

# Transitivity, Valence and Voice in Mandar\*

Jason Kwok Loong Lee  
Department of Linguistics  
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies  
The Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 0200  
[jason.lee@anu.edu.au](mailto:jason.lee@anu.edu.au)

## Abstract

Himmelman (2005) describes two broad typological categories that are useful in categorising non-Oceanic Austronesian languages. These two categories are symmetrical voice and preposed possessor languages. Of the 800 or so non-Oceanic Austronesian languages, about 60% are symmetrical voice languages, and these are found in the western part of the Austronesian world. About 25% are preposed possessor languages, and these are mostly found in the eastern-most parts of Indonesia. About 15% do not align clearly with either typological category, and Himmelman calls these "transitional" languages. Mandar is a transitional language, like its close relation Makassar (Jukes 1998; Jukes 2005). Although Mandar's voice system is not symmetrical, there are some clause types that appear to be neither transitive nor intransitive, but "semi-transitive". The difficulty in identifying the transitivity status of clauses is due largely to the difficulty in identifying whether an argument is core or non-core. In this paper I will describe transitivity, valence and voice in Mandar in its typological context.

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper I discuss how transitivity and voice are encoded in Mandar. I pay particular attention to what others have called the “semi-transitive” (Friberg 1991; Jukes 2005) construction in Mandar and closely related languages. After examining transitivity more closely, I propose calling them “extended intransitives” instead. I also show how the encoding of voice is closely tied to the encoding of transitivity.

What is “transitivity”? Hopper and Thompson (1980) see transitivity as a cline involving “a number of components, only one of which is the presence of an object of the verb” (1980:251). Their components are basically semantic (including discourse related properties) and concern the degree to which one thing affects another, but the presence of an object of the verb is a syntactic encoding feature. I prefer to refer to the semantic aspects of transitivity as “valence” and to reserve the term “transitivity” for their manifestation in morphosyntax.

Secondly, what is “voice”? Before we define voice, we need to recognise some basic semantic-syntactic roles or macroroles. In the realm of semantics, we can refer to “actor” and “undergoer” or “agent” and “patient”. As we step into the realm of morphosyntax, the semantic macroroles are translated into what are commonly called grammatical relations, relations between arguments and predicates. It is convenient to be abstract and follow Comrie (1978) in referring to “A” and “P” respectively as the more agent-like and the more patient-like argument in a multi-argument clause. And we can refer to “S” as the only argument of a single argument clause. (Dixon and others use “O” instead of “P” to refer to the same thing). Consequently, I take

“voice” to refer to alternations in morphosyntax that affect the mapping between grammatical relations and semantic macroroles.

## **2. Core arguments**

Before statements on the syntactic transitivity of a structure can be made, one must either mention or make assumptions about the core status of the argument or arguments of a structure. Mandarin is a head-marking language where pronominal clitics occur on clause heads and may thus be considered the core arguments. Examples (1) and (2) can be considered canonical intransitive clauses and examples (3) and (4) canonical transitive clauses. These examples characterise two basic clause types, represented schematically in (5) and (6) (a summary of the schematic representation of all the clause types discussed in this paper is presented in Table 1). It is also clear from these examples that the pronominal clitics pattern in an ergative-absolutive manner. The S of the intransitive clauses pattern with the P of the transitive clauses. Table 2 lists the pronominal clitics.

(1) *Umande aq.*<sup>1</sup>

*-um-ande* =aq

-A|TR<sup>2</sup>-eat =1s.ABS

‘I eat.’

(2) *Matindo aq.*

*ma-tindo* =aq

U|TR-sleep =1s.ABS

‘I sleep.’

(3) *Mu pipal aq.*

*mu= pipal* =aq

2.ERG= slap =1s.ABS

‘You slap me.’

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the examples in this paper are elicited or recorded in language-learning sessions. A few are taken from Muthalib (1977).

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 – first person; 2 – second person; 3 – third person; A – actor, agent, most agent-like argument of a multi-argument clause; ABS – absolutive; APP – applicative; AUX – auxiliary; AV – actor voice; BEN – benefactive; ERG – ergative; ITR – intransitive; NEG – negative; NP – noun phrase; P – patient, most patient-like argument of a multi-argument clause; PERF – perfect; PERS – personal name; POSS – possessive; s – singular; S – only argument of a single-argument clause; U – undergoer; V – verb.



