'Give' constructions in Papuan languages:

How useful is the notion of ditransitivity?

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Overview

- towards a formal definition of ditransitivity

- in search of a semantic prototype

- ditransitive alignment types

- Papuan languages

Ditransitivity

"A ditransitive construction is defined here as a construction consisting of a (ditransitive) verb, an agent argument (A), a recipient-like argument (R), and a theme argument (T) ..."

Studies in Ditransitive Constructions

Malchukov, Haspelmath & Comrie 2010: 1

Who cares?

- special morphosyntactic status?
- formal alternation with 'intransitive' or '(mono)transitive' clauses?

Consider 'transitivity'

- a 'transitive' clause (however defined) must be formally distinct from an 'intransitive' clause (however defined)

- the morphosyntactic realization of transitivity may be language-specific

- but we may hope to find a cross-linguistic semantic prototype

Two interpretations of 'ditransitive construction'

- 1) formally distinct from a 'monotransitive construction'

- 2) formally distinct from BOTH an 'intransitive construction' AND a 'transitive construction'

Two type of ditransitives

- 'Type 1':   intransitive ≠ transitive

   (transitive = monotransitive or ditransitive)

- 'Type 2':   intransitive ≠ transitive ≠ ditransitive

Prototype theory

"... a prototypical member of a category not only maximally resembles other members of that category, but is also *maximally distinct* from members of other, contrasting categories ..."

Prototypical Transitivity

Næss 2007: 12

Prototypical transitivity

The Maximally Distinct Arguments Hypothesis:

"A prototypical transitive clause is one where the two participants are *maximally semantically distinct* in terms of their roles in the event described by the clause."

Næss 2007: 30

In search of prototypical ditransitivity

- 1) Which construction is maximally distinct from transitive or intransitive constructions?

- 2) What are the semantic properties of that construction?

A necessary feature

- an intransitive clause contains exactly one obligatory argument

- a (mono)transitive clause contains exactly two obligatory arguments

- a ditransitive clause MUST contain exactly three obligatory arguments

*   argumenthood must be defined by language-specific morphosyntactic criteria

Some abbreviations

- S = single argument of intransitive clause
- A = 'agent' argument of (di)transitive clause
- P = 'patient' argument of monotransitive clause
- T = 'theme' argument of ditransitive clause
- R = 'recipient' argument of ditransitive clause

How the heck do you get three maximally distinct arguments?!

- 'type 1' ditransitive = verb + A, P, P
- 'type 2' ditransitive = verb + A, T, R

- an ideal 'type 1' construction requires two morphosyntactically IDENTICAL arguments
- an ideal 'type 2' construction requires three morphosyntactically UNIQUE arguments

Identifying the arguments: verb agreement

- an 'ideal type 1' pattern

  S-verb + S

  A-verb-P + A + P

  A-verb-P_T-P_R + A + P_T + P_R AND

  A-verb-P_R-P_T + A + P_R + P_T

- an 'ideal type 2' pattern

  S-verb + S

  A-P-verb + A + P

  A-T-R-verb + A + T + R

Identifying the arguments: noun case

- an 'ideal type 1' pattern

  verb + S-nom

  verb + A-nom + P-acc

  verb + A-nom + P_T-acc + P_R-acc

- an 'ideal type 2' pattern

  verb + S-nom

  verb + A-nom + P-acc

  verb + A-nom + T-acc + R-dat

Identifying the arguments: word order

- an 'ideal type 1' pattern

    S + verb

    A + verb + P

    A + verb + P_T + P_R AND

    A + verb + P_R + P_T
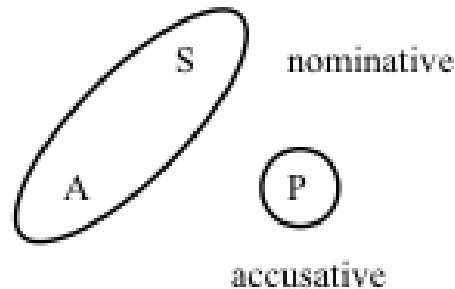
- an 'ideal type 2' pattern

    ?

Identifying the arguments: morphosyntactic tests

- passivization
- relativization
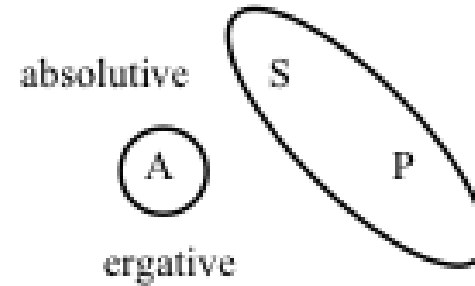- reflexivization
- pronominalization
- raising
- ...

