

## Eastern Tamang and the NP/DP Macroparameter\*

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Michael Jonathan Mathew Barrie · Kim, Dahoon. 2024. **Eastern Tamang and the NP/DP Macroparameter**. *Studies in Generative Grammar*, 34-3. 225-248. This paper deals with a series of papers by Bošković, who proposes a macroparameter to distinguish between DP languages (or article languages) and NP languages (or articleless languages). This NP/DP Macroparameter has garnered significant attention giving rise to much cross-linguistic research on nominals. Nevertheless, macroparameters have not fared well in recent years, and the NP/DP macroparameter also has problems, as we discussed. We evaluate the diagnostics for this macroparameter with data from Eastern Tamang, a dialect of Tamang, a Sino-Tibetan language. We show that the vast majority of the diagnostics fail to indicate the nominal structure of Eastern Tamang, and the few that do give rise to contradictory results. We discuss some problems with the diagnostics and give some tentative suggestions as to how the NP/DP Macroparameter might dissolve into various microparameters, thereby accounting for at least some of the contradictory results uncovered in Eastern Tamang and in other languages.

**Keywords:** Eastern Tamang, nominal structure, NP/DP Parameter, Macroparameters

### 1. Introduction

In a series of papers (Bošković 2005, 2008, 2013, Bošković & Gajewski 2011, Bošković & Hsieh 2015, Bošković & Şener 2014), Bošković proposes a

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\* We thank Sujan Lama for willing to share their knowledge about Tamang with us. We also thank three anonymous reviewers for helping us clarify the discussions. All remaining errors are our own.

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macroparameter with an extensive list of diagnostics that distinguishes between languages with and without articles (sometimes referred to here as DP languages and NP languages, respectively). The research program has given rise to a voluminous body of research analyzing the syntax and semantics of nominals in a vast number of languages, which has led to a deeper understanding of nominals and how they interact with the clausal structure. Following his works, this modest paper deals with how the NP/DP Macroparameter manifests in Eastern Tamang (taj), a member of the Tamang dialect continuum. We show that, despite the long list of diagnostics purporting to distinguish DP languages from NP languages, the results are inconclusive for Eastern Tamang. The goal of this paper is to show that the NP/DP Macroparameter is problematic for Eastern Tamang and thus should be re-thought. Some tentative remarks are given as to how Eastern Tamang might be analyzed and how a microparametric approach might fare better for Eastern Tamang and in general.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 gives the background of this study, which includes a discussion on the linguistic properties of Eastern Tamang. Section 3 discusses Bošković's NP/DP Macroparameter and its diagnostics. Section 4 discusses the demise of macroparameters in general and the implications of the Eastern Tamang facts on the NP/DP Macroparameter. Some tentative remarks are made on how this macroparameter might dissolve into microparameters. Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Background

This study investigates the NP/DP Macroparameter in the context of the nominal structure of Eastern Tamang (ISO code: taj), a member of the Tamang dialect continuum. Tamang itself is a member of the Sino-Tibetan family and is spoken in Nepal and neighboring India, with approximately one million native speakers (Owen-Smith, 2015). In addition to the published grammars cited below, the data from this study are provided by a mid-twenties, non-binary native speaker of the Lalitpur variety of Eastern Tamang. They actively use Eastern Tamang with family and other Tamang speakers in Nepal, Nepali with non-Tamang speakers in Nepal, and English otherwise.

As Eastern Tamang (and Tamang in general) is a relatively under-studied language, we give some basic grammatical properties of Eastern Tamang to acquaint the reader (Lee, 2011; Mazaudon, 2003; Owen-Smith, 2015; Poudel, 2006, 2012). Specifically, we cover the following properties.

- (1) **Some basic grammatical properties of Eastern Tamang**
- a. Head Finality
  - b. Case system
  - c. Numeral – Classifier system
  - d. Lack of Agreement

## 2.1 Head-Finality

We begin with a basic illustration of a simple Eastern Tamang sentence, illustrating SOV word order. This example also illustrates the light verb *la* ('do'), which hosts the lexical root *pʌdʌp* ('read'), borrowed from Nepali.

- (2) *Sudʒan-se som kitap pʌdʌp-la-dʒi*  
 Sujan-ERG three book read-do-PST  
 'Sujan read three books.'

Eastern Tamang exhibits typical head-final properties, two of which we show here: i) the use of postpositions, and ii) postnominal relative clauses. Consider the following examples.