	Intransitive	(examples)	Transitive	(examples)
basic (a)	$\text{ITRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{S}} (\text{NP}^{\text{S}})$	(1), (2)	$\text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P}} (\text{NP}^{\text{P}})$	(3), (4)
(b)	$\text{AUX} = \text{ABS}^{\text{S}} (\text{NP}^{\text{S}}) \text{ITRV}$	(9)	$\text{AUX} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P}} \text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} (\text{NP}^{\text{P}})$	(13)
(c)	$\text{NP}^{\text{S}} (\text{AUX}) \text{ITRV}$	(10)	$\text{NP}^{\text{P}} \text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV}$	(14)
extended (a)			$*\text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P1}} \text{NP}^{\text{P2}}$	(none)
(b)			$*\text{AUX} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P1}} \text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} \text{NP}^{\text{P2}}$	(none)
(c)			$\text{NP}^{\text{P1}} \text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} \text{NP}^{\text{P2}}$	(24)-(27)
<i>maC</i> - extended (a)	$\text{ITRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{A}} \text{NP}^{\text{P}}$	(7)		
(b)	$\text{AUX} = \text{ABS}^{\text{A}} (\text{NP}^{\text{A}}) \text{ITRV} \text{NP}^{\text{P}}$	(20)		
(c)	$\text{NP}^{\text{A}} (\text{AUX}) \text{ITRV} \text{NP}^{\text{P}}$	(18), (21)	$\text{NP}^{\text{A}} \text{TRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P1(recipient)}} \text{NP}^{\text{P2(theme)}}$	(29), (30)
Ditransitive?				
basic (a)				
(b)				
(c)			$\text{NP}^{\text{P1}} \text{ERG}^{\text{A}} = \text{TRV} = \text{ABS}^{\text{P}} \text{NP}^{\text{P2}}$	(32)

**Table 1: Summary of clause types (types marked with an asterisk (\*) indicate clause types that I would expect but that I have not yet found in my data)**

In example (4), the undergoer is represented by both the third-person pronominal enclitic =*i*, and a free noun phrase *loka-mu* ‘your bananas’. Here, the enclitic can still be considered the core argument while the free noun phrase is an optional co-referential NP in apposition to the enclitic. However, leaving out the NP still implies a definite or specific P, identifiable from context.

	Ergative	Absolutive	Possessive
1 <sup>st</sup> person	u=	=aq	-u
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	mu=	=o	-mu
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	na=	=i	-na

**Table 2: Pronominal clitics and some possessive suffixes**

When the undergoer is indefinite, another common construction tends to be used. Jukes describes parallel constructions in Makassar as “semi-transitive” (2005:664). I however, am calling such constructions “extended intransitives” (after Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000:3-4), but closer in definition and usage to Ross and Teng (in press:16-19)). Example (7) illustrates the extended intransitive construction, represented schematically in (8). Here, only the actor is represented by a pronominal clitic. The undergoer is not represented by a clitic, but by a full noun. The noun here is obligatory.

(7) *Maqande aq loka.*

*maC- ande =aq loka*

AV- eat =1s.ABS banana

‘I eat bananas.’

(8) ITRV =ABS<sup>A</sup> NP<sup>P</sup> ["extended intransitive", example (7)]

Before examining the extended intransitive more closely, I will first go back and examine the basic intransitive and transitive clause structures.

## 2.1 Intransitive

The schema for the basic intransitive clause given in (5) has a few common variations, as exemplified by (9) and (10) and schematised in (11) and (12).

(9) *Meloq aq umande.*

*meloq =aq -um-ande*

want =1s.ABS -A<sub>ITR</sub>-eat

'I want to eat.'

(10) *I Ali membuni.*

*i= Ali meC-buni*

PERS= Ali A<sub>ITR</sub>-hide

'Ali is hiding.'

(11) AUX =ABS<sup>S</sup> (NP<sup>S</sup>) ITRV

(12) NP<sup>S</sup> (AUX) ITRV



We can also note that almost all intransitive verbs are derived forms. That is, it is difficult to find bare-root intransitive verbs in clauses. Table 3 lists affixes that are found in the examples.

