

# Transitivity and Pronominal Clitic Order in Kapampangan\*

Hiroaki Kitano  
Aichi University of Education  
kitano <at> auecc.aichi-edu.ac.jp

In Kapampangan, pronominal marking is almost always obligatory, and the order of clitic pronouns is strictly the ergative followed by the absolutive, when both pronouns are present. This paper discusses some issues of transitivity associated with pronominal marking. Clauses with two core arguments show various degrees of transitivity. There are constructions with two core arguments whose predicates are semantically far from transitive (expressing ‘relations’, not ‘actions’), and thus low in transitivity. An analysis of such ‘low transitivity’ predicates is presented. Low transitivity predicates also show a kind of ‘mismatch’ between morphology and semantics, and some examples of the mismatch from other languages are provided. Finally, implications of fixed clitic order in Kapampangan are suggested.

## 1. Introduction

This paper deals with issues of transitivity associated with pronominal marking. In section 2, I discuss how transitivity is associated with the presence and absence of clitic pronouns and of full NPs. In section 3, I discuss one particular construction type, which involves an aptative prefix, forming both normal transitive constructions and ‘low transitivity’ constructions. In section 4, I introduce a concept of ‘morphological and semantic mismatch’ with which the Kapampangan construction in question is crucially associated, and give some similar cases from Tagalog and Indonesian. In section 5, I show some implications of Kapampangan fixed clitic order.

Kapampangan is spoken mainly in Pampanga Province, and also in parts of Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, and Bataan Provinces of Luzon, the Philippines.

The following tables give a general overview of Kapampangan pronominal clitics (Table 1) and of some fused combinations of two pronominal clitics (Table 2).

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**Table 1. Kapampangan pronominal clitics**

	ERGATIVE	ABSOLUTIVE
1SG	<i>ku</i>	<i>ku</i>
2SG	<i>mu</i>	<i>ka</i>
3SG	<i>na</i>	<i>ya</i>
1DU.IN	<i>ta</i>	<i>kata</i>
1PL.IN	<i>ta:mu, ta:</i>	<i>kata:mu, ta:mu, kata:, ta:</i>
1EX	<i>mi</i>	<i>kami, ke</i>
2PL	<i>yu</i>	<i>kayu, ko</i>
3PL	<i>da/ra</i>	<i>la</i>

**Table 2: Kapampangan fused clitic combinations**

ERGATIVE	+ ABSOLUTIVE.3SG ( <i>ya</i> )	+ ABSOLUTIVE.3PL ( <i>la</i> )
1SG ( <i>ku</i> )	<i>ke, kya</i>	<i>ko, kula</i>
2SG ( <i>mu</i> )	<i>me, mya</i>	<i>mo, mula</i>
3SG ( <i>na</i> )	<i>ne, nya</i>	<i>no, nala</i>
1DU.IN ( <i>ta</i> )	<i>te, tya</i>	<i>to, tala</i>
1PL.IN ( <i>ta:</i> )	<i>ta:ya</i>	<i>ta:la</i>
1EX ( <i>mi</i> )	<i>mya, miya</i>	<i>mila</i>
2PL ( <i>yu</i> )	<i>ye, ya</i>	<i>yo, yula</i>
3PL ( <i>da/ra</i> )	<i>de/re, dya/rya</i>	<i>do/ro, dala/rala</i>

## 2. Transitivity

It is important to distinguish between semantic and morphosyntactic transitivity (e.g. Himmelmann 1999, Ross 2002). A simple definition of semantic transitivity is that clauses denoting an event involving two participants are transitive. There are more fine-grained approaches to semantic transitivity, such as Hopper and Thompson (1980), proposing 10 (mostly semantic) parameters.

Morphosyntactic transitivity crucially depends on whether there are two core arguments in a clause or only one. According to Ross (2002), in conventional definitions, there are three conditions for an argument being ‘core’. One of the conditions, the only sufficient condition, is that the argument has a 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.

