



ENDANGERED LANGUAGES
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Nouns and verbs yet again: new questions in an old debate

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Do (all) Austronesian languages distinguish between nouns and verbs?

- ▶ ‘In Tagalog it is difficult to find a morphosyntactically relevant difference between event expressions and entity expressions’ (Himmelman 1991: 5)
- ▶ ‘in Samoan the categorization of words into nouns and verbs is not given a priori in the lexicon’ (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 76)
- ▶ ‘Tongan does not distinguish between nominal and verbal categories in the lexicon, and it does not distinguish between nominal and verbal categories in syntax’ (Broschart 1997: 153)
- ▶ ‘Riau Indonesian: a language without nouns and verbs’ (Gil 2013) ...



What does it mean for a language to lack a noun-verb distinction?

▶ Omnipredicative

- ▶ all major-class lexical items belong to a single word class of 'predicates'

▶ Precategorial

- ▶ the distinction between predication and reference is made only in the syntax, not in the lexicon

▶ 'Broschartian'

- ▶ lexical items fall into fine-grained semantic categories which determine their semantics when used in referential vs predicational environments

▶ Rampant zero conversion

- ▶ most lexical items can appear in either predicating or referring contexts, but the semantic relationships are unpredictable

(Evans and Osada 2005)



What is a word class anyway?

- ▶ «most theories about word classes take for granted a one-to-one correlation between lexical categories and syntactic categories» (Bisang 2011: 293)
- ▶ ‘Lexical flexibility’ (e.g. Hengeveld 1992, 2013, van Lier and Rijkhoff 2013, van Lier 2017 ed.): a single lexical class can have more than one syntactic function
 - ▶ largely “maintain[s] syntactic function as a definitional and universal component of parts of speech” (Vapnarsky and Veneziano 2017: 7)



What is a word class anyway?

- ▶ Lazard (1999), Himmelmann (2008) and others: the terms ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ can be applied to different levels of analysis
 - ▶ **ontological** (e.g. OBJECT roots vs ACTION roots)
 - ▶ **morpho-lexical** (classes of words defined by morphological potential)
 - ▶ **syntactic** (function in syntax as e.g. head of argument phrase, predicate phrase, or modifier) (Himmelmann)
- ▶ These three levels **need not overlap**.
- ▶ Lazard (1999): there is considerable typological variation in the distinctions made at different levels.



Reframing the questions

- ▶ What are the consequences of this dissociation of levels for our understanding of core aspects of grammar?
- ▶ How are the levels interlinked?
 - ▶ Which level(s) does morphology - inflectional and derivational - operate on?
 - ▶ Does the lack of a direct link between syntactic function and lexical class have consequences for the grammatical means used to identify syntactic functions in a clause?
- ▶ How great is the typological variation in these areas?
 - ▶ recent work on lexical classes in Austronesian suggests that it is considerable (e.g. Brill 2017a)



Tagalog (Himmelman 2008)

- ▶ Contrary to earlier claims, Tagalog roots are not pre-categorial but fall into distinct morpholexical classes.
- ▶ However, these do not align in a one-to-one fashion with syntactic functions.
- ▶ (Almost) all Tagalog content words may occur in exactly the same number and kinds of terminal positions in a phrase structure tree.
- ▶ Syntactic function is indicated by position (in the case of a clause-initial predicate) and by function words (**ang** subject, **ng/sa** nonsubject argument or adjunct, **na** modifier).