Affix	Function	Comments
<i>-um-</i>	actor intransitive	archaic; unproductive; but on very common verbs
<i>ma-</i>	undergoer intransitive	commonly found on stative and ‘adjectival’ roots
<i>ma-</i>	actor intransitive	rare could be an allomorph of <i>meC-</i>
<i>me-</i>	actor intransitive	could be an allomorph of <i>meC-</i>
<i>meC-</i>	actor intransitive	more common (productive?) than <i>-um-</i>
<i>maC-</i>	actor voice	
<i>-ang</i>	benefactive applicative	benefactive; distributive; collective action
<i>-i</i>	locative applicative	

**Table 3: Some verbal affixes**

It is difficult to predict which verbs can take which actor intransitive affixes. The choice of *-um-* over *meC-* for the root *ande* ‘eat’ is not predictable. The valence of the root (semantic transitivity or lexical transitivity) helps only a little in predicting whether a verb will have both intransitive and transitive forms. It is necessary to work the other way round and deduce the root valence of a verb by testing and searching whether they occur as intransitive and/or transitive forms.

## 2.2 Transitive

The basic transitive clause as schematised in (5) has similar variations to those of the basic intransitive clause. These are exemplified in (13) and (14) and schematised in (15) and (16). If we look at the summary of clause types (Table 1), we see that the (b) variations involve an auxiliary and the absolutive enclitic attaching to that instead of to the main verb. The (c) variations involve a fronted NP.<sup>3</sup>

(13) *Andiang i u ita duriammu.*

*andiang =i u= ita duriang-mu*  
 NEG =3.ABS 1s.ERG= see durian-2.POSS

‘I did not see your durian.’

(14) *Lokamu u ande.*

*loka-mu u= ande*  
 banana-2.POSS 1s.ERG= eat

‘It is your bananas that I eat. / I eat your bananas.’

(15)  $AUX =ABS^P \text{ ERG}^A = TRV (NP^P)$

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<sup>3</sup> An examination of structures involving a fronted NP is interesting in its own right, but is beyond the scope of this paper, where I only briefly touch on it. It probably has much to do with discourse features but that is not discussed here.

(16) NP<sup>P</sup> ERG<sup>A</sup>= TRV

The above examples show bare root verbs. However, derived forms can also occur in basic transitive clauses with the causative *pa-* and applicatives *-ang* (benefactive/distributive applicative) and *-i* (locative applicative). Example (17) is a simple transitive clause with a derived verb stem.

(17) *U itai i.*

*u= ita-i =i*

1s.ERG= see-APP =3.ABS

'I search for it.'

## 2.3 Core arguments

In the previous two sections on the basic intransitive and transitive clauses, I have made implicit assumptions about the identity of core arguments. To be able to identify the transitivity of a clause, we need to first be able to identify the core arguments.

Ross (2002:28) lists three conditions for an argument being core. They are,

- (a) The argument has morphosyntactic relationship to the verb. This relationship may be marked by coding on the verb (e.g. agreement affixes), by coding on the arguments (e.g. case marking), or by position in the clause. At the same time, the argument is not oblique: an argument is oblique if an argument with the same structure may also occur as a peripheral argument (one not required by verbal valency), as in *I was working on the floor*.
- (b) The argument is required by the valency of the verb (or, 'subcategorised for by the verb'). This is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, as verbal valency may also require an oblique argument, as in *I gave the apple to the man* or *I put the apple on the floor*.
- (c) The argument has reference-related functions. If the argument is not the pivot, then it will have fewer reference-related functions. This again is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, as in some languages an oblique argument may also have reference-related functions. (Ross 2002:28).

He states that only the first condition is sufficient. The latter two conditions are “necessary” but not “sufficient”. I have identified core arguments in Mandar by two forms of morphosyntactic coding. The first form of coding is the marking on the verb by pronominal clitics. That is, the pronominal clitics are core arguments. The second form of coding is position in the clause as a fronted NP. This fronted NP is also a core argument.

Arka (2005) has demonstrated the importance of using language-specific core-indices in determining the core status of arguments. He has 12 tests for core properties for Balinese and 11 tests for Indonesian. Unfortunately, I have not conducted sufficient elicitation to thoroughly determine such an extensive lists of tests that are applicable to Mandar in determining core status. This is an important further step I need to take in my research.

## **2.4 Extended intransitive**

We now return to the extended intransitive construction.