In Kapampangan, if there is only one clitic pronoun in a clause, it is usually coreferential with the only argument. If there are two clitic pronouns, they are coreferential with two arguments. These pronouns appear whether the coreferential arguments are overt (i.e., full

NPs) or not. Consider the examples in (1)<sup>1</sup>. In (1a), the only argument in a clause ('S') is marked by the third-person singular pronoun *ya*. In (1b), two arguments ('A' and 'O') are marked by the portmanteau pronoun *no*, the combination of third-person singular *na* and third-person plural *la*. The pronouns hereafter will be labeled as ergative (for 'A') and absolutive (for 'S' and 'O').

- (1) a. Susulagpo=*ya*            *ing*            *ayup*.  
       flying.AV=ABS.3sg    SPEC.SG    bird  
       'The bird is flying.'
- b. Pete=*no*                            *ring*            *tau*.  
       killed.PV=ERG.3sg+ABS.3pl    SPEC.PL    person  
       'He killed the people.'

Since these pronouns are obligatory whether their coreferential full NPs (*ing ayup*, *ring tau*) are present or not, they can be regarded as functioning as agreement markers ('agreement clitics').

In actor voice constructions such as (1a), the pronoun is coreferential with the actor. In undergoer voice constructions such as (1b), the pronouns are coreferential with the actor and undergoer. Since agreement marking on the verb is a condition for the argument being 'core', actor voice constructions and undergoer voice constructions can be regarded as intransitive and transitive, respectively. Note, however, that since the clitic is morphologically less bound to the verb than the affix, agreement clitics are not a prototypical case of coding on the verb.

Note that there are cases in which an absolutive clitic pronoun does not appear when its coreferential full NP is present, i.e., there is no agreement marking. Mithun (1994: 251, 253) shows that indefinite entities in a presentative construction, mass entities, and abstract entities are not cross-referenced by an enclitic pronoun.

Consider the following pair of examples, which are adjectival clauses, behaving just like canonical actor voice constructions. The absolutive *ing danum* is cross-referenced when a 'particular' water is referred to, as in (2a), but it is not when 'all' the water that one can find at the moment is referred to, as in (2b).

- (2) a. Marimla=*ya*    *ing*            *danum*.  
       cold=ABS.3SG    SPEC.SG    water  
       'The water is cold.'

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used for glosses are as follows: ABS absolutive, APT aptative, AV actor voice, ERG ergative, LK linker, NEG negative, OBL oblique, PL plural, PV patient voice, SG singular, SPEC specific noun marker, V verbalizer

- b. Marimla ing danum.  
 cold SPEC.SG water  
 ‘The water is cold.’

In (3a) below, there is no coreferential pronoun for *ing nasi* ‘steamed rice’, which is a mass entity, and not so individuated. In (3b), *ing asu* is much more individuated, and thus is marked by a pronoun.

- (3) a. Pengan=na ing nasi.  
 ate.PV=ERG.3SG SPEC.SG rice  
 ‘He ate (steamed) rice.’  
 b. Pengan=ne ing asu.  
 ate.PV=ERG.3SG+ABS.3SG SPEC.SG dog  
 ‘He ate the dog.’

Both clauses in (3) have the same patient voice predicate, but differ in pronominal marking. These examples coincide well with Hopper and Thompson’s (1980) parametric approach to semantic transitivity, more specifically the parameter of ‘individuation of O’ (cf. Mithun 1994: 254). Note here that the presence and absence of pronouns has to do not only with individuation of ‘O’ (exx. 2), but also with individuation of ‘S’ (exx. 1). That is, it is not just a matter of transitivity.

So far, we have seen that the degree of individuation is associated with pronominal marking. The degree of individuation can also be associated with nominal marking. Consider the following. In (4a) and (4b), the predicate is an actor voice predicate, whereas in (4c), the predicate is an undergoer voice predicate. In (4a) the undergoer is unexpressed. In (4b) it is expressed as an NP but not case-marked; it is connected to the rest of the clause by a linker. In (4c) it is expressed as an NP and case-marked (i.e., cross-referenced with a clitic pronoun). The degree of individuation (definiteness, referentiality, or concreteness) is lowest in (4a), and highest in (4c).

- (4) a. Maglinis=ya (keng mula).  
 clean.AV=ABS.3SG OBL yard  
 ‘He will clean up (in the yard).’  
 b. Maglinis=ya=ng awang.  
 clean.AV=ABS.3SG=LK window  
 ‘He will clean windows.’





