

Ditransitives in the Alor-Pantar languages

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This paper is an initial typology of ditransitive constructions and animacy effects in the Papuan languages of the islands of Alor and Pantar in eastern Indonesia. Many Papuan languages lack ditransitive verbs entirely and in those that do have them, ditransitives often form a very small subset of verbs (Foley 2000). Genuinely trivalent verbs are very few in Alor-Pantar languages and ditransitive situations are typically expressed by means of a serial verb construction (SVC) involving a handling verb, such as ‘take’ (cross-linguistically the typical verb for the introduction of themes in ditransitives (Malchukov, Haspelmath, and Comrie 2010)). This handling verb introduces the theme argument (T), so that SVCs are T-type in the typology of Margetts and Austin (2007).

Teiwa (Klamer 2010, in press) exhibits an animacy effect with respect to T and G. Teiwa has a few verbs which can appear in ditransitive serializations, e.g. *-an* ‘give to’, *-an* ‘sell to’, *-mian* ‘put at, give to’, *-lal* ‘show to’, and *-ayas* ‘throw at’. These verbs index the animate recipient (G) rather than the theme (T) with a prefix. Inanimate T’s are typically introduced with the intransitive verb *ma* ‘come’ (1), though transitive verbs like *met* ‘take’ or *pin* ‘hold’ can also serve this function. When T is animate, *pin* ‘hold’ has to be used (2). When G is an inanimate location rather than a recipient there is no prefix (3).

Teiwa examples in which both G and T are expressed as overt bare NPs in a single clause (double object construction) are marginal at best and restricted to *-an* ‘give’. There are no examples in which A, T, and G appear as overt unmarked NPs in front of the verb.

Adang (Haan 2001) allows a wider range of ditransitive constructions. The first option is that inanimate T’s can be introduced with an SVC using transitive *med* ‘take’ (4). (At the moment, we don’t have data on animate T’s.) The other two options do not require an SVC, a property particular to Adang. The second option is using ‘give’, which is trivalent in Adang allowing the three arguments A, G, and T to be bare NPs without any SVC (5). As a third option, Adang has a set of prefixes (set III) indexing goals of allative motion. This prefix set can be used to derive ditransitives (6) from monotransitives (7) through adding a goal or benefactive argument. These additional arguments are almost exclusively animate.

Abui (Kratochvíl 2007:263) has no trivalent verbs. Ditransitive situations are commonly expressed with an SVC employing the transitive verb *mi* ‘take’ (8) expressing T, which most frequently is inanimate. Unlike Teiwa and Adang, however, Abui also allows animate T’s to be introduced with a *mi* ‘take’-SVC (9).

The Alor Pantar languages therefore provide us with an interesting insight into the division of labour between SVCs and animacy in encoding ditransitive (presently 4?? words).

References

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Appendix

- (1) *uy ga'an u sen ma n-oma' g-an*
 TEI person 3SG DIST money come 1SG-father 3SG-give
 'That person gave money to my father.' (Klamer 2010:177)
- (2) *jadi hala biar kriman la pin*
 TEI so(IND) others children small FOC hold
aria' ma ni-mian [...]
 arrive come 1PL.EXCL-put_at
 'So others brought some children here and gave [them] to us [...]' (Klamer, to appear in a couple of days)
- (3) *ma toples g-om mian gula' [...]*
 TEI come jar 3-inside put_at finish
 'After putting (it) in a jar ...' (Klamer 2010:425)
- (4) *Ella sEng med n-En*
 ADN PN money take 1SG.I-give
 'E. gave me some money.' (Haan 2001:369)
- (5) *John sEng Rudy '-En*
 ADN PN money PN 3.I-give
 'J. gave R. some money.' (Haan 2001:237)
- (6) *Ay afE nE-'a-tEl*
 ADN PN ladder 1SG.III-3.I-lift
 'Ay lifted up the ladder toward me (to let me get down).' (Haan 2001:287)
- (7) *Roni sO kufa' punj ludung 'a-tEl*
 ADN PN 3.POSS strength with post 3.I-lift
 'R. lifted up posts with his strength.' (Haan 2001:371)
- (8) *na seng mi ne-mayol he-r-i*
 ABU 1SG money take 1SG.POSS-woman 3.III-give-PFV
 'I gave my wife the money.' (Kratochvíl 2007:263)
- (9) *kafiei ba di takaf-i nu la mi*
 ABU goat LNK 3ACT steal.CPL-PFV SPC.AD be.MD take
ba ho-kol-e!
 LNK 3.II-bind-IPFV
 'Bind that goat that he stole onto him!' (Kratochvíl 2007:192)