I mentioned in regard to example (7) that the NP<sup>P</sup> is usually indefinite or non-specific. However, a definite P is sometimes possible, as in example (18).

(18) *Yau pura maqatang asunna.*

*yau pura maC-atang asu-na*

1s already AV-hit dog-3.POSS

‘I already hit his dog.’

Examples (7) and (18) look like antipassive-voice clauses. The A argument occurs in the absolutive form and position. Indefinite bananas are less salient than definite bananas. What is salient is the action of eating. Even in example (18), the left-detached position of ‘I already’

makes that salient, not whose dog nor what was done. However, in canonical antipassives, the P argument should be optional or marked by an oblique. This is not so in Mandar.

Examples (7) and (18) also look like a canonical intransitive clauses in terms of their having only a single core argument. However, the obligatory NP<sup>P</sup> raises challenges. Example (19) presents a comparison to (18) where the same verb root is used in an intransitive (19) and extended intransitive (18) clause.

(19) *Tappana pura meatang, raqmusang mi maindong.*

<i>tappa-na</i>	<i>pura</i>	<i>me-atang</i>
straight-3. POSS	already	AITR-hit
<i>raqmus-ang</i>	<i>=m=i</i>	<i>ma-indong</i>
hurriedly-BEN	=PERF=3. ABS	AITR-run

‘Right after hitting, they hurriedly ran.’

Anna Margetts (1999) got around a similar descriptive issue in Saliba by advocating a distinction between an “inner” and “outer” core; and, a separation of transitivity onto three levels. The three levels of transitivity that she proposed are “valence” for the domain of the verb root, “word-level transitivity” for the domain of the inflected verb, and “clause-level transitivity” for the domain of the clause. For Margetts, word-level transitivity mapped onto the inner core and was defined by the number of pronominal affixes on the Saliba verb. Clause-level transitivity mapped onto the whole clause and was defined by the overall number of syntactic arguments in the clause.

Attempting to apply Margetts’ distinctions to Mandar has provided some answers, but also raised other questions. If word-level transitivity applies to the inner core, example (7) could be

seen as being intransitive at the word level (only one pronominal clitic) but transitive at the clause level (two referents, one marked by a clitic, the other by a noun). However, because Mandar has clitics rather than verb affixes, talking about the “word” level is a misnomer. Mandar clitics attach to phrases rather than words, so if the verb is modified by something like a negative, a different pattern of cliticisation occurs, as in example (20).

- (20) *Andiang aq maqande duriang.*  
*andiang =aq maC-ande duriang*  
 NEG =1s.ABS AV-eat durian  
 ‘I am not eating durian.’

Another approach would be to consider ‘bananas’ in example (7) to be an incorporated noun in the verb. That is, that ‘eat bananas’ is an intransitive verb, and so only requires a single S argument.

But we can return to defining the transitivity of a clause by the number of core arguments in the clause. And I am identifying core arguments as being the pronominal enclitics and/or a fronted NP. On this basis, the NP<sup>P</sup> does not qualify as a core argument. Others might make a case that the obligatory status of the NP<sup>P</sup> makes it a candidate for core status, but I do not.

There is an apparent mismatch between form and meaning. In form the clause is intransitive. In meaning it is transitive and its verb is “lexically transitive” (divalent?) in the sense that there is a corresponding form in which ‘bananas’ is the subject.

The extended intransitive has parallel variations to the variations listed for the intransitive and transitive construction. Example (20) is an extended intransitive with an auxiliary. Examples (18)

and (21) are extended intransitive clauses with a fronted NP instead of an absolutive enclitic. These are represented schematically in (22) and (23).

(21) *Yau maqande diqo lokamu o.*

*yau maC-ande diqo loka-mu =o*

1s AV-eat DIST banana-2.POSS =DIST

‘I ate those bananas of yours.’

(22)  $AUX =ABS^A (NP^A) ITRV NP^P$

(23)  $NP^A (AUX) ITRV NP^P$

## 2.5 Extended transitive

Having seen that there is an extended intransitive construction in Mandar, it is not surprising to find that there is a corresponding extended transitive construction. These occur particularly with semantically trivalent verbs. The verb ‘give’ is an example of a semantically trivalent verb. Examples (24) to (27) parallel the transitive example (14). In (24) and (25) the recipient is fronted. In (26) and (27) the theme is fronted. Both recipients and themes can be considered undergoers. These examples show that recipients and themes are treated in the same manner. In all the examples (24) to (27), the ergative proclitic marks the agent. Note too that the benefactive applicative *-ang* is used for all these examples. The schematic representation of these examples (24) to (27) is given in (28).