Ditransitive alignment

- Blansitt (1984)
  - 'dechticaetiative'   (T ≠ P = R)
  - 'dative'   (T = P ≠ R)
- Dryer (1986)
  - 'primary object'   (T ≠ P = R)
  - 'direct object'   (T = P ≠ R)
- Haspelmath (2005)
  - 'secundative'   (T ≠ P = R)
  - 'indirective'   (T = P ≠ R)
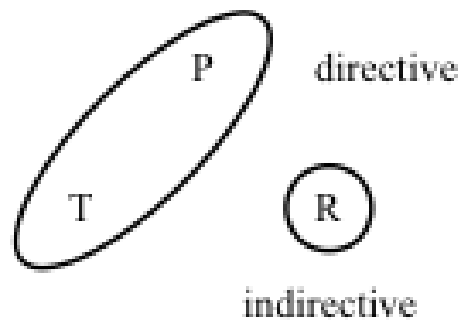 - 'neutral'   (T = P = R)
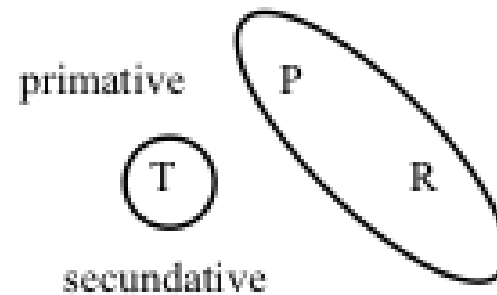
Morphosyntactic alignment types

(after Haspelmath 2005)

Beware the gloss!

- GIVE-event ≠ *give*

- Is 'give' in this language a ... ?

  1 transitive verb: 'to transfer [T] from [A] (to a recipient)'

  2 transitive verb: 'to transfer from [A] to [R] (a theme)'

  3 ditransitive verb: 'to transfer [T] from [A] to [R]'

  3a   'to transfer [T = P] from [A] to [R = P]'

  3b   'to transfer [T = P] from [A] to [R]'

  3c   'to transfer [T] from [A] to [R = P]'

- Is there polysemy?

'... encoding different cognitive perspectives of the giving act'?

- 'Human Interaction' perspective

    Recipient = 'primary object'

- 'Object Manipulation' perspective

    Thing = 'primary object'

Newman 2002: 91

'Expressing the GIVE event in Papuan languages: A preliminary survey' (Reesink 2013)

- Human Interaction perspective =

  secundative OR neutral alignment

- Object Manipulation perspective =

  indirective alignment (p. 219)

"... in the overwhelming majority of Papuan languages, the GIVE event is constructed according to the Human Interaction perspective ..." (p. 251)

Case study 1: Golin

- "Golin ... lack[s] verbal affixation for arguments other than agent/subject. In ditransitive clauses, the order is typically [S-Theme-Object-Recipient/Goal Object-Verb] with both objects unmarked ..."   (p. 224)

- Claim: secundative alignment (R = P) →

  – Human Interaction perspective

Golin: a closer look

- only S/A verbal indexing

- no case-marking

- SOV word order

- obliques may occur in immediate pre-verbal position with or WITHOUT postpositions

Golin: a new analysis

- 'give' is transitive
- 'T' = P

Case study 2: Menya

- "Menya ... marks the recipient of 'give', 'show/teach', 'tell (a story)' obligatorily as the primary object by the object prefix."   (p. 223)

- Claim: secundative alignment (R = P) →

  – Human Interaction perspective

Menya: a closer look

- S indexed as suffix on verb

- A indexed as suffix on verb

- P not indexed on verb

- but 'affectee prefix' indicates animate participants 'affected' by the action
    - benefactive / malefactive
    - experiencer
    - recipient

Menya: a new analysis

- 'give' is transitive
- 'T' = P

Conclusions

- argumenthood must be judged by the morphosyntactic phenomena of the language in question

- verbs glossed as 'give' may in fact be transitive

- ditransitive alignment typology is interesting, but could only have any value when applied to 'true' ditransitive constructions

- the identification of 'give' clauses (in some languages) as monotransitive is more than a mere terminological issue: it can help explicate interesting morphosyntactic phenomena

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Mahalo!
Thank you!