

Event-internal grammar

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0. Introduction: the nature of event-internal orientation

Main assumption: languages are designed to communicate messages about and distinguish two aspects of reality: the internal structure of events (in a broad sense, including states, processes, and actions) and associated circumstances. The latter may include participants in events or temporal or logical relationships among events

(1) Major event-internal vs. event-external categories

Event-internal categories

- Semantic alignment
- Valency-change sensitive to verbal semantics (e.g. resultatives)
- Aspect over tense
- Verbiness of property concepts

Event-external categories

- Syntactic or hierarchical alignment
- Valency-change involving grammatical relations (e.g. passives)
- Tense over aspect
- Nouniness of property concepts

Alignment

‘Semantic alignment’: for a language to qualify it should have two forms of pronominal indexing or case-marking for the arguments of intransitive predicates, where the two different treatments are either identical to the way that agents of transitives or patients of transitives are treated or where there is a differential treatment according to verbal aspect. The differential treatment of arguments of intransitives should be carried through for all intransitives, not just certain form-classes.

Valency-change

With respect to valency-change I shall focus particularly on passives as opposed to patientive resultatives. In the former kind of construction, at least in its canonical syntactic form, a patient is accorded subject properties and the valency is reduced by one place. Both effects change the construal of the event to one which does not harmonize with the semantically transitive structure inherent in the event. In this sense the derivation may be said to be event-external. A patientive resultative, on the other hand, is sensitive to the nature of the event. It produces a different construal of

the action where there is a focus on the result of the action, the endpoint of the event. For this reason such constructions are generally limited in productivity. A resultative may be characterized as event-internal since it is sensitive to the structure of the event and does not modify this structure, but rather just selects an aspect of it for special focus.

Aspect vs. tense

- Aspect is event-internal, cf. the definition of Comrie (1995:1244): aspect “refers to the grammatical expression of the internal temporal contour of a situation.”
- Tense is event-external since it locates events with respect a deictic reference point and/or to other events. Comrie (1995:1244) defines tense as “the grammatical expression of location in time.”

Verby vs. nouny property concepts

Most languages treat adjectival concepts as a subclass of either nouns or verbs. Perhaps the difference may be related conceptually to the parameter of event-internal vs. event-external orientation, but it is any case clear that the difference correlates with the presence vs. absence of morphological tense distinctions.

1. The correlation between presence of semantic alignment and absence of passives (tested on languages of Eurasia and North & Middle America)

1.1. Definition of a canonical passive for present purposes

- (1) By ‘passive’ in the present context is meant a verbal derivation which involves (a) the promotion of a patient to subject and (b) the reduction from *n*-place to *n-1*-place of the valency of the predication. (The latter part of the definition entails that if a ‘passive’ derivation also applies to intransitives and thus does not necessarily involve a valency-reduction the derivation then fails to meet this second criterion for a canonical passive).

1.2. Unproblematical cases

(2) Semantically aligned languages lacking passive constructions

- Haida [Na-Dene] (Levine 1977; Enrico 2003:1232-1277)
- Wichita [Caddoan] (Rood 1976:117-119)
- Choctaw and Creek [Muskogean] (Davies 1986:38, n. 9 and Martin 2000)
- Tonkawa [Tonkawa] (Hoijer 1933)
- Tunica [Gulf] (Hass n.d.; Van Valin 1977:111-112)
- Euchee [Yuchian] (Linn 2001)
- Tlapanec [Otomanguean] (present author)

(3) Genetic units with syntactic alignment and passives

Ainu, Burushaski, Finno-Ugric, most Indo-European, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Samoyedic, Semitic, Sumerian, Turkic, Tungusic, Algonquian, Coos, Eskimo-Aleut, Eyak-Athabaskan, Karok, Keresan, Kiowa-Tanoan, Mayan, Miwok-Costanoan, Mixe-Zoquean, Ritwan, Sahaptian, Salishan, Takelma, Uto-Aztecan, Wakasan, Wintun, Yokuts, Yuki-Wappo.