- (3) Postposition  
*Sudʒan-se bʰantʂa-ri ʃjʌw tʃa-dʒi*  
 Sujan-ERG kitchen-in apple eat-PST  
 'Sujan ate an apple in the kitchen.'
- (4) Postnominal Relative Clause  
*[yambu-ri tʂi-ba] mʰi-kadε*  
 Kathmandu-in stay-NMLZ person-PL  
 'People who live in Kathmandu'

## 2.2 Case System

Eastern Tamang exhibits ergative Case alignment with split ergativity based on aspect. As the following examples show, absolutive case is phonologically null. Observe that the single argument in (5)b. bears the same case as the object in (5)a.

- (5) a. Ergative-Absolutive Case Alignment

Sudʒan-se gor-ki momo-∅ ʃja-dʒi.  
 Sujan-ERG CL-one dumpling-ABS eat-PST  
 ‘Sujan ate one dumpling.’

b. Sudʒan-∅ hjar-dʒi.  
 Sujan-ABS run-PST  
 ‘Sujan ran.’

Eastern Tamang also exhibits differential object marking (DOM) (Bossong, 1991). The trigger for DOM varies (Aissen, 2003). In particular, Eastern Tamang uses animacy as a trigger for DOM. Consider the example below. Observe that the animate object is marked with the case marker *-da*. Compare this with (5a), where no marker is present on the object.

(6) DOM  
 Sudʒan-se gor ŋ<sup>h</sup>a ʃjan-da saŋ-dʒi  
 Sujan-ERG CL five tiger-DOM kill-PST  
 ‘Sujan killed five tigers.’

### 2.3 Numeral-Classifier System

Eastern Tamang adopts a generalized numeral classifier system. There is a single classifier, *gor*, that is used for all nouns.<sup>1</sup> The language exhibits a mixed numeral system. Specifically, for the low numbers (from one to ten), Tamang numerals are used, but from eleven and onwards, Nepali numerals are borrowed. For Tamang numerals, the classifier is optional, but for Nepali numerals, the classifier is not found (Barrie & Jun, 2022).

(7) a. (\*gor) g<sup>h</sup>jarʃsa g<sup>h</sup>i m<sup>h</sup>i  
 CL hundred oneperson  
 ‘one hundred people’  
 b. (gor) som m<sup>h</sup>i  
 CL three person  
 ‘three people’

<sup>1</sup> Note that this aspect of Tamang grammar varies greatly among dialects. Consult the Tamang grammars cited above for descriptions of numeral classifiers in other Tamang dialects.

## 2.4 Lack of Agreement

Eastern Tamang (and Tamang in general) does not exhibit subject or object agreement. Observe that in the following examples no agreement is found on the verb or anywhere in the clause.

- (8) a.  $\eta ai$   $\int j\widehat{a}w$  (gor) pre-kade  $\widehat{t}ja-d\check{z}i$ .  
 I.ERG apple (CL) 8-PL eat-PST  
 'I ate eight apples.'<sup>2</sup>
- b. e-s $\epsilon$  momo  $k\check{a}ta-s\epsilon$   $\widehat{t}ja-ba$  hinna?  
 you-ERG dumpling fork-with eat-PST COP  
 'Did you eat the dumpling with a fork?'
- c.  $Sud\check{z}an-s\epsilon$   $b^hantsa-ri$   $\int j\widehat{a}w$   $\widehat{t}ja-d\check{z}i$ .  
 Sujan-ERG kitchen-in apple eat-PST  
 'Sujan ate an apple in the kitchen.'

## 3. The NP/DP Macroparameter

### 3.1 About the Parameter

The identity of the maximal projection of nominal phrases has been the subject of lively debate. Since the DP hypothesis was proposed (Abney, 1987), it has become the accepted standard. However, a large body of work by Bošković has argued that the maximal projection of the noun phrase varies, depending on whether the language has an overt definite article or not. Specifically, if a language has an overt article, Bošković proposes that it is a DP language. On the other hand, if a language lacks an overt article, it is categorized as an NP language. However, as argued by Gillon & Armoskaite (2015), among others, it is possible for a language to have a phonologically null D. Thus, the absence of an overt definite determiner does not necessarily entail that the language is an NP language.

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<sup>2</sup> An astute reviewer notes that there are two different past tense markers, *-ba* and *-d $\check{z}i$* . These in fact differ in terms of aspect, which is not relevant to the discussion.

As the lack of a definite article does not entail that the language is an NP language, Bošković has proposed a number of diagnostics to distinguish between NP languages and DP languages. We present one of the diagnostics here to familiarize the reader with the kind of argumentation to follow.

- (9) Only languages without articles may allow Left Branch Extraction.

Left Branch Extraction (hereafter, LBE) is the displacement of an element at the left edge of the nominal to a position higher in the sentence (Bondarenko & Davis, 2023). The diagnostic above states that only languages without an overt article allow LBE. Note crucially that this is a one way entailment. Thus, if a language lacks left branch extraction, it may be because it's a DP language, or it may be an NP language that simply lacks left branch extraction.

