Polyadicity and context sensitivity in classical Sanskrit

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One evident use to which syntactically tagged, or parsed, Classical Sanskrit texts can be put is to further our understanding of the syntax of Classical Sanskrit. As deeply insightful as the Indian grammatical tradition has been, it is unlikely that all aspects of the syntax of Classical Sanskrit have been adequately covered and, for those aspects which have been treated in depth, it is not impossible that, in light of cross-linguistic comparisons, another, perhaps even better, treatment is possible. To this end, it is essential to ensure that the tags adopted permit an investigator to use the corpora to ask whether or not syntactic patterns known to occur in a vast number of the world's languages occur in Classical Sanskrit. Here are two such phenomena: context dependence and polyadicity. Context dependence comes in two forms: the dependence exhibited by a pronoun on its antecedent and the dependence of an elliptical gap on its antecedent.

Another phenomenon widely attested across languages is that of polyadicity, that is, the phenomenon in which a clause expressing a relational fact has the word denoting the relation, but does not have a word for each of the relata of the relation. Such unexpressed relata are often called implicit arguments. Here are examples from English and French. The expressions enclosed in parentheses may be omitted without loss of acceptability.

1. Pierre a mangé (une pomme)
   Peter ate (an apple)

2. Pierre est arrivé (ici) ce matin.
   Peter arrived (here) this morning.

3. Pierre est près (d'ici).
   Peter is near (here).

4. Pierre et moi sommes voisins (l'un de l'autre).
   Peter and I are neighbors (of each other).

5. Bill washed (himself).

Moreover, when words admitting optional complements have their complements omitted, the resulting interpretations are limited: they are either definite, indefinite, reflexive or reciprocal, as illustrated by the preceding examples.

The paper will explain these phenomena clearly and set out ways of distinguishing them empirically and of tagging them. Some forms of these phenomena have been identified. See (Gillon, 2001, 2010a,b, 2011, 2012a,b) The question remains: are there other forms in Classical Sanskrit, either attested cross linguistically or peculiar to Classical Sanskrit.

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