The aptative prefix *a-* usually produces more verb-like predicates, such as *a-pate* above, and thus may be regarded as a verb-forming affix. But it produces relational predicates as well.

To summarize, let us schematize the construction types dealt with so far.

- (10) a. [*Anak=ku*]=*ya*. 'He is my child.' (cf. 9)  
 b. *A*-[*maestru=ku*]=*ya*. 'He became my teacher.' (cf. 7)  
 c. *A-pate*=*ku*=*ya*. 'I killed him (accidentally).' (cf. 5a)  
 d. *Pete*=*ku*=*ya*. 'I killed him (intentionally).' (cf. 6a)  
 (N.B. =*ku*=*ya* is actually realized as =*ke*)

(10a) is a typical example of nominal-equational constructions. (10d), on the other hand, is a typical example of verbal transitive constructions. (10b) and (10c) are aptative constructions. (10b) is similar to (10a) in that both are low in transitivity, but (10c) and (10d) are equally transitive, although the parameter of 'volitionality' (Hopper and Thompson 1980) would rank (10d) as higher in transitivity than (10c). The interpretation of the ergative =*ku* is possessor in (10b), but actor in (10c). The meaning of the prefix *a-* is shared, however, by both (10b) and (10c): accidentality or unintentionality.

The difference between the two types of aptative constructions may be due to whether the root is inherently nominal or verbal. This discussion concerning the nature of roots can be extended to non-aptative predicates. Thus, if the root is nominal (10a, 10b), the construction is more like nominal-equational, and the ergative is interpreted as possessor. If the root is verbal (10c, 10d), the construction is more like verbal transitive, and the ergative is interpreted as actor.

#### 4. Morphological and semantic mismatch

In traditional morphological views, clitics are morphologically less 'bound' than affixes. However, the degree of 'boundness' in morphology does not always match up with the degree of 'boundness' in semantics. This is true for prefix-root-enclitic sequences in Kapampangan aptative transitive constructions. Let us examine *a-maestra=ku*, for example. ([V] below represents a 'verbalizer'.)

(11) Kapampangan prefix-root-enclitic sequences

- a. *a-maestra =ku*  
 b. [word ] [clitic ] morphology  
 c. [V]-['my teacher' ] semantics

In (11), the prefix-root-enclitic sequence *a-maestra=ku* can be analyzed both morphologically and semantically. Morphologically, the major division is between *a-maestra* and *ku*<sup>2</sup>. Semantically, on the other hand, the major division is between *a-* and *maestra=ku*. The prefix *a-*, which can be characterized as a verbalizer, has as its scope the NP [*maestra=ku*], not just the word *maestra*. That is, *a-* makes the verb ‘to become someone’s teacher’, not ‘to become a teacher’. The phrase *a-maestra*, without an ergative pronoun, does not make sense (‘She became a teacher’ in Kapampangan should be *Meging=ya=ng maestra* or *Mig-maestra=ya*).

Such a mismatch between morphology and semantics is attested in other Austronesian languages as well. Rubino (1998: 1157) discusses that Tagalog preroot derivational morphemes, although normally classified as prefixes, show some properties characteristic of proclitics. They can attach to polylexemic lexical items and phrases, some of which are shown below (polylexemic lexical items in square brackets; AF = Actor Focus).

(12) Tagalog preroot derivational morphemes

- a. *mag-[boda de plata]*  
AF-[silver wedding anniversary]  
‘to celebrate one’s silver wedding anniversary’
- b. *mag-[tenedór de libro]*  
AF-[accountant]  
‘to be an accountant’

Take, for example, *mag-tenedór de libro*. It consists of three words. Semantically, *tenedór de libro* forms a polylexemic lexical item, and the semantic scope of the prefix *mag-* is this whole lexical item. *Mag-tenedór*, without *de libro*, does not make sense.

(13) Tagalog preroot derivational morphemes

- a. *mag-tenedór de libro*
- b. [word       ] [word] [word ] morphology
- c. [V]-[ ‘accountant’               ] semantics

Another example comes from Indonesian. According to Sneddon (1996: 64), many *ber-*verbs have noun bases which are phrases. For example, the phrase *celana pendek* ‘short pants’ becomes the base of the verb *bercelana pendek* ‘wear short pants’. This and other examples are shown below.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, this sequence would be written *amaestra ku* in Kapampangan (casual) orthography.