### 3.2 The Drawbacks of the Parameter

There are criticisms of the macroparameter both theoretically and empirically. For example, the way to account for LBE being restricted to article-less languages is based on two conditions (Bošković, 2013). The first condition is anti-locality (Bošković, 1994; Grohmann, 2003). The validity of the syntactic movement rests on whether it meets the anti-locality condition or not (i.e. syntactic objects must bypass at least one full phrase). The second one is a DP as an escape hatch (Alexiadou et al., 2007; Chomsky, 2001). In DP languages, adjective phrases are all base-generated as NP-adjuncts and must stop by [Spec, DP] for the subsequent LBE. This movement violates anti-locality, meaning LBE is impossible in DP languages. However, this reasoning is called into question as it is well established that there are additional functional categories inside a nominal phrase below DP (Déchaine & Wiltschko, 2002; Ritter, 1991). The existence of functional projections between DP and NP allows anti-locality to be respected as the moved element can bypass a complete projection on its way to [Spec, DP] (Salzmann, 2020).

The NP/DP Macroparameter has garnered significant empirical support, but it is not entirely free of its detractors. To name a few, contradictory results have been found for Lithuanian (Gillon & Armoskaite, 2015), Estonian (Norris, 2018), Vietnamese (Phan & Lander, 2015), Bangla (Syed & Simpson, 2017), and Tagalog (Paul et al., 2015).

Furthermore, it has been argued that Bošković's diagnostics may be unlearnable (Jeong, 2016) by claiming that the NP/DP Macroparameter, characterized by a

lengthy list of diagnostics, consists mostly of one-way entailments. The LBE diagnostic states, “Only article-less languages may allow LBE.” Thus, the diagnostic does not show a clear-cut dichotomy between NP and DP languages. Rather, LBE is a characteristic that can only manifest in article-less languages.

Despite this criticism, the NP/DP Macroparameter gained empirical support as many languages adhere to it. A good example found in Turkish (Bošković & Serkan, 2014). This paper tests the nominal structure of Eastern Tamang against this macroparameter not only to evaluate the viability of the NP/DP Macroparameter, but also to elucidate the structure of nominals in Eastern Tamang.

### 3.3 Evaluating the NP/DP Macroparameter in Eastern Tamang

Eastern Tamang does not have an overt definite article. Therefore, it might be expected that the diagnostics will exhibit article-less language properties. The diagnostics tested in this paper are the following.

- a. Radical pro-drop may be possible only in languages without articles.
- b. Only languages without articles may allow scrambling.
- c. Only languages with articles allow the majority reading of most.
- d. Inverse scope for S-O is unavailable in languages without articles.
- e. Possessors may induce an exhaustivity presupposition only in languages with articles.
- f. Number morphology may not be obligatory in languages without articles.
- g. Languages without articles do not allow transitive nominals with two lexical genitives.
- h. The negative concord reading may be absent with multiple complex negative constituents, only in negative concord languages with articles.
- i. Only languages without articles may allow Left Branch Extraction.
- j. Languages without articles disallow negative raising  
(i.e. strict clause-mate NPI licensing under negative raising).
- k. Negative constituents must be marked for focus in article-less languages.

The remainder of the subsection describes the observations in applying the diagnostics.

#### **Diagnostics that test positive for NP**

**a. Radical pro-drop may be possible only in languages without articles.**

Radical pro-drop refers to the availability of null arguments in the absence of agreement on the verb. Recall from the previous section that Eastern Tamang lacks agreement. In light of this, consider the following examples that show that either the subject (11)b or the object (11)c can be absent if they are recoverable from the discourse. Thus, Eastern Tamang exhibits radical pro-drop, suggesting it is an NP language.

(11) a: Pasang-se      t<sup>h</sup>ε      ʃjāw    ʃʃa-la.  
 Pasang-ERG      that      apple eat-NON.PST  
 “Pasang will eat that apple.”

b: Ahin, t<sup>h</sup>ε      ɖʒa    ʃʃa-la.  
 No, that      FOC eat-NON.PST  
 “No, (he) will eat that one.” (pointing to a different apple)

c: Ahin,    Suɖʒan-sε    ɖʒa      ʃʃa-la.  
 No,    Sujan-ERG    FOC      eat-NON.PST  
 “No, Sujan will eat (it).” (not Pasang)

We note a potential problem with this diagnostic, however, based on Colloquial Singaporean English (CSE). CSE is known to exhibit radical *pro*-drop (Sato, 2011, 2014, 2016; Sato & Kim, 2012).<sup>3</sup> Although CSE allows bare nouns much more liberally than English (Ziegeler, 2015, p. 181ff), determiners are found in CSE, and, when present, trigger obligatory number agreement (C. Kim et al., 2009), a point to which we return. While it is beyond the scope of this short contribution to delve into the CSE facts, these observations warrant a reconsideration of this diagnostic.

