Pronouns and Information Structure in Kelabit

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1. Introduction

- ❖ 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 and the more innovative Indonesian-type languages (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　　buaq　　kaber　　　*uih*
　　　　　PFV-AV.eat　　fruit　　pineapple　　1SG.NOM
　　　　　'I ate pineapple'

　　　b.　**Undergoer Voice (UV)**
　　　　　Kinan　　　*kuh*　　　　buaq　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)

2. Kelabit Pronouns

- ❖ Basic pronouns in Kelabit demonstrates SINGULAR, DUAL, PAUCAL and PLURAL number distinctions and an INCLUSIVE and EXCLUSIVE opposition[1]:

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[1] There is also an impersonal pronoun *narih* which can be used for any person/number/clusivity combination in typical irrealis contexts, e.g. wishes/requests

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**
1SG	uih	kuh
2SG	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]iə	*=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).' (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	AV.see	3SG.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 intransitive predicates (6) and (7)
    ➢ following prepositions (8)

(5)   *Kelabit*
    Undergoer Voice
    a.

Seni'er	kuh	ieh
UV.see	1SG.GEN	3SG.NOM

    'I saw him'

    b.

Seni'er	uih	tieh
UV.see	1SG.NOM	PT=3SG.NOM

    'I saw him'

(6)   *Kelabit*
        Intransitive
    a. Na'am uih   keliq.
        NEG   1SG.NOM   know
        'I don't know.'

    b. Na'am keliq   kuh.
        NEG   know   1SG.GEN
        'I don't know.'

(7)   *Kelabit*
        Accidental Predicate
    a. Ne-bilaq   uih   bigan ih.
        ACCID-break   1SG.NOM   plate PT
        'I accidentally broke the plate.'

    b. Ne-bilaq   kuh   neh   bigan ih.
        ACCID-break   1SG.GEN   PT   plate PT
        'I accidentally broke the plate.'

(8)   *Kelabit*
        Prepositional Phrases
    a. [ruyung   kuh]PP
        with   1SG.GEN
        'with me'

    b. [ruyung   uih]PP
        with   1SG.NOM
        'with me'

- ❖ Hence, NOM and GEN pronouns constitute DIFFERENTIAL MARKING in Kelabit.
- ❖ This leads to the question of what motivates the differential use of NOM and GEN pronouns and what differences in interpretation emerge?

3. Differential Marking and Information Structure

- ❖ Differential marking is known to be affected by SEMANTIC FACTORS and INFORMATION STRUCTURE:
    - ➢ 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 topicality (Lemmolo 2010, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011)
    - ➢ In some languages, differential marking is related to properties of event semantics, e.g. volitionality, control, affectedness (Naess 2004)
- ❖ Since differential marking only occurs with pronouns in Kelabit (as nominal arguments are unmarked), animacy, referentiality and definiteness do not apply…

❖ Q: are there information structure differences?
❖ The GEN pronouns are favoured out of context for UV actors and used in naturalistic discourse when the actor is a continuing topic:

(9)   *Kelabit*
         Nalap   neh   pupuq
         UV.PFV.fetch   3SG.GEN   hitting.implement
         'She fetched something to hit with'

         Nukab   neh   bubpuq   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)

❖ They are also found in subordinate clauses (like in Eastern Penan, Beatrice Clayre, p.c.):
❖ In contrast, NOM pronouns are used when the UV actor represents FOCUS information:

(10)   *Kelabit*
   Q.   senuruq   iih   tieh   ngelaak   ngen   tauh?
         UV.PFV.order   who   PT+3SG.NOM   AV.cook   for   1PL.INCL
         'who ordered her to cook for us?'

   A1:   senuruq   uih   tieh
         UV.PFV.order   1SG.NOM   PT+3SG.NOM
         'I ordered her'

   A2:   *senuruq   kuh   tieh
         UV.PRF.order   1SG.GEN   PT+3SG.NOM
         'I ordered her'

❖ Or when the UV actor expresses a CONTRAST:

(11)   *Kelabit*
         Kayuq inih,   senuuk   uih   neh.
         Like   DEM   UV.PFV.string 1SG.NOM   DEM
         'Like that one, I strung that.'

❖ Example (11) occurs as the speaker discusses learning how to string necklaces from a great aunt. She then points to a particular necklace that she made herself.

❖ Hence, NOM pronouns appear to mark an actor that is information structurally marked, as focus, contrastive or unexpected.

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

❖ This is common with DIFFERENTIAL SUBJECT MARKING cross-linguistically (Bruil 2016, Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2017)
❖ Q: does this analysis extend to other cases where NOM/GEN alternate? Are there also differences in event semantics/semantic transitivity? Might this explain why NOM and GEN alternate with intransitive predicates that are lower in transitivity?
❖ This is a question for future research…

4. Conclusion

❖ The loss of case-marking in Western Austronesian appears to pass through a stage where case-marking has a differential function.
❖ It makes sense that this would be realised for 1SG, 2SG, 3SG (3PL?) pronouns as these are perhaps the most likely continuing topics.
❖ Interestingly, the NOM/GEN alternation in Kelabit contrasts with the use of (optional) ergative case in other languages where ergative (rather than nominative) is used to mark focal, 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 2017 and references therein)
❖ Is this related to the fact that the actor is an object in Western Austronesian UV (Kroeger 1993)?
❖ Is this related to the fact that GEN is the expected and NOM the unexpected case for UV actors?

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