Austronesian and Papuan Languages and Linguistics (APLL) 10 University of Surrey, 4th-5th May 2018

Information Structure and Differential Actor Marking in Kelabit

Charlotte Hemmings University of Oxford charlotte.hemmings@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

1. Introduction

- This paper presents an analysis of NOM and GEN pronouns in Kelabit, arguing that an alternation in the encoding of UV (non-subject) actors can be seen as a case of differential actor marking that is determined by focus/information structure.
- ❖ Kelabit is a Western Austronesian language spoken mainly in the fourth and fifth divisions of Northern Sarawak, Malaysia.
- ❖ It is a member of the Apad Uat subgroup which also includes Lun Bawang/Lundayeh, Sa'ban, Adung and Tring (Kroeger 1998)
- ❖ The Apad Uat languages are said to be transitional between the more conservative Philippine-type languages, with case-marking, and the more innovative Indonesian-type languages, without case-marking (Hemmings 2015, Clayre 2005).
- ❖ They are characterised by SYMMETRICAL VOICE alternations or alternations in the mapping of arguments to functions without changes to the syntactic transitivity (Himmelmann 2005):

(1) Kelabit Voice Alternations

a. Actor Voice (AV)

Ne-kuman bua' kaber *uih*PFV-AV.eat fruit pineapple 1SG.NOM
'I ate pineapple'

b. Undergoer Voice (UV)

Kinan *kuh* bua' kaber ih
UV.PFV.eat 1SG.GEN fruit pineapple DEF
'I ate pineapple'

Table 1. Grammatical Functions in AV and UV

	subject	object	
ACTOR VOICE	actor	undergoer	
UNDERGOER VOICE	undergoer	actor	

- ❖ As shown in (1), Western Austronesian pronominal systems interact with the voice system in interesting ways (Clayre 2005, Soriente 2013).
- ❖ However, the patterns differ from more widely described systems in other languages (see section 2).
- ❖ The data in this presentation was collected during fieldwork in Bario/Pa Dalih between 2013-2017.

2. Kelabit Pronouns

❖ Basic pronouns in Kelabit demonstrates SINGULAR, DUAL, PAUCAL and PLURAL number distinctions and an INCLUSIVE and EXCLUSIVE opposition¹:

Table 2. Kelabit basic pronouns

	1.INCL	1.EXCL	2	3
SINGULAR		uih	iko	ieh
DUAL	kiteh	kediweh	meduweh	diweh
PAUCAL	teluh	keteluh	meteluh	deteluh
PLURAL	tauh	kamih	muyuh	ideh

❖ There is also a reduced paradigm of variant pronouns in 1sg, 2sg, 3sg and 3pL:

Table 3. Kelabit variant pronouns

	NOM	GEN	
1s _G	uih	kuh	
2 SG	iko	muh	
3sg	ieh	neh	
3PL	ideh	deh	

❖ These are labelled NOM and GEN on the basis that they appear to be cognate with case-marked pronouns in the more conservative Philippine-type languages:

Table 4. Pronouns in Proto-Southwest Sabah (Lobel 2013: 103)

	NOM	GEN
1sg	*aku	*=ku
2SG	*(əi)-ka[w], *=kə	*=mu, *=nu
3sg	*[s]*	*=yə, *=nə, *nyə
1DU.INCL	*[k]itə	*=tə
1PL.INCL	*[ki]ta-kau	*=ta-kau
1PL.EXCL	*ə-kai	*=mai
2PL	*ə-kau, *=kau	*=muyu[n]
3PL	*[s]idə	*=[ni-]də

❖ In Phillipine-type languages, NOM pronouns mark subjects (i.e. actor in AV and undergoer in UV) and GEN pronouns mark non-subject actors:

(2) Kimaragang Dusun

a. Actor Voice

Mangalapak okuh do niyuw. AV.TR.split 1SG.NOM GEN coconut 'I will split a coconut/some coconuts.'

b. Undergoer Voice

Lapak-on kuh it niyuw. split-UV 1SG.GEN NOM coconut 'I will split the coconut(s).'

¹ There is also an impersonal pronoun *narih* which is used in typical irrealis contexts, e.g. wishes/requests

c. Instrumental Voice (IV)

Nokuroh.tu n-i-lapak nuh do niyuw inoh why PST-IV-split 2SG.GEN GEN coconut MED.NOM

dangol kuh? knife 1SG.GEN

'Why did you use my bush knife to split coconuts?' (Kroeger 2005)

- ❖ In Lundayeh, NOM pronouns are used for subjects (i.e. actor in AV, undergoer in UV); GEN pronouns for UV actors and oblique (ACC?) pronouns for AV undergoers:
- (3) *Lundayeh*
 - a. Actor Voice

Iko nguit neneh amé nekuh. 2SG.NOM AV.bring 3SG.OBL go 1SG.OBL 'You bring him to me.'

b. Undergoer Voice

Inapung kuh ieh rat neneh.

