Information Structure and DAM in Kelabit

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Overview

- In this talk, I will present an analysis of NOM and GEN pronouns in the Kelabit language of Northern Sarawak.

- Although the pronoun sets appear cognate with other Western Austronesian (WAn) languages, the **patterns of distribution** are somewhat different and both are possible in the context of marking UV actors.

- I will argue that they constitute a case of **differential actor marking** (DAM) and that the choice is motivated by **information structure** (focus).

Roadmap

- Background
- Kelabit pronouns
- Differential marking cross-linguistically
- DAM and information structure in Kelabit
- Implications
- Conclusion

Background

Kelabit

- Kelabit is a WAn language spoken mainly in the Fourth and Fifth divisions of Sarawak, Malaysia (Martin 1996).

- It is part of the Kelabitic or Apad Uat subgroup of Northern Sarawak which also includes Lun Bawang/Lundayeh, Tring and Sa'ban (Kroeger 1998).

- Data is based on my own fieldwork in Bario from 2013-2017.

Symmetrical Voice

- Kelabit (like other WAn languages) has a system of **symmetrical voice** alternations

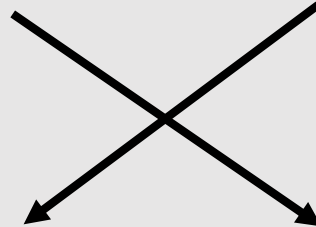**Actor Voice** **Undergoer Voice**

Semantic Roles A U A U

Case-marking interacts with the voice system

Syntactic Functions SUBJ CORE SUBJ CORE

Transitive **Transitive**

WAn Typology

- Kelabit is transitional between the more conservative **Philippine-type** languages and the more innovative **Indonesian-type** languages.

- One example of this is in **case-marking**:

Philippine-type	Kelabit	Indonesian-type
Case-marking	Case-marking of pronouns	No case-marking

Kelabit pronouns

Kelabit NOM 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**

Kelabit GEN pronouns

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

❖ What motivates the choice of NOM vs GEN?

❖ Is it related to grammatical function?

❖ Or is it related to information structure?

Pronouns in Proto-Southwest Sabah

- The Kelabit pronouns are referred to as **NOM** and **GEN** since they are cognate with other systems:

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**

NOM = subjects or privileged arguments

GEN = non-privileged actors and possessors

(Lobel 2013: 103)

Kimaragang Dusun (Kroeger 2005)

(2a)   **Actor Voice**

Mangalapak   **okuh**   *do*   *niyuw*.

AV.TR.split   1SG.NOM   GEN   coconut

'I will split a coconut/some coconuts.'

(2b)   **Undergoer Voice**

Lapak-on   *kuh*   **it**   **niyuw**.

split-UV   1SG.GEN   NOM   coconut

'I will split the coconut(s).'

(2c)   **Instrumental Voice**

Nokuroh.tu   n-i-lapak   *nuh*   *do*   *niyuw*   *inoh*   **dangol kuh**?

why   PST-IV-split   2SG.GEN GEN   coconut MED.NOM   knife   1SG.GEN

'Why did you use my bush knife to split coconuts?'

Lundayeh (Clayre 2005)

(3a) **Actor Voice**

Iko nguit neneh amé nekuh.

2SG.NOM AV.bring 3SG.OBL go 1SG.OBL

'You bring him to me.'

(3b) **Undergoer Voice**

Inapung *kuh* ieh rat neneh.

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

'I hid it from him.'

Kelabit

(1a) **Actor Voice (AV)**

Ne-kuman   *bua'* *kaber*   **uih**

PFV-AV.eat   fruit   pineapple   1SG.NOM

'I ate pineapple'

(1b) **Undergoer Voice (UV)**

Kinan   *kuh*   **bua' kaber**   **ih**

UV.PFV.eat   1SG.GEN   fruit   pineapple   DEF

'I ate pineapple'

Kelabit

- BUT: NOM is used for both actor-subject and undergoer-object in Actor Voice:

(4a)   **AV Actor**

     Uih   ni'er   *ieh*

     1SG.NOM   AV.see   3SG.NOM

     'I see him.'

(4b)   **AV Undergoer**

     Ieh   ni'er   *uih*

     3SG.NOM   AV.see   1SG.NOM

     'He sees me.'

