

Complex Predicates

in Some Formosan Languages

Yung-li Chang
Academia Sinica

This paper investigates complex predicates in some Formosan languages from both synchronic and diachronic viewpoints. Synchronically speaking, the formation of complex predicates is rather productive and pervasive in the Formosan languages I investigate. This is evidenced by the widely reported syntactic patterns shown in (1-3) (Chang 1997, 2005; Huang 1997). In examples like these, the underlined noun phrases appear to be semantically selected by the embedded verbs but end up as the matrix subjects. How can this be possible? The matrix subjects can not be raised from the embedded clauses because the matrix verbs do not behave like raising verbs (cf. English *seem*). Neither can they be licensed by the matrix verbs alone since they are not the arguments of the matrix verbs. It is more likely that the 'nonsubcategorized' noun phrases are licensed by the composite of the embedded verbs plus the matrix verbs, i.e., they are licensed by the complex predicates in much the same way as the nonsubcategorized noun phrases are licensed in Chinese and English resultative constructions (as in 5-6). Meanwhile, complex predication at issue involves not only regular predicates such as motion/phrasal verbs (as shown in 1a, 2a-b, and 3a) but also adverbial verbs such as manner/frequency/emphatic verbs (as shown in 1b-c, 3b-c). In this sense, complex predication in Formosan languages is more productive and pervasive than their Chinese and English counterparts. In Formosan complex predicate constructions, the two verbs can be intervened by linkers, as attested in Mayrinax Atayal (as in 2), Paiwan (as in 3), and Amis. They can also be juxtaposed without any linking elements, as found in Kavalan (as in 1), Wulai Atayal, Seediq, Puyuma, Thao, Rukai, and Saisiyat. In Tsou, the two verbs can be further fused into a verb complex, as shown in (4). The grammatical diversity can represent the evolution of complex predicates and each type of the grammatical patterns can stand for a different stage along the evolutionary path, as schematized below:

Type I V1 LNK V2 (Paiwan, M. Atayal, Amis)
Type II V1 V2 (Kavalan, W. Atayal, Seediq,
Puyuma, Thao, Rukai, Saisiyat)
Type III V1-V2 (Tsou)

One might ask: Why not the other way around, that is, why not the expansion from verb complexes to complex predicates? There is empirical evidence that the fusion theory is more plausible than the expansion theory. First, the fusion theory rather than the expansion theory is in line with the well-established observation that Wulai Atayal is more innovative than Mayrinax Atayal (Huang 1993, 1995). Second, the fusion theory instead of the expansion theory accords with the well-known fact that Tsou is more innovative than the listed Formosan languages. My analysis accounts for the typologically diverse data in a natural way and explains the correlations between them in a unified manner.

Examples

- (1) a. qatiw-an-ku m-ara ya sunis (Kavalan)
go-PF-1s.GEN AF-take NOM child
'I went to bring my child back.'
- b. paqanas-an-ku tayta ya sulal
slow-PF-1s.GEN see<AF> NOM book
'I read the book slowly.'
- c. pataz-an-ku-ti supas ya qRitun
often-PF-1s.GEN-ASP buff<AF> NOM car
'I buffed my car often.'
- (2) a. wah-an 'i' m-itaal ni' yumin 'i' yaya'-nia'
(Mayrinax Atayal)
go-LF LNK AF-see GEN Yumin NOM mother-3s.GEN
'Yumin went to see his mother.'
- b. naqaru-un-mi' ma-bahuq ku' situing la
finish-PF-1s.GEN AF-wash NOM clothes part
'I have finished washing the clothes.' (Huang 1995:
193)
- (3) a. ku-'<in>acuvung a ma-sengseng a
1s.GEN-finish<PERF.PF> LNK AF-make NOM
ku-kava (Paiwan)
1s.GEN-clothes
'I have finished making my clothes.'
- b. ku-g<in>alu a kim a hung
2s.GEN-slowly<PERF.PF> LNK search<AF> NOM book
'I searched the book slowly.'
- c. ku-pa'ulid-en a pa-sa-teku a acilay
1s.GEN-true-PF LNK CAU-go.to-bottom NOM stone
'I really put down the stone'
- (4) a. os-'o-cu aepung-a an-a 'o f'ue (Tsou)
NAF-1s-PERF finish-PF eat-PF NOM S.P
'I have finished eating the sweet potatoes.'

a'. os-'o-cu o-epung-a 'o f'ue
NAF-1s-PERF eat-finish-PF NOM S.P

'same as (a).'

b. la asnguc-a an-a 'o f'ue ne nuana'o
HAB often-PF eat-PF NOM S.P. long.time.ago

'We used to eat the sweet potatoes long time ago.'

b'. la o-snguc-a 'o f'ue ne nuana'o
HAB eat-often-PF NOM S.P. long.time.ago

'same as (b)'

(5) a. Zhangsan ku-de shoupa dou shi le

(Mandarin Chinese)

Zhangsan cry-DE handkerchief all wet asp

'Zhangsan cried till the handkerchief was wet.'

b. Zhangsan ba shoupa dou ku-shi le

Zhangsan BA handkerchief all cry-wet ASP

'same as (a)'

c. Zhangsan ku-shi-le shoupa le

Zhangsan cry-wet-ASP handkerchief ASP

'same as (a)' (J. Huang 1992)

(6) a. He cried his throat hoarse.

b. She winked us past.

c. The dog barked him awake. (Rappaport H. and Levin
2001)