UV.PFV.hide 1SG.GEN 3SG.NOM from 3SG.OBL

'I hid it from him.' (Clayre 2005: 25)

- ❖ Hence, the primary function of case-marking in Kimaragang Dusun and Lundayeh is to indicate information about the grammatical function (and semantic role) of the pronominal argument within the voice system.
- ❖ Since GEN pronouns are used for actors in clauses with an undergoer subject or pivot, they are similar to ERGATIVE case-marking.
- ❖ In Kelabit, however, NOM pronouns are used for both subject (actor) and object (undergoer) in AV clauses:
- (4) *Kelabit*
 - a. Actor Voice

Uih ni'er ieh 1SG.NOM 'I see him.'

b. Actor Voice

Ieh ni'er uih
3SG.NOM AV.see 1SG.NOM
'He sees me.'

- ❖ Moreover, although GEN is typically used for expressing UV actors, NOM and GEN alternate in the following contexts:
 - > non-AV actors (5)
 - > single argument of certain non-voice marked predicates (6) and (7)
 - > following prepositions (8)
 - > for possessors (along with other strategies) (9)

(5) *Kelabit*

Undergoer Voice

- a. Seni'er kuh ieh UV.see 1SG.GEN 3SG.NOM
 - 'I saw him'
- b. Seni'er uih t=ieh

UV.see 1SG.NOM PT=3SG.NOM

'I saw him'

(6) *Kelabit*

Experiential Predicates

- a. Na'am uih keli'.

 NEG 1SG.NOM know
 'I don't know.'
- b. Na'am keli' kuh.

 NEG know 1SG.GEN

 'I don't know.'
- b. Na'am sekenan kuh ngadan ih
 NEG remember 1SG.GEN name PT
 'I don't remember the name' (text, BAR21082014CH 06)
- c. Am neto' uih sekenan ridtu' ineh kemuh
 NEG PT 1SG.NOM remember fold DEM say.2SG.GEN
 'I don't remember that bit, you know.' (pear story, BAR02082014CH 01)

(7) *Kelabit*

Accidental Predicates

- a. Ne-bila' uih bigan ih.ACCID-break 1SG.NOM plate PT'I accidentally broke the plate.'
- b. Ne-bila' kuh neh bigan ih.

 ACCID-break 1SG.GEN PT plate PT

 'I accidentally broke the plate.'

(8) *Kelabit*

Prepositional Phrases

a. [ruyung kuh] $_{PP}$ b. [ruyung uih] $_{PP}$ with 1SG.GEN with me' with me'

(9) *Kelabit*

Possession

- a. ruma' uih b. ruma' kuh c. ruma' kudih house 1SG.NOM house 1SG.GEN house 1SG.POSS 'my house' 'my house' 'my house'
- d. duih ruma'
 1SG.POSS house
 'my house' (elicitation, fieldnotes)
- ❖ The function of the pronouns is (seemingly) the same in the pairs in (5)-(9). Hence, NOM and GEN pronouns constitute DIFFERENTIAL MARKING in these contexts.
- ❖ This leads to the question of what motivates the differential use of NOM and GEN pronouns and what differences in interpretation emerge?
- ❖ The rest of the paper will address this specifically in relation to the alternation in (5), leaving other contexts for future research.
- Note that the GEN pronoun is a clitic, whilst the NOM pronoun can be stressed and may be free-standing in other contexts (e.g. pre-verbally). However, both NOM and GEN are seemingly clitics in the post-verbal context in (5) (Hemmings 2016).

3. Differential Marking and Information Structure

- ❖ Differential marking is known to be affected by SEMANTIC FACTORS and INFORMATION STRUCTURE:²
 - ➤ In some languages, differential marking is related to animacy, referentiality and definiteness (Aissen 2003, Bossong 1985, de Swart 2007)
 - ➤ In some languages, differential marking is related to properties of event semantics, e.g. volitionality, control, affectedness (Naess 2004)
 - ➤ In some languages, differential marking is related to topicality (Iemmolo 2010, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011)

(10) Tundra Nenets

a. Non-topical object

What happened? What did a/the man do? What did a/the man kill?