Kelabit

- AND: **NOM** and **GEN** alternate in certain contexts

(5a) **Undergoer Voice**

Seni'er *kuh* **ieh**

UV.see 1SG.GEN 3SG.NOM

'I saw him'

(5b) Seni'er *uih* **t=ieh**

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

'I saw him'

> **non-AV actors**
> A argument of experiential and accidental predicates
> following prepositions
> for possessors (along with other strategies)

DIFFERENTIAL ACTOR MARKING (DAM)

Summary

- In many Western Austronesian languages case-marking distinguishes **subjects** and **non-subject actors**

- In other words, the choice of pronoun relates to the **grammatical function** within the **symmetrical voice system**.

- However, in Kelabit, NOM can mark all functions, and NOM and GEN alternate in certain contexts. Hence, it appears to be a case of **differential actor marking**

- This leads to the question of what **motivates** the differential use of NOM and GEN and what differences in interpretation emerge?

Differential Marking

Differential Marking

- **Differential marking** = non-uniform grammatical marking of arguments
- It is known to be affected by both **semantic factors** and **information structure**:
  - ➤ Animacy, Referentiality and Definiteness
  - ➤ Properties of event semantics, e.g. volitionality, control, affectedness
  - ➤ Topicality/Focus

(Aissen 2003, Bossong 1985, de Swart 2007, Naess 2004, Iemmolo 2010, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011, Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018)

DOM and Topicality

- Often objects receive overt marking when they are **(secondary) topics:**

Tundra Nenets (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011: 103)

(10a) xasawa   ti-m   xadaᵒ

man   **reindeer-ACC**   kill.3SG.SUBJ

'A/the man killed a/the reindeer'

Non-topical Object
What happened?
What did the man do?
What did the man kill?

(10b) xasawa   ti-m   xadaᵒda

man   **reindeer-ACC**   kill.OBJ.3SG.SUBJ

'A/the man killed a/the reindeer'

Topical Object
What did the man do to the reindeer?

DAM and Focus

- Often actors receive overt marking when they represent **focus/contrastive/ unexpected** information (Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018):

Lhasa Tibetan (Tournadre 1995: 264)

(11a)
khōng khāla' so̱-kiyo:re'
he food make-IPFV.GNOM
'He prepares the meals.'

> **Given Actor**
> *What does he do?*

(11b)
khōng-ki' khāla' so̱-kiyo:re'
he-ERG food make-IPFV.GNOM
'*He* prepares the meals.'

> **Contrasted Actor**
> *Him and not someone else*

Summary

- **DOM** is often related to the topicality of the object (undergoer?)
- **DAM** is often related to the focus status of the actor

Does information structure play a role in the choice of GEN vs NOM?

What pattern do we find given that the uv actor is (arguably) both an **object** *and* an **actor**?

Information Structure and DAM in Kelabit

DAM and Information Structure

- 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** and used in naturalistic discourse when the actor is a **continuing topic**.

  ➢ NOM pronouns represent **focus/contrastive/unexpected** actors.

GEN is more frequent

- In a small corpus of **folk stories**, **news reports** and narratives elicited using a video stimulus (**pear stories**), of c. 2000 clauses there were 184 UV clauses

- Of these 122 of 66% had **pronominal actors** – 119 were GEN marked

- Only 3 were NOM marked – one case could represent dialect differences and one where it was a partitive actor (*edteh burur ideh* 'one of them')

> GEN is expected – NOM is unexpected

(12)   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'

The GEN actor is a
given topic…

…and has high
topic continuity

NB: the undergoer is not
necessarily given/topical

NOM as focus/contrastive

(13) En   *kuh*   ni'er **ieh**   naru'   ih
UV   1SG.GEN   AV.see 3SG.NOM   AV.make   DEM
'I'd watch her [my great aunt] 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].'

> The NOM actor is contrasted against her great aunt…
>
> …and the undergoer is the topic

Topic Test

- If you establish the actor as a **hanging topic**, then GEN is preferred:

(14a) **Paul   kedieh**,   kinan   *neh*   bua'   ebpuk

Paul   3SG.EMPH   UV.PFV.eat   3SG.GEN   fruit   passion

'As for Paul, he ate the passion fruit'

GEN = ✓

(14b) **#Paul   kedieh**,   kinan   *ieh*   bua'   ebpuk

Paul   EMPH.3SG   UV.PFV.eat   3SG.NOM   fruit   passion

FOR: 'As for Paul, he ate passion fruit'

NOM = ✗

Focus Test

- If you make the actor the **answer to a wh-word**, NOM is preferred:

Context: who ordered her to cook?