(14) Indonesian *ber-* verbs

- a. *ber-celana pendek*  
BER-pants short  
'to wear short pants'
- b. *ber-baju kulit*  
BER-jacket skin  
'to wear a leather coat'
- c. *ber-kaki panjang*  
BER-leg long  
'to have long legs'
- d. *ber-kebun kelapa*  
BER-garden coconut  
'to have a coconut plantation'

Perhaps *ber-* + language name combinations, e.g. *ber-bahasa Indonesia* ('to speak Indonesian'), are also the case in point here. Again, *ber-* morphologically attaches to *bahasa*, but *bahasa Indonesia* is a lexical unit, and *ber-bahasa*, without a country/regional name, does not make sense.

(15) Indonesian *ber-* verbs

- a. *ber-bahasa Indonesia*
- b. [word ] [word ] morphology
- c. [V]-['Indonesian language' ] semantics

In this section, we have seen cases of morphological and semantic mismatch in three languages.

In morphology, and accordingly in semantics, prefix-root combinations should be tighter than root-enclitic combinations. However, this is not always the case in Kapampangan. I have shown that the prefix-root-enclitic combination consisting of the aptative prefix *a-*, a nominal root, and an ergative enclitic exemplifies a case of morphological and semantic mismatch.

## 5. Implications of 'fixed' clitic order

In Kapampangan, the order of pronominal clitics is strictly the ERGATIVE followed by the ABSOLUTIVE. This ordering seems to be prevailing in Philippine languages, especially in Central Luzon subgroup, where it is categorical (Billings and Kaufman 2004). In this section, I will mention some implications of Kapampangan 'fixed' clitic order.

Like many Philippine languages, Kapampangan has the basic predicate-initial order. When the construction has two core clitic pronouns, the ergative and the absolutive, the former comes closer to the predicate. And if the predicate is ‘relational’, i.e., if the root is nominal, the root-(ergative) enclitic sequence forms a semantically bound unit, an NP with a head and its possessor. If the clitic order is not fixed, this will not be always warranted.

It would then be interesting to ask if such relational predicates exist in other languages, especially in those languages which permit other clitic orderings than the ERG-ABS ordering. This is to ask if there are correlations between the existence of relational predicates and the degree of rigidity of clitic ordering.

However, it must be noted that the ergative pronoun is not always adjacent to the root. Kapampangan clitic pronouns occupy the second position in a clause, and if some element other than the predicate occupies the initial position, as below, the root-enclitic sequence is not formed.

- (16) E=ke                                    a-maestra            i                    Mrs. Diaz.  
       NEG=ERG.1SG+ABS.3SG    APT-teacher        SPEC.SG        Mrs. Diaz  
       ‘Mrs. Diaz was not my teacher.’

A general property of clitics is that they show more freedom of positioning than affixes (but less freedom than independent words), which results in discontinuous constituency. Another example of discontinuous constituency is shown below.

- (17) E=ne                                    anak    Elmer.  
       NEG=ERG.3SG+ABS.3SG    child    Elmer  
       ‘He is not Elmer’s child.’

(17) is a simple nominal-equational clause, with two NPs, *anak=na=ng Elmer* (‘Elmer’s child’) and *ya* (third-person singular absolutive), but two clitic pronouns *na* and *ya* get fused into *ne*, and because of the initial negator *e*, they precede the rest of the NP ‘Elmer’s child’.

Although it is true that Kapampangan has a fixed clitic order within the clitic cluster, the idea of semantically bound unit will not work well when an ergative pronoun and its head are discontinuous. It must be assumed, then, that the idea of semantically bound unit presupposes the basic word order of Kapampangan, i.e., predicate-initial order.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has attempted to discuss issues of transitivity in Kapampangan associated with clitic pronouns and pronominal marking. I discussed aptative-prefixed predicates and ‘relational’ predicates from a perspective of transitivity. I also discussed the ‘morphology

and semantic mismatch', citing examples from Tagalog and Indonesian. Finally, I showed some implications of Kapampangan fixed clitic order.

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