xasawa ti-m xada° /*xada°da

man reindeer-ACC kill.3sg.subj kill.obj.3sg.subj

'A/the man killed a/the reindeer'

b. Topical object

What did a/the man do to a/the reindeer?

xasawa ti-m xada°da /*xada° man reindeer-ACC kill.OBJ.3SG.SUBJ kill.3SG.SUBJ

'A/the man killed a/the reindeer' (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011: 128)

² Information structure can be understood as a formal mechanism for facilitating effective information exchange (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011) or information update (Erteschik-Shir 2007)

- ❖ With DIFFERENTIAL ACTOR MARKING (or optional ergativity), differential marking is often used to mark focus, contrastive and unexpected information:
 - > e.g. Warrwa or Umpithamu (Australia)
 - > e.g. Ku Waru (Papuan)
 - ➤ e.g. Meithei and Lhasa (Tibeto-Burman) (see Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018 and references therein, McGregor 2010)
- (11) Central (Lhasa) Tibetan
 - a. Given Actor (context: 'what does he do?')
 khōng khāla' so-kiyo:re'
 he food make-IPFV.GNOM
 'He prepares the meals.'

b. Contrasted actor

khōng-ki' khāla' soʻ-kiyo:re' he-ERG food make-IPFV.GNOM 'He prepares the meals.' (Tournadre 1995: 264)

- ❖ This is particularly true in contrastive contexts or question/answer pairs that represent 'argument focus' in the sense of Lambrecht (1994) (Fauconnier and Verstraete 2014)
- Since differential marking only occurs with pronouns in Kelabit (nominal arguments are unmarked), animacy, referentiality and definiteness do not apply...
- Q: Does information structure play a role? Is it the same as in other languages?

3.1 Differential Actor Marking in Kelabit

- ❖ Interestingly, it seems the choice of NOM or GEN does reflect the information structural status of the actor in UV constructions.
 - > GEN pronouns are favoured out of context for UV actors and used in naturalistic discourse when the actor is a continuing topic.
 - ➤ In contrast, NOM pronouns represent focus/contrastive/unexpected actors.
- ❖ This can be seen in naturally occurring data, as well as grammaticality judgements for elicited structures.
- ❖ In a small corpus of folk stories, pear story retellings and news reports of 122 UV clauses with pronominal actors, 119 had GEN marking, 2 had NOM marking and in one case the actor was partitive with NOM case, *edteh burur ideh* 'one of them'.
- As in (11), the GEN actor of a UV clause is typically a continuing topic (NB. the status of the undergoer is less important):
- (12) Kelabit GEN as topic

Nalap **neh** pupu' UV.PFV.fetch 3SG.GEN hitting.implement 'She [Dayang Beladan] fetched something to hit with' Nukab **neh** bubpu' daan UV.PFV.open 3SG.GEN door hut

'Opened the door to the hut'

Nalap **neh** dteh kayuh UV.PFV.fetch 3SG.GEN one stick

'Picked up a piece of wood'

Nulin **neh** kuyad sineh UV.PFV.throw 3SG.GEN monkey DEM

'And threw it at the monkey' (narrative, PDA10112013CH 01)

- ❖ In contrast, (12) illustrates the use of NOM where the undergoer is given and the actor contrasted:
- (13) Kelabit NOM as focus

Uih keli' naru' baney let uih i'it ngilad 1SG.NOM know AV.make necklace from 1SG.NOM small past

Nuuk maya' edteh tetepuh menaken kuh keyh
AV.string follow one great.aunt 1SG.GEN PT
'I've known how to make necklaces since I was young, I used to string beeds following a great aunt of mine'

[...]

Nuuk teh kedieh petaa ngilad, petaa ba'o rawir AV.string PT 3SG.EMPH bead.cap past bead.cap rawir.beed 'She would make bead caps in the past, of orange beeds'

En kuh ni'er ieh naru' ih
UV 1SG.GEN AV.see 3SG.NOM AV.make DEM
'I'd watch her doing it'

Naru' n=uih petaa ba'o rawir Av.make pt=1sg.nom bead.cap beed rawir 'Then I'd make my own orange bead cap'

Kayu' inih, senuuk **uih** neh.
Like DEM UV.PFV.string 1SG.NOM DEM

'Like that one, I strung that [pointing to the bead cap on the table].'