**Diagnostics that are inconclusive**

**b. Only languages without articles may allow scrambling.**

Bošković (2008) states that, for this diagnostic, scrambling refers to long-distance, A'-scrambling; typically shown in Korean and Japanese-type languages. Eastern

<sup>3</sup> Consult the references cited for earlier descriptive work on CSE and radical *pro* drop.



Tamang allows scrambling in a limited fashion. Consider the following examples.

- (12) a. Suḏʒan-da [kitap sA-ri tāj-ḏʒi bʰisi] tʰa mu-la  
 Sujan-DAT [book floor-on fall-PST COMP] know COP-NON.PST  
 b. <sup>3</sup>kitap<sub>i</sub> Suḏʒan-da [t<sub>i</sub> sA-ri tāj-ḏʒi bʰisi] tʰa mu-la  
 book Sujan-DAT [ floor-on fall-PST COMP] know COP-NON.PST  
 ‘Sujan knew that the book fell on the floor.’
- (13) a. Suḏʒan-da [Pasang-sɛ kitap tājna la ba bʰisi] tʰa mu-la  
 Sujan-DAT [Pasang-ERG book drop do PST COMP] knowCOP-NON.PST  
 b. \*<sup>3</sup>kitap<sub>i</sub> Suḏʒan-da [Pasang-sɛ t<sub>i</sub> tājna la-ba bʰisi] tʰa mu-la  
 Book Sujan-DAT [Pasang-ERG drop do-PST COMP] know COP-NON.PST  
 (‘Sujan knew that Pasang dropped the book.’)

As observed in (12) and (13), if the embedded clause is intransitive, scrambling can take place, although our speaker finds it slightly degraded. On the other hand, it is impossible to scramble the embedded object to the main clause. Although we remain agnostic about the exact details of scrambling in Eastern Tamang, the fact that it allows long-distance scrambling in limited environments renders the diagnostic inconclusive.

**c. Only languages with articles allow the majority reading of *most*.**

It has been noted that only DP languages allow majority (aka superlative) reading of *most* (Bošković & Gajewski, 2011; Hackl, 2009). Thus, the presence of the majority reading entails that the language is a DP language. The lack of such a reading does not entail anything. The language could be either an NP language or a DP language. The majority reading and the plurality reading are described in the scenarios below.

**Scenario A:** People at dinner chose one beverage each. 40% of the people had beer, 30% had soju, and 30% had wine. (Plurality)

- (14) <sup>3</sup>lʰama mʰi-kaŋ-sɛ beer tʰuŋ-ḏʒi  
 Most people-PL-ERG beer drink-PST  
 ‘Most people drank beer.’

**Scenario B:** People at dinner are allowed more than one beverage. 60% of the

people had beer. 75% of people had wine. (Majority)

- (15) \*l<sup>h</sup>ama m<sup>h</sup>i-kaŋ-sɛ          beer    t<sup>h</sup>uŋ-ɕɕi  
 Most people-PL-ERG    beer    drink-PST  
 ("Most people drank beer.")

The plurality (relative) reading refers to the case when the beer is selected more often than any other beverage, even though it is not necessarily consumed by more than half of the people involved. The majority reading refers to the case when the beer is selected by more than half of the people although it does not imply the beer is the most consumed item. As the examples show, the plurality reading is the only possible reading in Eastern Tamang. This renders the diagnostic inconclusive.

**d. Inverse scope for the subject and object is unavailable in languages without articles.**

If a language allows inverse scope between the subject and the object, it is a DP language. If inverse scope is not available, then this diagnostic is inconclusive. That is, it could be an NP language or a DP language that happens to disallow inverse scope. Consider the following examples.

- (16) ʃsaura    gor    ŋ<sup>h</sup>i-sɛ    ɕɕAMMAN    meŋs<sup>h</sup>    ŋ<sup>h</sup>oŋ-na    la-ɕɕi  
 People    CL    two-ERG    every    chair    destroy-PRT    do-PST  
 'Two people destroyed every chair.'    (2>∀, \*∀>2)
- (17) k<sup>h</sup>alɿi-sɛ    ɕɕAMMAN    kitap    paɕpaɕ    la-ɕɕi  
 someone-ERG    every    book    read    do-PST  
 'Someone read every book.'    (∃>∀, \*∀>∃)

Eastern Tamang only allows surface scope readings for the examples shown above. (16) asserts that there are two specific people who destroyed all the chairs. Similarly, (17) also asserts that there is a specific person who read every book in a given context. Hence, this diagnostic is inconclusive for Eastern Tamang.