Morphology in Tagalog

- ▶ Voice marking in Tagalog is consistently derivational
 - ▶ including with ACTION roots
- ▶ All voice-marked words in Tagalog are members of a single morpho-lexical class (the ‘V-class’), regardless of their base
 - ▶ only members of this class are inflected for aspect and mood
 - ▶ V-class words differ from all other content words in that they are systematically ambiguous:
 - ▶ used as predicates, they denote a specific instance of an action
 - ▶ used as arguments, they denote one of the participants involved in the action



Lexical class vs syntactic function in Tagalog

- ▶ Syntactic function is indicated by function words (and position in the case of an initial predicate)
 - ▶ lexical classes are not subcategorised for function
- ▶ Voice marking is derivational and applies to roots irrespective of their ontological category
 - ▶ the outcome is a morpho-lexical class of ‘V-words’
- ▶ Aspect-mood marking applies to a specific morpho-lexical class (the class of V-words)

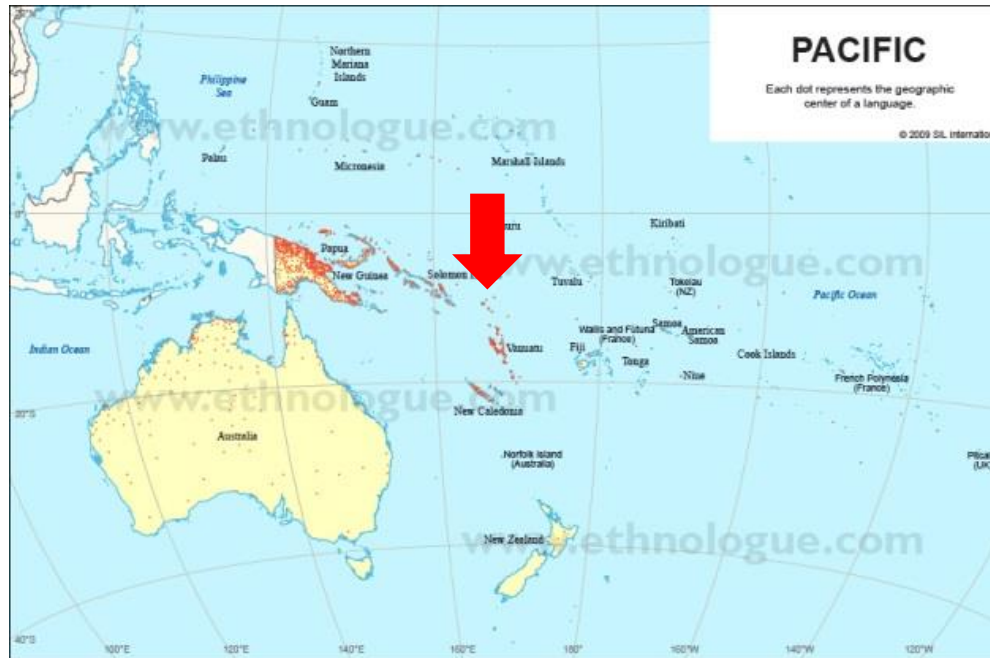


Northern Amis (Taiwan, Brill 2017b)

- ▶ Roots are (largely) precategorial
- ▶ Voice markers derive verbal stems; noun stems are formed with noun markers
- ▶ TAM morphology applies to predicates (regardless of lexical class)
- ▶ Causative and nominalising morphology applies to verbal stems
- ▶ One-way flexibility: noun stems can be predicates, but verb stems cannot be arguments without derivational morphology
- ▶ Syntactic functions identified by word order (predicates are clause-initial) and morphology (arguments formed from verbal stems bear derivational morphology)



Äiwoo (Reefs)



Oceanic, Temotu (Ross and Næss 2007)



Äiwoo

- ▶ Surprisingly ‘Philippine-type’ in core areas of its grammar
 - ▶ symmetrical voice with a basic actor voice/undergoer voice distinction plus a circumstantial voice marked by a clitic
 - ▶ no possibility of promoting participants to anything other than subject (i.e. no applicatives if defined as adding an ‘object’ rather than a ‘subject’)
- ▶ But lacks ‘phrase markers’ like Tagalog **ang, ng, sa** or an obligatory ‘linker’ in modification constructions



Basic clause structure in Äiwoo

- ▶ Intransitives: SV, prefixes Actor voice: AVO, prefixes

I-ku-wä.

I MIN-IPFV-go

‘I go.’