- ❖ In fact, if you establish the actor as a hanging topic, then GEN is preferred:
- (14) *Kelabit Hanging Topics*

c. GEN marked actor

Paul kedieh, kinan **neh** bua' ebpuk Paul 3SG.EMPH UV.PFV.eat 3SG.GEN fruit passion 'As for Paul, he ate the passion fruit'

a. NOM marked actor

#Paul kedieh, kinan **ieh** bua' ebpuk Paul EMPH.3SG UV.PFV.eat 3SG.NOM fruit passion FOR: 'As for Paul, he ate passion fruit'

- ❖ But, if you make the UV actor a focus by making it the answer to a wh-word, then NOM is preferred:
- (15) *Kelabit*
 - Q. senuru' *iih* tieh ngelaak ngen tauh?
 UV.PFV.order who PT+3SG.NOM AV.cook for 1PL.INCL
 'who ordered her to cook for us?'

a. NOM marked actor

senuru' **uih** tieh
UV.PFV.order 1SG.NOM PT+3SG.NOM
'I ordered her'

b. GEN marked actor

*senuru' **kuh** tieh
UV.PRF.order 1SG.GEN PT+3SG.NOM
'I ordered her'

- Similarly, in (15) the use of NOM is preferred when the actor is contrasted, GEN if the undergoer is contrasted and the actor is given:
- (16) Kelabit Differential Marking

a. Contrasted Actor

Pinupu' uih (*/#kuh) tieh pu'un, am dih iko UV.PFV.hit 1SG.NOM PT=3SG.NOM first NEG DEM 3SG.NOM 'I hit him first, not you' (i.e. you didn't hit him first))

b. Contrasted Undergoer

Ieh teh suk pinupu' kuh (*/#uih), am dih iko 3SG.NOM PT REL UV.PFV.hit 1SG.GEN NEG DEM 3SG.NOM 'He's the one I hit, not you' (i.e. I didn't hit you)

- ❖ In fact, in some cases GEN also appears for AV actors that are given:
- (17) *Kelabit Actor Voice*
 - a. GEN AV actor?

Ni'er *neh* keyh. AV.see 3SG.GEN PT

Neh mirat let dingi ayu' teh ngaley from over.there DEM PT PT marten INTR.appear 'She looked. At that exact moment, the marten appeared from over there.' (text, PDA10112013CH 01)

- a. Ni'er *kuh*, ngi neh anak ih upun buro AV.see 1SG.GEN DEM PT child PT run away 'I looked and there were the piglets running away' (text, PDA10112013CH 02)
- ❖ Hence, NOM pronouns appear to mark an actor that is information structurally marked, as focus, contrastive or unexpected, whereas GEN pronouns are typically continuing topics (the default function of actor pronouns?).

Table 5. Summary of differential actor marking in UV

	Expectedness	Information Structure
GEN ACTOR	expected	A = continuing topic
NOM ACTOR	unexpected	A = focus/contrastive topic

- ❖ The pattern is similar to DIFFERENTIAL ACTOR MARKING as discussed in section 3 (Bruil 2016, Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018)
- ❖ However, it is the marked case (GEN) that is used for continuing topics, and the unmarked case (NOM) that is used for focus/contrastive etc.
- ❖ Is this related to the grammatical function of the UV actor?
- ❖ Or is it that GEN case is expected for Austronesian UV actors (and possibly found in an earlier stage of the Kelabit language, given the Lundayeh patterns) as well as less marked in terms of discourse frequency?

4. Implications

- ❖ That there are clearly defined contexts for the use of NOM vs GEN suggests that a stage of differential marking may be involved in the loss of case-marking between more conservative Western Austronesian languages and more innovative languages (e.g. Sa'ban, (Clayre 2005)
- ❖ Importantly, it also suggests that the choice of UV is not necessarily motivated by the pragmatic function of the undergoer as either topic or focus since both of these roles can be fulfilled by the actor, as in (11) and (15).
- This supports an analysis whereby the AV/UV alternation is understood as a symmetrical voice alternation in the mapping between arguments and grammatical functions

- (Riesberg 2014), rather than indexing a particular pragmatic status of the privileged argument (Schachter 1976).
- ❖ An interesting question is why you would choose to focus pronominal actors in a UV construction, when actors can also be focused/contrasted by appearing pre-verbally in an AV construction:

(18) *Kelabit AV actor*

Tulu uih na'am ngimet ceiling, lit if 1SG.NOM NEG AV.hold ceiling suddenly

tebpa teh langit ih keneh fall.in PT sky DEM he.said

'If I don't hold up the ceiling, it will fall in, he said.'

Uih teh ne-ngimet inih keneh 1SG.NOM PT PFV-AV.hold DEM he.said 'I am the one holding this [the ceiling] up'

- ❖ In (18), the actor is contrasted, but also the primary topic. Perhaps the use of NOM actors in UV constructions is restricted to cases where the actor is focused *and* the undergoer is the topic?
- ❖ This might explain why it occurs relatively infrequently...