**e. Possessors may induce an exhaustivity presupposition only in languages with articles.**

If possessors in a language induce an exhaustivity presupposition, then it is a DP language. If no such presupposition is induced, then there is no such entailment. The language could be either an NP language or a DP language. An exhaustivity presupposition for quantified possessive nominals in English. In the expression *Mary's three books* it is presupposed that Mary has exactly three books. Consider the following data.

- (18)  $\eta$ a-I      Suḏʒan-la    som    kitap-kade    pʌdʌp-la-ḏʒi  
 me-ERG    Sujan-GEN    three    book-PL      read-do-PST  
 'I read Sujan's three books.'

- (19) darem,  $\eta$ a-I    thɛ-la    arku    kitap    ɛ    pʌdʌp-la-ba    sem    mu-la  
 Now,    me-ERG    he-GEN    another    book    FOC    read-do-PRT    want    COP-NONPST  
 'Now, I want to read another book of his.'

In Eastern Tamang, the sentence in (19) can follow the sentence (18) without giving rise to any contradiction. This shows that possessors do not induce an exhaustivity presupposition, thus this diagnostic is inconclusive.

Note, however, that a serious counter-example has been put forth calling into question the validity of this parameter (Gillon & Armoskaite, 2015). Consider the data in (20). Observe that there is no maximality presupposition in the first example.

- (20) a. Zhangsan's one sweater is ugly, and his other one is uglier.  
 b. #Zhangsan's three sweaters are ugly, and his other ones are uglier.

Although grammatical judgments vary among speakers, the numeral *one* does not pattern with the exhaustivity presuppositions as otherwise discussed for English here.

**f. Number morphology may not be obligatory in languages without articles.**

Bošković (2013) proposes a universal that states that the number features of D must be morphologically realized. Thus, number marking is obligatory in DP languages but may be optional in NP languages. Conversely, if a language lacks obligatory number morphology, then it is an NP language. If a language has obligatory number marking, it is either an NP or a DP language. Considering the

data below first, it appears that Eastern Tamang has optional number marking.

- (21) a. gor som ʔsaura-(kade)  
 CL three child-PL  
 ‘three children’
- b. ʔsaura-(kade) gor som  
 child-PL CL three  
 ‘three children’

Eastern Tamang has a suffix *-kade* for marking plurality. The examples above suggest that number marking is optional, suggesting that Eastern Tamang is an NP language. Consider, however, the following examples (Barrie & Jun, 2022, p. 127).

- (22) a. Suḏʒan-sɛ gor-ki gʰla-ri kitap(-kade) rʰup la-mu-ba.  
 Sujan-ERG CL-one spot-in book(-PL) together put-COP-PST  
 ‘Sujan gathered the books in one spot.’
- b. Suḏʒan-sɛ gor-ki gʰla-ri nʌgi\*(-kade) rʰup la-mu-ba.  
 Sujan-ERG CL-one spot-in dog(-PL) together put-COP-PST  
 ‘Sujan gathered the dogs in one spot.’

In addition, it is also observed that when a demonstrative is present in the nominal structure, number agreement is obligatory, even with an inanimate nominal, as shown below.<sup>4</sup>

- (23) Suḏʒan-sɛ cu ʃjəw\*(-kade) tsa-mu-ba  
 Sujan-ERG DEM apple-PL eat-COP-PST  
 ‘Sujan ate these apples.’

Similar patterns are observed in CSE (C. Kim et al., 2009), Korean (K. Kim & Park, 2024) and Blackfoot (K. Kim et al., 2017). Namely, plural marking tends to be obligatory on definite nominals. Such patterns are fully in line with the cross-linguistic variation described in Corbett (2000). While there may be a way

<sup>4</sup> A reviewer asks about the semantic properties of demonstratives, in particular whether they mark anaphoric definiteness. It has been shown in other languages that number marking is obligatory with anaphoric definites. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper to address this in detail; however, the reader is referred to Kim (2024) for more discussion.

to accommodate the variation discussed here into Bošković's framework, the facts here require us to proceed with caution. Recall that Bošković's analysis depends on a universal requirement for number features to be expressed on D. The very analysis proposed for Blackfoot (K. Kim et al., 2017) proposes that full nominals are DPs (and thus have obligatory number marking) and that reduced nominals are NPs (and thus number marking is optional). Such a possibility may be possible for Eastern Tamang. We revisit this possibility in section 3.4 below.