(24) *Innai mu bengang gulangngu?*

*innai mu= be-ang gulang-u*

who 2.ERG= give-BEN rope-1s.POSS

‘Who did you give my rope to?’

(25) *Anaqu u bengang gulammu.*

*anaq-u u= be-ang gulang-mu*

child-1s.POSS 1s.ERG give-BEN rope-2.POSS

‘I gave your rope to my child.’

(26) *Apa mu bengang anaqmu?*

*apa mu= be-ang anaq-mu*

what 2.ERG= give-BEN child-2.POSS

‘What did you give your child?’

(27) *Gulammu u bengang anaqu.*

*gulang-mu u= be-ang anaq-u*

rope-2.POSS 1s.ERG= give-BEN child-1s.POSS

‘I gave your rope to my child.’

(28) NP<sup>P1</sup> ERG<sup>A</sup>= TR V NP<sup>P2</sup>



When the actor is fronted, no ergative proclitic occurs and the verb is prefixed with *maC-*. The absolutive enclitic marks the recipient. Instead of the benefactive applicative *-ang*, the locative applicative *-i* is used. Examples (29) and (30) show a fronted actor NP and are schematically represented in (31).

(29) *Innai mambei o diqo gulang?*

*innai maC-be-i =o diqo gulang*

who AV-give-APP =2.ABS DIST rope

‘Who gave you that rope?’

(30) *Kamaqu mambei aq diqe gulang.*

*kamaqu-qu maC-be-i =aq diqe gulang*

father-1s.POSS AV-give-APP =1s.ABS PROX rope

‘My father gave me this rope.’

(31) NP<sup>A</sup> TRV =ABS<sup>P1(recipient)</sup> NP<sup>P2(theme)</sup>

## 2.6 Ditransitive?

I have only one example of what looks like a ditransitive construction, example (32). This is the only example I have of a fronted NP co-occurring with what looks like a co-referential absolutive enclitic. It is not helpful in showing the recipient marked by the enclitic because both the recipient and theme are in the third person. I’m not too sure about this example. It could be an error as it is structurally and semantically very similar to example (27).

(32) *Gulammu u bengan i anaku.*

*gulang-mu u= be-ang =i anaq-qu*

rope-2.POSS 1s.ERG= give-BEN =3. ABS child-1s.POSS

‘I gave your rope to my child.’

### 3. Voice

At the start of this paper, I stated that voice refers to alternations in morphosyntax that affect the mapping between grammatical relations and semantic macroroles. From the above discussion, we can see that the *maC*- extended constructions are in a paradigmatic voice relationship with parallel constructions.

The *maC*- extended intransitive construction is in a paradigmatic voice relationship with the transitive construction. The extended intransitive is similar to a canonical antipassive. However, the antipassive is commonly defined with the demotion of the P argument from a core to an oblique. Here, the P argument is demoted from core to a non-core obligatory extended argument. Because of the differences in transitivity, the voice alternation may be described as asymmetrical.<sup>4</sup>

With the semantically trivalent verb ‘give’, there appear to be two kinds of voice alternation. The first is a simple syntactic alternation between the fronting of either the recipient or the

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, those who argue that what I have called the ‘extended argument’ is indeed a core argument can then also say that Mandar is symmetrical.

theme. This could be described as a syntactic voice alternation between a recipient voice and theme voice. Here, the alternation is purely syntactic, not morphological.

The morphosyntactic variation between the *maC*- extended transitives and basic extended transitives also marks a voice alternation. If the verb is prefixed with *maC*-, the fronted NP is the actor. Otherwise, the fronted NP is an undergoer (either a theme or recipient).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this paper I have defined and restricted the terms transitivity and valency to morphosyntax and semantics respectively. By doing so I have shown that in Mandar clauses are syntactically either intransitive or transitive. The evidence for ditransitive clauses is not enough for me to be sure that this can be considered a third class of clauses in terms of transitivity. I have shown that the *maC*- extended constructions are in a voice relationship with related transitive constructions, but these voice alternations are asymmetrical rather than symmetrical.

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