(4) Languages with syntactic alignment (accusative or ergative) and no passives

- Gilyak (accusative) [Gilyak] (Gruzdeva 1998:32)
- Hittite (accusative) [Indo-European] (Luraghi 1997:32-33; Watkins 2004:564)
- Yukaghir (accusative) [Yukaghir] (Maslova 2003)
- Washo (accusative) [Washo] (Jacobsen 2000[1964])
- Maricopa and Jamul Tiipay (accusative) [Yuman] (Gordon 1986 and Miller 2001)
- various West-Caucasian languages (ergative) (Hewitt ed. 1989:106-7, 334-335, 387)
- various Nakh-Daghestanian languages (ergative) (Smeets ed. 1994:55-6, 122, 197, 498; Kibrik 2001:1417)
- Coast Tsimshian (ergative) [Tsimshian] (Mulder 1994:143-45)

1.3. Seemingly problematical cases

1.3.1. Ket

Vajda (2004:28): “[a]lthough there is no regular passive transformation in Ket, INSTR occasionally marks animate agents in conjunction with resultative verbs.”

Vajda (2004:50): the ‘split-S’ or ‘active/agentive’ pattern is limited to one of the conjugation classes, the so-called ‘Active Conjugation’. “The existence of other productive patterns, notably Absolutive Conjugation, where semantic roles have no independent effect on actant marking, vitiates the claim that Ket possesses active alignment as an overall typological trait.”

- (5) KET
- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <i>súùl</i> | <i>óv-às</i> | <i>bimbàve</i> | [<i>bin-b-a-bet</i>] |
| snow.sled | father-INSTR | it.is.made | self-3N.SJ-R-make |
- “The sled is one my father made.” (Vajda 2004:28)

1.3.2. Koasati

The Koasati passive is promotional, the semantic patient being marked as subject by means of a nominative case suffix *-k*. It is marked by means of a verbal prefix that takes the shape *ho-* before a consonant and *oh-* before a vowel, and is glossed ‘distributive’. The main function of the distributive is to indicate that “a subject or object is multiple or scattered over a space” (Kimball (1991:136). It may be used to indicate that the actor is indefinite or as a way of concealing the identity of the actor. The passive is clearly an extension of the indefinite actor construction, the only difference apparently being the presence of the nominative suffix *-k* in the ‘passive’ and its absence in the ‘indefinite actor’ construction. Perhaps the addition of *-k* serves to topicalize the patient.

(6) KOASATI

- (a) *alíkcí mók ho-hí:ca-tik sánko-n. . .*
doctor also DIST-look.for-but be-able-3NEG-SW
'They also looked for a doctor, but were unable to [find one]. . .'

(Kimball 1991:137)

- (b) *thátha-k ho-banna-tíkko-laho-Ÿ ká:ha-t*
white.person-SUBJ DISTR-need-3NEG-IRR-PHR.TERM say-CONN
'White people will not be needed,' he said.' (Kimball 1991:138)

1.3.3. Central Pomo

The construction in question involves a verbal suffix $-(y)a$, which appears mainly to serve the purpose of defocalizing the agent. The patient does not get promoted, but remains encoded as a patient, compare example (7a), where $-(y)a$ is absent, with example (7b), which carries $-(y)a$. In addition to its lack of promotion of the patient, the Central Pomo construction also differs from a canonical passive in that the $-(y)a$ suffix may be added to intransitive verbs, as in (7c).

(7) CENTRAL POMO

- (a) *Míul yal qó?diw.*
he us-PAT bring-ASP
'He brought us.' (Mithun 1988:40)

- (b) *. . . yal mii dáa?č'aw ^hin ?in.*
us-PAT there want-PL.IPFV-X-ASP not is-IPFV
' . . . we are not wanted there.' (Mithun 1988:43)

- (c) *Mii ba?íi-ya-?le*
there PL.lie-X-COND
'There they would sleep.' (Mithun 1988:40)

1.3.4. *Apurinã*

A construction looking like a passive where the agent is demoted and where the patient has been promoted to subject appears to exist in *Apurinã*, cf. (8a). Facundes (2000:405), however, states that such examples are rare in actual speech. Moreover, the “passive” marker is not restricted to transitives, but may also occur with intransitives, as in (8b), as well as in sentences that do not show signs of agent demotion, as in (8c).