**g. Languages without articles do not allow transitive nominals with two lexical genitives.**

This diagnostic holds that only DP languages can have a nominal with two genitive-marked arguments. Note that this parameter does not deal with a possessors, but rather true arguments (Bošković & Şener, 2014). Thus, only nominals such as Complex Event Nominals in the sense of Grimshaw (1990) are considered. For example, consider the acute difference between the data in English and Polish (Bošković, 2013).

- (24) a. the barbarian's destruction of Rome  
 b. \*zničeni Āima barbarŭ  
 destruction Rome.GEN barbarian.GEN  
 ('The barbarians destruction of Rome')

Because it is assumed that the genitive case requires a spec-head relationship, there is a difference in the number of specifiers in NP and DP languages. Thus, DP languages can utilize one more specifier than NP languages, allowing a double-genitive construction. In Eastern Tamang, this diagnostic is not testable. Complex event nominals such as *coercion*, *destruction*, or *arrival* are not attested in the language. Eventive nominals are formed by nominalized clauses. As such, the arguments bear ergative or absolutive case marking. Hence, this parameter is untestable.

**h. Negative concord reading may be absent with multiple complex negative constituents, only in negative concord languages with articles.**

In DP languages, while negative concord readings are possible, negative concord readings are unavailable in complex negative constituents. First, (25) shows that Italian has NPIs or the relevant kind. Consider the case in Italian. (26a) displays

negative concord, but (26b) does not, as the arguments are complex negative constituents.

(25) Maria non ha visto nessuno / nessun libro.  
 Maria NEG has seen nobody / no book  
 'Maria has not seen anybody/any book.'

(26) a. Nessuno ha visto nessuno.  
 Nobody has seen nobody  
 'Nobody has seen anybody.' (Negative concord reading only)

b. Nessuno studente ha letto nessun libro  
 No student has read no book  
 'No student has read no book.' (Double negation reading only)

The crucial point with this diagnostic is that the language needs a complex negative construction to see whether negative concord reading is absent (i.e. *no student*). Consider (27). These sentences are ungrammatical without the negative morpheme, *-a*. Thus, they act as NPIs, similarly to Italian.

(27) Eastern Tamang  
 a. ḥsaura-kadε kʰalɿ-sε ε kitap pɒɒɒp \*(a)-la-ḏzi  
 child-PL NPI-ERG FOC book read NEG-do-PST  
 'No Children read a book.'

b. ḥsaura-kat.sε kitap kʰappɿ ε pɒɒɒp \*(a)-la-ḏzi  
 child-PL.ERG book NPI FOC read NEG-do-PST  
 'Children didn't read any book.'

Observe in (28) that if both the subject and object are composed of negative constituents, only the negative concord reading is possible, unlike Italian. Observe crucially that a negative marker is required on the verb. Note that the lack of a double negation reading is possible in both NP and DP languages, so this test is inconclusive.

(28) ḥsaura-kadε kʰalɿ-sε-ε kitap kʰappɿ-ε pɒɒɒp \*(a)-la-ḏzi  
 child-PL any-ERG-FOC book any-FOC read NEG-do-PST  
 'No children read any book.' (Negative concord reading only)

**i. Only languages without articles may allow Left Branch Extraction.**

Left-branch extraction (LBE) is commonly attested in NP languages, notably in Serbo-Croatian, whereas it is disallowed in DP languages like English. A typical set of examples is as follows (Bošković, 2005).

- (29) Lijepe<sub>i</sub> je vidio [t<sub>i</sub> kuće] [Serbo-Croatian]  
 Expensive I see [ house]  
 'I see a an expensive house.'
- (30) \*Beautiful<sub>i</sub> I saw [t<sub>i</sub> houses]  
 ('I saw beautiful houses.')

In Eastern Tamang, LBE is not possible. Thus, this diagnostic is inconclusive. Consider the following examples. Observe that extraction of the colour adjective out of the object results in ungrammaticality.

- (31) Suɖʒan-sɛ wala gʌɖi gʰlu-ɖʒi.  
 Sujan-ERG red car buy-PST  
 'Sujan bought a red car.'
- (32) \*wala<sub>i</sub> Suɖʒan-sɛ [t<sub>i</sub> gʌɖi] gʰlu-ɖʒi.  
 red Sujan-ERG [ car] buy-PST  
 ('Red, Sujan bought a car.')

**j. Languages without articles disallow negative raising (i.e. strict clause-mate NPI licensing under negative raising).**

There is a fundamental difference between NEG-raising predicates and non-NEG-raising predicates in terms of long-distance NPI licensing. Consider the two sets of examples below (Gajewski, 2005). The NPIs in question are bold-faced.

