

Resultative constructions and transitivity in Sakizaya

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Like related ‘Philippine-type’ languages, the Sakizaya language (Formosan) is characterised by its ‘voice’ or ‘focus’ system: a type of morphosyntactic alignment (actor vs undergoer) whereby verbal affixes highlight the semantic topic argument (actor, patient, instrument etc.), which is promoted to the syntactic subject via nominative case marking (Kroeger, 2010). While the triggers that lead to a change in morphosyntactic alignment differ across Philippine-type languages, the most influential factor in Sakizaya is undoubtedly that of Affectedness of Object (Hopper & Thompson 1980). This implies that the more clearly a patient argument is affected semantically, the more likely the event is to culminate in a result state, which is then expressed morphosyntactically as an undergoer (patient)-focused clause. Sakizaya expresses the scalar quality of the event (i.e. the degree to which an object is affected) both semantically and morphosyntactically:

Actor Voice	1.	<i>mu-kan</i>	<i>k-u</i>	<i>tatama</i>	<i>t-u</i>	<i>buting</i>
		AV-eat	NOM-CN	man	OBL-CN	fish
		‘The man eats/is eating (a/some) fish.’				
Locative Voice	2.	<i>kan-an</i>	<i>n-u</i>	<i>tatama</i>	<i>k-u</i>	<i>buting</i>
		eat-LV	GEN-CN	man	NOM-CN	fish
		‘The man ate (a part of) the fish.’				
Patient Voice	3.	<i>ma-kan</i>	<i>n-u</i>	<i>tatama</i>	<i>k-u</i>	<i>buting</i>
		PV-eat	GEN-CN	man	NOM-CN	fish
		‘The man ate (all of) the fish.’				

While all three sentences contain two arguments (an agent and a patient), these arguments differ in their ‘corehood’ (Arka 2005), which influences the transitivity of each clause. The ‘corehood’ of an argument is determined by its (in)ability to satisfy the prototypical features of agent and patient arguments (described by Hopper & Thompson (1980) amongst others) so that they are maximally distinct from one another (Næss 2007). Most salient among these features are volitionality [+], agency [+], affectedness of object [+] and individuation of object [+]. In the examples above, one can see that patient arguments in actor-voice (AV) (extended-intransitive) clauses are marked as oblique and are interpreted as non-individuated; the level of affectedness is therefore undetermined, rendering the event atelic with an imperfective reading. However, in undergoer (UV) clauses (i.e. patient voice (PV) and locative voice (LV)), patient arguments marked as nominative are interpreted as individuated and partly- or fully-affected, rendering the event telic with a perfective reading and (to varying degrees) a lasting result state. As resultative clauses typically have arguments that semantically satisfy the prototypical agent / patient features, they are more likely to project onto transitive structures morphosyntactically. However, as with other languages, there are certain semantic restrictions on which kinds of verbs can be expressed as full result states and which cannot (Washio 1997), for example, while the verb root *tiik* ‘hit’ can be found in all three voices (actor, patient and locative), the

verb root *tukud* ‘kick’ cannot co-occur with result *ma-* as a kick typically affects only one area or moves an object:

Actor Voice	4.	<i>mi-tukud</i>	<i>ci-niza</i>	<i>ci-Kacaw-an</i>	
		AV-kick	NOM-3SG	OBL-Kacaw-OBL.PN	
		‘He kicks/is kicking Kacaw.’			
Locative Voice	5.	<i>tukud-an</i>	<i>niza</i>	<i>ci</i>	<i>Kacaw</i>
		kick-LV	GEN.3SG	NOM.PN	Kacaw
		‘He kicked Kacaw (somewhere).’			
Patient Voice	6.	<i>*ma-tukud</i>	<i>niza</i>	<i>ci</i>	<i>Kacaw</i>
		PV-kick	GEN.3SG	NOM.PN	Kacaw
		*‘He kicked Kacaw (all over?)’			

Another restriction is that of stative (and nominal) predicates, which typically do not have an undergoer counterpart. Instead, if one wishes to convey the notion of ‘causing something to become state X / something’, Sakizaya has a separate causative construction (where the prefix *pa-* is added to the verbal root), which differs from undergoer result states in that a separate ‘causer’ is added, thus increasing the valency of the clause. When the causative affix *pa-* is added to a verbal root that is stative in nature (e.g. fat, dead etc.) then the clause is resultative (Wu 2006):

(Extended) Intransitive	7.	<i>ma-patay</i>	<i>=tu</i>	<i>k-ya</i>	<i>ayam</i>
		STAT-die	=ASP	NOM-DEM	bird
		‘The bird died.’			
*(?)Transitive (Result)	8.	<i>*ma-patay</i>	<i>n-u</i>	<i>wawa</i>	<i>k-ya</i> <i>ayam</i>
		*PV-die	GEN-CN	child	NOM-DEM bird
		‘The child killed the bird.’			
Causative	9.	<i>pa-patay</i>	<i>k-ya</i>	<i>wawa</i>	<i>t-ya</i> <i>ayam</i>
		CAU-die	NOM-DEM	child	OBL-DEM bird
		‘The child killed the bird.’			
		Lit: ‘The child caused the bird to die.’			

This paper hopes to demonstrate the richness of the Sakizaya voice system in its ability to portray the scalar nature of result clauses; how such a system exemplifies and reinforces the semantic-morphosyntactic interface; and what result clauses can tell us about the nature and manifestation of transitivity as seen through a highly-endangered and understudied language.

References:

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