(8) APURINÃ

(a) *Ø-oka-pẽ-ka*

3M-kill-PFV-PASS

‘He was killed.’ (Facundes 2000:521)

(b) *uwã u-su-pẽ-ka*

there 3M-go-PFV-PASS

‘He/it has gone (somewhere).’ (Facundes 2000:406)

(c) *sotu ãkiti akatsa-pẽ-ka*

deer jaguar bite-PFV-PASS

‘The jaguar has already bitten the deer.’ (Facundes 2000:406)

1.4. A typical valency reduction mechanism in semantically aligned languages: the patientive resultative

(9) Some Tlapanec verbs that take resultative derivation (author field notes)

ni²-ʔdi¹ ‘s/he sowed it’

wi³-ʔdu² ‘it got sown’

ne³-ʔspe¹ ‘s/he cut it down’

wi³-ʔspa² ‘it got cut down’

ni²-mbo¹ ‘s/he finished it’

wa⁻³-mba² ‘it was finished’

ni-mbro¹ʔo¹ ‘s/he wrapped it’

ni-mbro¹ʔo²³ ‘it got entangled’

ni-še¹ʔyga¹ ‘s/he removed it’

ni-še¹ʔygo²³ ‘it got removed’

ni-hpri¹ʔyu¹ ‘s/he peeled it’

ni-hpri¹ʔyu²³ ‘it got peeled’

ni²-ʔni² ʔše¹ ‘s/he fastened it’

ni²-ʔni² ʔša¹ ‘it got fastened’

- (10) Some Tlapanec verbs that do not take resultative derivation

nimbo²mo¹ 's/he forgot it'

nindaʔe¹ 's/he asked for it'

ne²ndo¹ 's/he wanted it'

niguri³gwi¹ 's/he received it'

ni²hmuʔ¹ 's/he used it (up)'

nihya³winʔ² 's/he scratched it'

niʔjun¹ 's/he heard it'

- (11) TLAPANEC

A: *na¹ di¹hku³ ni-nda²tsi¹ bu³rr-y-a¹²?*

Q just.now PFV-buy.2 >3 burro-POSS.CLAS-2

'Have you just now bought your burro?'

B: *a²¹ di¹hku³ wi-ʔtsi¹ o¹*

yes just.now RES-buy.3 EMPH

'Yes, it got bought just now.'

- (12) TLAPANEC

wa-³mba² wi²-ʔtsu²³ diʔi³, šuʔki³...

PFV.RES-finish.3.INAN PFV.RES-insert.3.INAN flower then. . .

'When the flowers have been inserted, then . . .' (from a description of a ritual)

For other examples of resultatives semantically aligned languages, see Enrico (2003:1232-1277) on Haida and Martin (2000:386) on Choctaw.

2. Aspect vs. tense

(13) Tense-aspect systems in some semantically aligned languages

- Haida (Skidegate): aspectual suffixes indicating imminency, durativity, prior completion of participation, or that the situation almost occurred, habitual, and future (conditional); in addition, there are means for explicitly marking a past tense (Levine 1977:109-122).
- Mohawk: “Every verb in Mohawk is inflected with either a habitual, punctual, stative, or imperative suffix (. . .) After the habitual and stative aspects, a past tense formative may be added” (Hopkins 1988:156-157).
- Oneida: has an aspect system to some degree combined with tense; aspectual categories glossed ‘serial’, ‘punctual’, and ‘stative’ may inflect further for past and future tense; ‘stative’ can be modified further for progressive aspect; inherently stative verbs may be inflected for past and future (Abbott 2000:44)
- Alabama: categories glossed as ‘continuous’ and ‘perfect’ are characterized as “clearly more aspectual than temporal” (Lupardus 1982:170). The system is currently undergoing change in the direction of tense over aspect (Lupardus 1982, cf. also discussion in Wetzler 1996:305).
- Koasati: irrealis/realis (‘realis’ or ‘preterite’ expressed by a suffix *-toho* which “indicates that the action of the verb has been completed, but without any indications as to the time of ending” (Kimball 1991:193); superimposed on the fundamentally aspectual distinction there are four different past tenses, distinguishing present or recent past, very recent past, past, and remote past (Kimball 1991:208)
- Creek (Florida Seminole dialect): has present vs. recent past vs. middle past tense (Nathan 1977:69-70)
- Northern Pomo: has various aspectual suffixes which produces changes in the meaning that are to some degree lexical and depend on the meaning of the stem to which they attach; they are glosses as ‘progressive aspect’, ‘inherent aspect’, ‘semelfactive’, ‘continuative’ (O’Connor:1987:20-32).
- Dakota: listed as ‘non-tensed’ in Wetzler (1996:304).
- Caddo: has a past-tense proclitic, and many other morphemes that include past