- (33) a. Mary didn't believe [that Bill had seen **anything** unusual.]  
 b. Mary didn't believe [that Bill had left the country **in years**.]
- (34) a. Mary didn't claim [that Bill had seen **anything** unusual.]  
 b. \*Mary didn't claim [that Bill had left the country **in years**.]

The NPIs can be classified as to whether they must be licensed in a local relationship with its licensor or not. The NPIs that must be licensed locally are strict NPIs, whereas NPIs that may be licensed across clauses are non-strict NPIs. In English, the NPI *anything* is a non-strict NPI, whereas *in years* is a strict NPIs. The contrast is shown in (34). Since the NPI and its licensor appear in different clauses, (34b), fails to be licensed and, hence, is ungrammatical. However, when the predicate in the matrix clause is a NEG-raising predicate (*believe*), as in (33), it is possible to license strict NPIs across a clause.

The gist of this diagnostic is that in DP languages, even a strict NPI can be licensed long-distance under a NEG-raising predicate. In order to test this diagnostic, a strict NPI, which is not licensed under non-NEG-raising, must be available. If the NPI that is found is non-strict, it does not tell us anything since non-strict NPIs are licensed in both NEG-raising and non-NEG-raising contexts. So far, strict NPIs remain undiscovered during our survey. To describe some cases, consider the example below.

- (35) ɲa-da [ʈsaura-kat.se kitap khappɽi-ε pɽɽap la-ʈʂi] rang a-nam-ʈʂi  
 I-DAT [child-PL.ERG book NPI-FOC read do-COMP] believe NEG-COP-PST  
 'I didn't believe that children read any book.'
- (36) ɲa-da [ʈsaura-kat.se kitap khappɽi-ε pɽɽap la-ʈʂi] pang a-nam-ʈʂi  
 I-DAT [child-PL.ERG book NPI-FOC read do-COMP] say NEG-COP-PST  
 'I didn't say that children read any book.'

Based on the grammaticality of the sentences in (35) and (36), the NPI in question patterns with its English counterpart, *anything*, indicating that it is a non-strict NPI. Likewise, other NPIs in Eastern Tamang such as *sinko kɽi* ('lift a finger' - lit.: break a stick) or *gor ki-ε* (even one) are not strict NPIs. Hence, this diagnostic is untestable.

### Diagnosics that test positive for DP

#### k. Negative constituents must be marked for focus in article-less languages.

This diagnostic states that in NP languages, the focus particle cannot be dropped in negative constituents. The negative constituents in (37) and (38) may be optionally marked with a focus marker in Eastern Tamang. As a reviewer asks,



there is no change in meaning if the focus marker is left off. This suggests a DP structure.

(37)  $\widehat{f}$ saura-kade      k<sup>h</sup>al $\Delta$ i-s $\epsilon$  ( $\epsilon$ )      kitap    p $\Delta$ d $\Delta$ p    a-la- $\overline{d}$ zi  
 child-PL            any-ERG FOC      book    read      NEG-do-PST  
 ‘No children read a book.’

(38)  $\widehat{f}$ saura-kat.s $\epsilon$     kitap      k<sup>h</sup>app $\Delta$ i    ( $\epsilon$ )      p $\Delta$ d $\Delta$ p    a-la- $\overline{d}$ zi  
 child-PL.ERG    book      any      FOC      read      NEG-do-PST  
 ‘Children didn’t read any book.’

### 3.4 Interim Summary

We have considered various diagnostics within Bošković’s NP/DP Macroparameter, and only one definitively supports an NP structure. Further more, one test supports a DP structure. The vast majority of the diagnostics are inconclusive. We review three important findings here. First, we have seen that number morphology is optional in Eastern Tamang in indefinite nominal phrases; however, when the nominal phrase is definite, number marking is obligatory. We have suggested that this diagnostic is inconclusive. As a reviewer notes, this property may make it difficult to classify Eastern Tamang as either an NP language or a DP language. Recall the analysis for Blackfoot was precisely one in which nominals are sometimes DPs (with obligatory number marking) and are sometimes NPs (with optional number marking). Consider the following examples. Observe crucially that the first example has a determiner and the second example does not. Recall that this is similar, but not identical, to Eastern Tamang. Crucially, when a demonstrative is present as in (23), number marking is obligatory.<sup>5</sup>

- (39) Blackfoot, Alogonquian (Ritter *et al.* 2013, ex 1)
- a. Nit-a’pihkahtoo’p-yi    amo-\*(istsi)    aipasstaam-\*(istsi).  
 1-sell.TI-TH-3PL      DEM-(PL)    apple-(PL)  
 ‘I’m selling apples.’ (plural marking required for plural interpretation)
- b. Nit-iponota’si-wa      aipasstaam-(istsi).  
 1-sell.AI-3SG            apple-(PL)  
 ‘I’m selling an apple/apples.’ (plural marking optional)

<sup>5</sup> One difference is that in the absence of a demonstrative, number marking is obligatory for animate definite nouns, but not inanimate ones. Such facts would require a more sophisticated analysis than what is proposed for Blackfoot.

