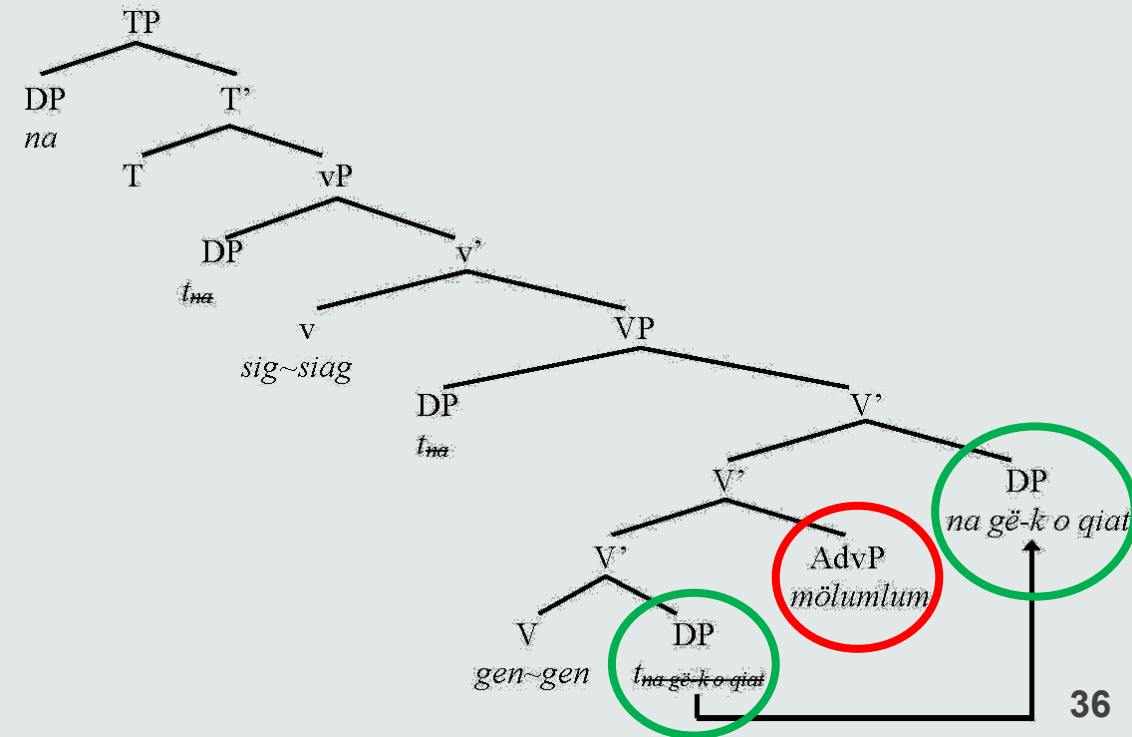
... *mala pwi* *to* *k-a* *kah* *karahat*
 in.case 1INCL.PL IRR-NSG find mud.crab
 ‘...in case we find any mud crabs’ (Cleary-Kemp 2015:53)



Object locus: V_{itr} + V_{tr}

Na=sig~siag gen~gen **möllumlum** na **gë-k** o **qiat.**
 1SG.GNO=DUR~sit DUR~eat **slowly** ART CL.FOOD-1SGP ART taro
 'I'm sitting slowly eating my taro.'

- V₂ object:
 - generated in COMP-V
 - extracted to right periphery



Object locus: Vurës

...nēr töl a tövun wareg nē la=tan.

3PL three NSG bury properly 3SG COM.LOC=ground

‘...the three of them buried him properly in the ground.’ (Malau 2016:602)