Voice in the Languages of Eastern Indonesia: A Preliminary Glance at Discourse

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Languages

- Flores
  - Lio (CEMP, Central Flores)
  - Ngadha (CEMP, Central Flores)
- Sumbawa
  - Bima (CEMP)
- Lombok
  - Sasak (WAn, Bali-Sasak-Sumbawa)
    - Selong dialect
    - Bonjeruk dialect

Locations

Data

- frog stories
- personal narratives
- folk tales
- conversations
Relevant Constructions

Lio, Ngadha

• Basic Transitive Construction

Lio
kai deo ero
3rd catch bee
He caught a bee

Ngadha
go rua di lele go lako
ART bee PRT chase ART DOG
The bees chased the dog

Bima

• Basic transitive clause

Lio
jendela kai tutu
window 3sg close
He closed the window

Ngadha
dia ja’o mu’a gha
this 1sg find PERF
I’ve found him

Bima

Hanta=na lako=na de
Lift=3sg dog=3sg that
He picked up his dog

sia nenti kai ra saranggo haju
3sg grasp APPL PERF branch tree
He grabbed the branch of a tree
• Oblique Agent (PF)
  Lako=na ra coco wali ‘ba ani ma mboto
  Dog=3sg PERF chase CONT OBL bee REL
  The dog was being chased by a bunch of bees

  eda lalo kai ‘ba sia doho re so’bu ani
  See suddenly APPL OBL 3RD PL DEM hive bee
  They suddenly saw a bee hive

• Fronted Patient (PF)
  Karefa=na (e)de tau=na ‘di toplies
  Frog=3sg DEM put-3sg in jar
  That frog of his, he put in a jar

Sasak, Bonjeruk dialect

• Basic transitive clause
  daet=n tetontel-tontel=n
  meet=3SGA frog=3SGA
  He found his frog

  moq mu=n kapung=ah
  then PST=3SGA embrace=3SGP
  Then he embraced it (his dog)

• Passive
  te-kakoq elaq=n siq nyiuq etoah
  PASS-bite tongue=3SG OBL bee DEM
  His tongue was stung by that bee

  Pade bojak lepang:tontel setoah
  3PL look:for frog DEM
  They looked for that frog
- Fronted patient (PF)
  sepatu=n  mu=n  balik:belah,
  shoe=3SG  PST=3SGA  overturn
  He turned his shoes upside down

- Oblique actor (PF)
  deman lalok=n  gitak siq  Seman iku
  like  very=3SGA  see  OBL  NAME  DEM
  He likes to be seen by that Seman

- Nasal transitive clause
  lye  m-eliharaq  lepang kence  acong,
  3SG  N-take:care:of  frog and dog
  He owns a frog and a dog
  teh te=m-eta=ye  teh
  DM  1PL=N-look:for=3SGP  DM
  Come on, let’s look for him, come on

- Oral transitive clause
  lye  toloq  lepang  no  leq  dalem toplies
  3SG  put  frog  DEM  in  inside  jar
  He put the frog in the jar.
  te=pete=ye  teh  becat!
  1PL=look=3SGP  DM  quickly
  Let’s look for him, come on, quickly!

- Passive
  acong=ne  te-paleq-paleq  siq  lebah  ino
  dog=3SG  PASS-chase-chase  OBL  bee
  DEM
  His dog was being chased by those bees

- Fronted patient (PF)
  kasur=ne  wah  bongkar=ne,
  pillow=3SG  PERF  take:apart=3SGA
  He had pulled his pillows apart
• Oblique agent (PF)
  paleq=ne  eku  siq  lebah ino,
  chase=3SGA 1SG  OBL bee  DEM
I'm being chased by these bees

Research Questions

• To what degree do these constructions behave like a WAn focus system?

• How do they differ from a WAn focus system?

Frequency – Raw Numbers

Frequency - Percentages
Discourse Transitivity

- High transitivity
  - Realis
  - Telic
  - Kinesis
  - Volition
  - Foreground
  - Individuated patient
- Associated constructions
  - Active voice
  - PT

- Low transitivity
  - Irrealis
  - Atelic
  - No kinesis
  - No volition
  - Background
  - Unindividuated patient
- Associated constructions
  - Passive
  - AT

Expectations

- If non-basic clauses are functionally PF, will be higher in discourse transitivity than basic clauses
  - These expectations are not always borne out even in exemplary focus languages
- If basic clauses are still functionally AF, will rarely have individuated patients
  - This expectation is borne out in exemplary focus languages

Summary of findings for discourse transitivity

- Verbal/clausal parameters rarely show expected correlations
- Patient individuation does not show expected correlation
  - but distribution is skewed in ways that might be a reflection of a correlation at an earlier stage

VERBAL MEASURES OF TRANSITIVITY - LIO

Chart 1: Basic Transitive Clauses
Chart 2: Patient Initial Clauses
**Patient Status – Sasak, Selong Dialect**

![Graph showing patient status for Sasak, Selong Dialect]

**Topicality**

- **Measures of Topicality**
  - Lookback: how far back is the previous mention of the referent
    - Shorter distance = higher topicality
    - Longer distance = lower topicality
  - Persistence: how many times is the referent mentioned in the next 10 clauses
    - More mentions = higher topicality
    - Less mentions = lower topicality

**Topicality and Voice**

- Active/Ergative actor > patient
- Inverse actor < patient
- Passive actor << patient
- Anti-passive actor >> patient

**Expectations**

- If this is a focus system
  - basic clauses should be antipassive
  - non-basic clauses should be ergative
- so in both clause types
  - actor should be more topical
  - difference should be greater in basic clauses
- patient should be more topical in non-basic than in basic clauses

**Focus systems**

- AF is considered anti-passive
- PF is considered ergative
Summary of findings for lookback

- Lookback does not show expected pattern of actor/patient relationship in most languages
  - Lio, Ngadha, Sasak – Selong Dialect,
  - Sasak – Bonjeruk dialect
- Lookback does show patients in non-basic clauses to be (slightly) more topical than patients in basic clauses in most languages
  - Bima, Ngadha, Sasak – Selong Dialect, Sasak – Bonjeruk dialect
Summary of findings for persistence

- Persistence shows the expected pattern of actor/patient relationship in some languages:
  - Ngadha, Bima, Sasak – Selong dialect
- Persistence shows patients in non-basic clauses to be more topical than patients in basic clauses in some languages
  - Lio, Bima, Sasak – Selong dialect
Conclusion

• Basic clauses are clearly not comparable to AF – Rather, they are ordinary active clauses
• Fronted Patient and Oblique Agent clauses do show some traces of PF functions
• Bima is the language that shows the most similarity to the old system, both in frequency and in function

The Next Step

• Add more data for all languages
• For languages with more than 2 constructions, look at each construction individually – Patient initial vs oblique actor vs both
• Look into other ways of determining topicality
• Look for other possible functions for various constructions

References

• Hopper, Paul & Sandra Thompson (1980). Transitivity in Gramar and Discourse. Language 56:2, 251-299.
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