Whether such an analysis is possible for Eastern Tamang is left to future research. The crucial question the reviewer raises, however, is what the effect of such an analysis is on the NP/DP Macroparameter. One could classify Blackfoot as a DP language that happens to allow reduced nominal phrases. Unfortunately, we must leave this important question to future research, too. The only diagnostic that definitively suggests that Eastern Tamang is an NP language is that of radical *pro*-drop; however, as was discussed above, data from CSE casts doubt on this diagnostic. Further research on this topic and how CSE fits into the general picture is required. We are left, then, with a single diagnostic suggesting that Eastern Tamang is an NP language, with the relevant problems noted above. Finally, the lack of obligatory focus markers on negative constituents indicates a DP structure for Eastern Tamang.<sup>6</sup> In fact, if the concerns raised above all turn out to be legitimate, we are in fact left with a series of inconclusive results for the diagnostics considered. In the next section we discuss the NP/DP Macroparameter in the context of the Macroparametric Enterprise.

#### 4. The Status of Macroparameters

The Principles and Parameters framework was established as a solution to the Poverty of Stimulus problem (Chomsky 1981, 1986, Chomsky & Lasnik, 1993). Macroparameters were thought to simplify acquisition and explain large cross-linguistic generalizations (see Newmeyer, 2017 for an insightful review). Macroparameters have not fared too well, however. The *pro*-drop parameter, one of the crowning achievements of the P&P era, was elegantly formulated in the mid-eighties (Hyams, 1986) only to be shown to dissolve into a variety of microparameters one year later (Gilligan, 1987). Likewise, the strong version of the Head-Directionality Parameter, in which all languages are uniformly either left-headed or right-headed, is rarely entertained seriously any more. The Polysynthesis Parameter (Baker, 1996), has also been shown to give way to a series of microparameters (Kaiser 1996; MacSwan 1998; Nordlinger & Saulwick 2002; Fortescue 2009). In fact, under the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture, all linguistic variation is limited to the Lexicon. In other words, variation in language has to be acquired by the child from evidence available in the language. It is not part of our biological endowment.

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<sup>6</sup> Željko Bošković (pc) mentions that the absence of the focus marker might be due to low-level PF deletion and thus does not matter for this diagnostic. Crucially, the focus marker would still be present at LF.

Turning specifically to the NP/DP Macroparameter, we offer a few tentative remarks on how variation could arise. Recall from the introduction that some languages have been reported to show mixed NP/DP properties. Recall that some of the differences between NP and DP languages are explained by the presence of a DP projection, and some are explained by the mere presence of a D head. If a language has a non-projecting D, some mixed NP/DP properties are expected to arise. Crucially, such a language might allow LBE and disallow two genitive-marked arguments (NP properties that require the absence of a DP), but allow neg-raising (a property that requires a D, but not necessarily a DP). Specifically for Eastern Tamang, we suggested that an analysis along the lines of what has been proposed for Blackfoot might account for the variation in number marking. Crucially, an indefinite nominal lacks a DP projection, so, following Bošković's line of reasoning number marking may be optional. However, a definite nominal entails the presence of a DP projection (or possibly at least a D head), thus requiring number to be overtly marked. We leave the precise analysis of Eastern Tamang nominal structure to future research, however.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper tackled the nominal structure of Eastern Tamang (taj) by appraising it against the NP/DP macroparameter. What we observed was that, despite the vast array of diagnostics tested, Eastern Tamang tested positive for only two diagnostics, but with contradictory results. That is only one diagnostic suggested that Eastern Tamang is an NP language, and one suggested it is a DP language. The remainder were inconclusive. This unfortunately leaves us with unanswered questions as to the structure of nominal phrases in Eastern Tamang; however, see Kim (2024) for extensive details.

Various other languages were noted that also gave rise to contradictory results for the diagnostics. Given that macroparameters have not fared too well over time, we suggested a microparametric approach might be more fruitful. We made the tentative suggestion that languages with non-projecting D heads (as opposed to a projecting D head as in English) might capture some contradictory properties.

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Received: 2024. 7. 16

Revised: 2024. 8. 13

Accepted: 2024. 8. 19