I-ki-vängä

I MIN-IPFV-eat.A

‘I eat fish.’

sii.

fish

- ▶ Undergoer voice: OVA, suffixes

Sii enge

fish DEM:PROX

‘I killed this fish.’

i-wâ-nubo-wâ-**no**.

PFV-CAUS-die-UV-I MIN

- ▶ 3MIN arguments are nearly always unmarked.
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Lexical classes in Äiwoo

- ▶ Two-participant verbs obligatorily inflect for actor voice/undergoer voice, with a number of inflectional classes

| Class | AV | UV | Example |
|-------|-------------|--------|---|
| 1a | -e | -i | läve ~ lävi 'fish with a net' |
| 1b | -ei/-oi | -i | gei ~ gi 'rub, shave' |
| 1c | ∅ | -i | eta ~ etai 'fish with a line' |
| 2a | -ou | -u | tou ~ to 'carry, bring, give birth to' |
| 2b | -âwââ | -ââ | eâwââ ~ eââ 'pull' |
| 2c | -lowe | -lu | tâlowe ~ tâlu 'cut long flexible object e.g. hair, grass' |
| 3 | -ei | -(i)li | vei ~ vili 'weave' |
| 4 | ∅ | -(e)â | vâlo ~ vâloeâ 'beckon, wave to signal someone' |
| 5 | iive-/iivä- | ∅ | iivängo ~ ngo 'twist or braid fibre into a rope' |



Lexical classes in Äiwoo

- ▶ Intransitives do not take voice inflection, though active intransitives can take morphology deriving an undergoer-voice transitive
 - ▶ *mängä* 'laugh', *mängä-ive* 'laugh at' (UV, no corresponding AV)
- ▶ Lexical nouns do not take voice morphology (with one exception to be discussed later)



Lexical classes in Äiwoo

- ▶ A subclass of nouns take obligatory suffixed possessive marking
 - ▶ **tumo** ‘my father’, **tumomu** ‘your father’, **tumwä** ‘his/her father’
- ▶ Other nouns are optionally possessive-marked by means of one of six possessive classifiers
 - ▶ **na** ‘food’
 - ▶ **numwä** ‘drink’
 - ▶ **nogo** ‘tools and utensils’
 - ▶ **tä** ‘real estate’
 - ▶ **da** ‘betel nut and betel-chewing paraphernalia’
 - ▶ **no** ‘everything else’
- ▶ Lexical verbs may occur with indirect possessive marking but only allow the ‘tool’ possessive.



Nouns as predicates

- ▶ Allow but do not require aspect-mood and person marking

Le ki-sime=to=we ...

PROX IPFV-person=now=PROX

When he is becoming a person (i.e. when a child grows older) ...'

I-president no Mothers' Union

I MIN-president POSS:GEN.3MIN Mothers' Union

'I am the president of the Mothers' Union.'

Inâ [sime catechisti nyigi] kele Ngäsinuwe=ke.

3MIN person catechist one here Fenua.Loa=PROX

'He was a catechist here on Fenua Loa.'



Verbs as arguments

Lâ deu=kâ [kele tokoli ee]
DIST before=DIST here sit DEM:PROX

i-mo-oli-mä-i=lä.

PFV-live-go.down-DIR:I-3AUG=CV

‘In the past, they abided by this (way of) sitting.’

Mo käsä [ngângo mana nä]
but be.like be.strong very of.3MIN
kode nyidâbu eve.
maybe day three

‘But it was really strong [lit the being very strong of it] for maybe three days’



Derivational morphology

▶ Causative *wâ-*

l-nubo.

PFV-die

‘S/he died (intransitive)’

l-ku-wâ-nubo

sii.