tense marking as part of their function; it contrasts with future, which is marked by two different morphemes and with present tense, which is the default interpretation when a verbal construction is unmarked for tense (Melnar 2004:62). Aspect is said to be “much more diversified than tense in Caddo; most verbs are marked for aspect and there are twelve aspectual categories indicated by thirty-eight distinct TAM markers occurring as proclitics, prefixes, and suffixes in the verb” (Melnar 2004:66).

- Acehnese. Listed as ‘non-tensed’ in Wetzer (1996:304).
- more investigation needed

3. The treatment of property concepts

Examples of semantically aligned languages that express property concepts as a subclass of intransitives taking patientive marking (from Wetzer 1996:216-219):

(14) ACEHNESE

(a) *lôn ka lôn-poh-geuh*
 I INCH 1AG-hit-3UND

‘I hit him.’ (Durie 1985:203)

(b) *gopnyan panyang-geuh*
 he tall-3UND

‘He is tall.’ (Durie in p.c. to Wetzer 1996:216)

(15) ALABAMA

(a) *ca-is-hiica-o*
 1SG.PAT-2SG.AG-see-PERF

‘You see me.’ (Lupardus 1982:75)

(b) *ca-cahaa-ci*
 1SG.PAT-tall-CONT

‘I am tall.’ (Lupardus 1982:219)

- (16) DAKOTA
- (a) *ma-ya-'kte*
1OBJ-2SUBJ-kill
 'You kill me.' (Boas and Deloria 1941:76)
- (b) *ma-ci'k'ala*
1OBJ-small
 'I am small.' (Boas and Deloria 1941:81)

(17) Tensedness:

A language is *tensed* if this language has a grammatical category of tense, which is encoded on the main verb by means of *bound morphology*, and which minimally involves a distinction between *past* and *non-past* tense (Wetzer 1996:276)

Wetzer's explanation for this pattern is as follows:

- (18) Accounting for the absence of verby adjectivals in tensed languages
 Assuming that prototypical adjectivals, because of their semantic nature, display a strong tendency to avoid bound tense marking, it is not difficult to understand why the verby default option for the encoding of adjectival predicates is abandoned in tensed languages. Once the grammar of a given language requires that "location in time" is obligatorily expressed by means of bound morphology on verbs, adjectivals will no longer participate in the verbal system of bound tense marking. As a result, predicate adjectivals are wedged away from the verbs and a non-verbal predicate formation strategy will be chosen in preference to the verby default option. (Wetzer 1996:294)
- (19) The Tensedness Universals of Adjective Encoding (Stassen 1997:613)
- (a) If a language is tensed, it will have nouny predicate adjectives.
 If a language has nouny predicate adjectives, it will be tensed.
- (b) If a language is non-tensed, it will have verby predicate adjectives.
 If a language has verby predicate adjectives, it will be non-tensed.

- (20) A problematical case?
- (a) *John is/was a linguist*
 - (b) *John is/was tall*
 - (c) *John runs/ran*

Conclusions

- Klimov (1977) essentially correct in seeing a relationship between the absence of (canonical promotional, valency-reducing passives) passives.
- The role and reference grammar explanation problematical because the phenomenon to be explained, i.e., the absence of passives and antipassives, defines the concept that explains it, i.e. role-domination.
- None of the correlates are privileged, but rather individually motivated.
- The proposed parameter a heuristic for typological research rather than a final statement. Are there other possible instantiations of event-internal vs. event-external orientation in grammar?

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