5. Conclusion

- ❖ Although many Western Austronesian languages reserve NOM marking for subjects and GEN marking for non-subject actors, in Kelabit both NOM and GEN can alternate as a means of marking UV actors.
- ❖ In this paper, I have argued that the choice is not random, or indicative of the general loss of case-marking in Borneo languages, but rather systematically reflects a contrast between focus actors and topic actors a common pattern of differential actor marking cross-linguistically (Fauconnier and Verstraete 2014, Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018).
- ❖ This is interesting because it indicates that the status of the actor is at least as important as that of the undergoer in UV − and argues against motivating the voice alternations in terms of the pragmatic function of the privileged argument
- A Rather, it suggests that voice alternations permit many different configurations of A and U, allowing for marked information structural interpretations, such as topical undergoers and focused actors.

6. References

Aissen, Judith. 2003. "Differential Object Marking: Iconicity vs. Economy." *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 21 (3):435-483.

Bossong, Georg. 1985. Empirische Universalienforschung. Differentielle Objektmarkierung in der neuiranischen Sprachen. Tübingen: Narr.

- Bruil, Martine. 2016. "Differential argument marking in Ecuadorian Siona." LDLT5, SOAS, University of London.
- Clayre, Beatrice. 2005. "Kelabitic languages and the fate of 'focus': evidence from the Kerayan." In *The many faces of Austronesian voice systems: some new empirical studies*, edited by I. Wayan Arka and Malcolm Ross, 17-57. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Dalrymple, Mary, and Irina Nikolaeva. 2011. *Objects and Information Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Swart, Peter. 2007. "Cross-linguistic Variation in Object Marking." PhD Dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Radboud University.
- Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 2007. *Information structure: The syntax-discourse interface*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fauconnier, Stefanie, and Jean-Christophe Verstraete. 2014. "A and O as each other's mirror image? Problems with markedness reversal." *Linguistic Typology* 18 (1):3-49.
- Hemmings, Charlotte. 2015. "Kelabit Voice: Philippine-Type, Indonesian-Type or Something a Bit Different?" *Transactions of the Philological Society* 113 (3):383-405.
- Hemmings, Charlotte. 2016. "The Kelabit Language, Austronesian Voice and Syntactic Typology." PhD Dissertation, Department of Linguistics, SOAS, University of London.
- Himmelmann, Nikolaus P. 2005. "The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar: Typological Characteristics." In *The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar*, edited by Alexander Adelaar and Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, 110-181. London: Routledge.
- Iemmolo, Giorgio. 2010. "Topicality and differential object marking: Evidence from Romance and beyond." *Studies in Language* 34 (2):239-272.
- Kroeger, Paul R. 1998. "Language classification in Sarawak: a status report." *Sarawak Museum Journal* 53 (74):137-73.
- Kroeger, Paul R. 2005. "Kimaragang." In *The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar*, edited by Alexander Adelaar and Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, 397-428. Routledge.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representations of Discourse Referents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lobel, Jason. 2013. "Philippine and North Bornean Languages: Issues in Description, Subgrouping and Reconstruction." PhD Dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.
- McGregor, William B. 2010. "Optional ergative case marking systems in a typological-semiotic perspective." *Lingua* 120 (7):1610-1636.
- Naess, Åshild. 2004. "What markedness marks: the markedness problem with direct objects." *Lingua* 114 (9-10):1186-1212.
- Riesberg, Sonja. 2014. Symmetrical voice and linking in western Austronesian languages, Pacific Linguistics,. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Schachter, Paul. 1976. "The Subject in Philippine Languages: Topic, Actor, Actor-Topic, or None of the Above?" In *Subject and Topic*, edited by Charles N. Li, 491-518. New York: Academic Press.
- Soriente, Antonia. 2013. "Undergoer Voice in Borneo: Penan, Punan, Kenyah and Kayan languages." In *Voice variation in Austronesian languages of Indonesia*, edited by Alexander Adelaar, 175-203. Jakarta: NUSA.
- Tournadre, Nicolas. 1995. *Tibetan ergativity and the trajectory model*. Edited by Y. Nishi, J.A. Matisoff and Y Nagano, *New Horizons in Tibeto-Burman Morphosyntax*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.

Witzlack-Makarevich, Alena, and Ilja A. Seržant. 2018. "Differential argument marking: Patterns of variation." In *The Diachronic Typology of Differential Argument Marking*, edited by Alena Witzlack-Makarevich and Ilja A. Seržant. Berlin: Language Science Press.