IMIN-IPFV-CAUS-die

fish

‘I’m killing fish (actor voice)’

Sii eângâ i-wâ-nubo-wâ-no=ngâ.

fish DEM:DIST PFV-CAUS-die-UV-IMIN=DIST

‘I killed that fish (undergoer voice)’



Derivational morphology

- ▶ Causative morphology applies to predicates rather than lexical verbs:

Ku-wâ-tepusi-eâ-kä i=nâ.
IPFV-CAUS-cat-UV-DIR:3 3MIN=DIST
'It turned him into a cat'

Kâ-mu=wä ku-wâ-sigiläi-eâ-mu
say-2MIN=CV IPFV-CAUS-man-UV-2MIN
nuwopa tä i-lââ-kâ-mu
house POSS:LOC.3MIN PFV-build.UV-2MIN
ngä nelo=kâ?
LOC sea=DIST

'Did you want to make her into a boy, building her a house of her own by the sea?'



Derivational morphology

▶ Action nominalisation?

- ▶ eä nyi-välowe-na lâ i-du=kâ ...
- ▶ CONJ NMLZ-cut.hair-NMLZ DIST PFV-finish=DIST
- ▶ ‘and (when) the haircutting is finished ...’

- ▶ Wä=nâ, ile nyi-tei-na nogo
- ▶ go=DIST PROX NMLZ-fish-NMLZ POSS.TOOL.3MIN
- ▶ ile isä=ne i-meli-kä=jo.
- ▶ PROX mother.3MIN=PROX PFV-stop-DIR:3=PROG
- ▶ ‘After a while, her mother stopped her fishing.’



Derivational morphology

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Ilâ | pesaliki=kâ | singedaa | ki-dâu, |
| DIST | rich.man=DIST | wife.3MIN | IPFV-be.many |
| ki-dâu=kâ | go | | |
| IPFV-be.many | because.of | | |
| ilâ | nye-pesaliki-na | nogo=nâ. | |
| DIST | NMLZ-rich.man-NMLZ | POSS:TOOL.3MIN=DIST | |

‘That rich man had many wives, he had many because he was a rich man (lit because of his [being a] rich man)’.



Derivational morphology

Eâmo i-te-mä sigiwâu nyigi.

then PFV-see-DIR:I young.man one

‘Then a young man saw her.’

I-liaa-kä=jo nye-sigiwâu-na nogo.

PFV-reach-DIR:I=PROG NMLZ-young.man-NMLZ POSS:TOOL.3MIN

‘He was reaching adulthood.’

- ▶ Not a ‘nominalisation’ construction but a construction marking reference to an action or state.
 - ▶ Applies to predicates rather than lexical verbs.
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Identifying syntactic functions

- ▶ Two basic means of identifying the syntactic function of a constituent if this does not follow from the lexical class of its head alone: word order and morphological marking (Hengeveld et al. 2004)
- ▶ Cf. Tagalog
- ▶
- ▶ Äiwoo: No case marking; predicates do not always show person and TAM marking.
- ▶ Word order is only helpful if all constituents are overtly expressed.



Identifying syntactic functions

Ote.

be.tiny

'It's tiny.'

Sigiläi.

man

'A man/He's a man.'



Identifying syntactic functions

Lamaa sigiläi=kâ.

if man=DIST

‘If he is a man.’

Eä i-kää-eopu go i-sii.

CONJ PFV-know-also because PFV-fish

‘And it knows too, because it is a fish.’

Me-ku-wo-lâ go sii=kâ.

IAUG-IPFV-go-out for fish=DIST

‘We go out for fish.’



Lexical class vs syntactic function in Äiwoo

- ▶ Voice is inflectional and largely defines the morpho-lexical class of (transitive) verbs
 - ▶ derivational morphology that adds an O argument applies to the lexical class of intransitive verbs
- ▶ Aspect-mood and person marking applies at the level of syntactic function, and partly works as a means of identifying such functions
- ▶ Some derivational morphology (causativisation, ‘nominalisation’) applies at the level of syntactic function



Conclusions

- ▶ Austronesian languages showcase the typological variation in how lexical classes and syntactic function may relate to each other
 - ▶ in terms of which morphological functions apply at which level
 - ▶ in terms of what means a language uses to identify syntactic function when this cannot be deduced directly from lexical class
- ▶ Understanding this variation is important not just for better linguistic descriptions, but for general theories of how different components of grammar can be integrated across languages.



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