

Applicative Constructions in the Bantik Language: descriptive and typological discussion.

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This paper aims to discuss applicative verbs and applicative constructions in the Bantik Language from a descriptive and typological perspective. Bantik is a West Malayo-Polynesian language spoken in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. It belongs to the Sangiric subgroup which in turn belongs to the Phillipine language group. It is spoken by a few thousand people and in danger of extinction as it is not spoken by the younger generations.

Bantik has an Actor Voice and two Undergoer Voices: one takes the suffix *-AN* and will be called ‘Goal Voice’, and the other does not take any affix at all and will be called ‘Conveyance Voice’ in this paper. Verbs can thus be categorized into three types: those which take only Actor Voice, those which may take Actor Voice and one of the Undergoer Voices, and lastly, those which may take Actor Voice and both Undergoer Voices. Most basic verbs, which have no derivational affixes, take either Actor Voice alone, or Actor Voice and one of the two Undergoer voices. Among derivational verbs, causative and applicative verbs may take all three voices.

Core arguments are defined as NPs which can take subject position in one of the three voices (as shown in example (2)). There are correlations between the semantic roles of the subject NP and the voice form. For example, ACTOR takes subject position in Actor Voice, CONVEYED THEME fills that of Conveyance Voice, and PATIENT and LOCATION fill that of Goal Voice.

Applicative verbs in Bantik are formed with ‘semantically transitive’ verbs by adding the prefix *paN-*. Without *paN-*, transitive verbs take two arguments, but when *paN-* is attached, they take one more argument. The original subject and object stay as such irrespective of the addition of one more argument (the original object does not get demoted). The newly added argument is a nominal which denotes either INSTRUMENT or LOCATION. Example (1) contains a basic transitive verb. When *paN-* is added to the verb, an applicative verb with additional INSTRUMENT argument is formed as in (2). Examples (3) and (4) are a similar pair of basic and applicative verbs, but this time the additional argument in the applicative construction denotes LOCATION. (In these examples, additional arguments are boldfaced.) A newly added INSTRUMENT NP occupies Object 2 slot and the prefix *ni-/nu-* is attached, but a LOCATION NP in applicative construction always takes Object 1 slot and the prefix *si-/su-* is added. As shown in example (2)a, b, and c, core arguments in Bantik can take subject position in one of the voices. It is evident that an additional applicative argument takes subject position as well, which is sufficient reason to call it a core argument in the structure of the Bantik language.

A BENEFACTIVE NP does not become an additional argument in the applicative construction in Bantik. This is typologically unusual, since cross-linguistically, the most widely observed additional argument in an applicative construction is BENEFACTIVE (cf. Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, Polinsky 2005). I would like to argue that this is because there is a specific construction where BENEFACTIVE NPs take subject position, shown in example (5).

Another explanation for this typological uniqueness is that the semantic characteristics of the prefix *ni-/nu-* and *si-/su-* prefer INSTRUMENT and LOCATION NPs respectively. *Ni-/nu-* is a marker for Object 2, but when used before non-core argument, it mostly marks either NPs denoting INSTRUMENT or CAUSE. Similarly, *si-/su-* is used as a marker of Object 1, but it frequently marks non-core LOCATION arguments. I suggest that these semantic functions of the prefixes affect the selection of an additional core argument in the applicative construction.

Only a small set of verb bases can form applicative verbs with the prefix *paN-*. It

can be said to be a limited process of word formation,. This may be the third reason why BENEFACTIVE, the most widely observed argument in the applicative construction, is not found in Bantik.

(1) (basic verb, Actor Voice)

i-heis ma-mareŋ uai ene

I-Heis MAN-take mango that

‘Heis takes that mango’

(2)a. (applicative verb, Actor Voice, INSTRUMENT as a new argument)

i-heis ma-pa-mareŋ nu-batu ie su-uai ene

I-Heis MA-PAN-take NU-stone this SU-mango that

‘Heis will take mango by throwing this stone’

b. (applicative verb, Goal Voice)

uai pa-mareŋ-an ni-heis nu-batu ie

mango PAN-take-AN NI-Heis NU-stone this

‘That mango will be taken by Heis by throwing this stone’

c. (applicative verb, Conveyance Voice)

batu ie pa-mareŋ ni-heis su-uai ene

stone this PAN-take NI-Heis SU-mango that

‘This stone will be used by Heis to take that mango’

(3) (basic verb, Actor Voice)

i-remi ma-mandaŋ pisou=ne

I-Remi MAN-try knife NI-3sg

‘Remi tries his knife’

(4) a. (applicative construction, Actor Voice, LOCATION as a new argument)

i-remi ma-pa-mandaŋ nu-pisou=ne su-pun nu-teŋiŋ

I-Remi MA-PAN-try NU-knife=NI-3sg SU-tree NU-bamboo

‘Remi tries his knife on the bamboo’

(5) (benefactive construction, with benefactive verb in the ‘paN- + base + -AN’ form)

i-titin pa-teŋed-an ni-steŋi barei

I-Titin PA-stand-AN NI-Stevy house

‘Stevy will build a house for Titin (*Lit.* Titin will get a house which is built by Stevy)’

References

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- Polinsky, Maria. 2005. ‘Applicative Constructions’. In Haspelmath, Martin ed. *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Pp442-445. Oxford: Oxford University Press.