(15a)   senuru'   *uih*   **t=ieh**

           UV.PFV.order   1SG.NOM   PT=3SG.NOM   NOM = ✓

           'I ordered her'

(15b)   *senuru'   *kuh*   **t=ieh**

           UV.PRF.order   1SG.GEN   PT=3SG.NOM   GEN = ✗

           'I ordered her'

Contrast Test

- If actor is **contrasted**, NOM is preferred – if undergoer is **contrasted**, GEN is preferred:

(16a)   Pinupu'   *uih* (*/#kuh)   **t=ieh**   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))

| NOM = ✓ | GEN = ✗ |

(16b)   **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)

| GEN = ✓ | NOM = ✗ |

Summary

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

- The choice of NOM vs GEN follows a **common pattern of DAM** – but the marked case (GEN) is used for topics and the unmarked case (NOM) is used for focus/contrast?

- Does this reflect the UV actor's status as an **object**? Or is it a product of **diachronic development**?

Implications

Implications

- **Western Austronesian Typology/Development:**

  ➤ It is not as simple as distinguishing between languages with case-marking and those without - languages differ in terms of a) which arguments are case-marked and b) the function of case-marking

  ➤ 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)

Implications

- **Western Austronesian Voice Systems:**

  - ➢ the choice of UV is not necessarily motivated by the **pragmatic function** of the undergoer – either as topic or focus - since the DAM patterns have shown that the actor can fulfil both of these roles within a UV construction.

  - ➢ Conversely, the pragmatic status of the actor does not trigger actor voice (AV).

  - ➢ This supports a **symmetrical voice analysis**, in which the alternation is treated as an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions – rather than reflecting topicality or focus.

Implications

- An interesting question is why speakers would want to focus a pronominal actor in UV? Why not use the AV construction?

(18) 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'

> The AV actor is a contrasted topic…
>
> …the undergoer does not have topic continuity

Implications

- So perhaps the use of NOM for UV actors is restricted to contexts where the undergoer is mapped to **subject** (as it is the primary topic) *and* the pronominal actor is also **contrasted/focused**.

- Since pronouns and actors are typically topics – this would explain why such a context is rare!

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Although many Western Austronesian languages reserve NOM 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.

- Instead, it 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).

Conclusion

- This is interesting because it indicates that the **status of the actor** is at least as important as that of the undergoer in UV

- This argues against motivating the voice alternations in terms of the pragmatic function of the privileged argument alone.

- Rather, it suggests that the alternations permit many different configurations of A and U, allowing for different **information structural interpretations**, such as topical undergoers and focused actors.

Many Thanks!

Evidence for Symmetrical Analysis

- **Morphology**
  - Actor and Undergoer in both AV and UV are **NPs**, whereas obliques are otherwise **PPs**:

(2) **La'ih sineh** **nem**erey   *nuba'* [ngen anak nedih]_{PP}

man DEM PFV.AV.give rice to child 3SG.POSS

'The man gave rice to his child'

- **Syntax**
  - Actor and Undergoer behave like core arguments in both AV and UV
  - NB. does not mean that there are no morphosyntactic differences between the voices…

Relativisation

(3a) **Actor Voice**

Seni'er	kuh	**la'ih**	[suk	nenekul	*nuba'*	ngen seduk]
UV.PFV.see	1SG	man	REL	PFV.AV.spoon	rice	with spoon

'I saw the man who spooned up rice with a spoon'

> **CORE PROPERTY: *AV actor can be relativized on***

(3c) **Undergoer Voice**

Seni'er	kuh	**nuba'**	[suk	sikul	*la'ih sineh*	ngen seduk]
UV.PFV.see	1SG	rice	REL	UV.PFV.spoon	man DEM	with spoon

'I saw the rice that the man spooned up with a spoon'

> **CORE PROPERTY: *UV undergoer can be relativized on***

Raising

(4a) **Actor Voice**

Uih	ngelinuh	**ieh**	*tu'uh-tu'uh*	[nekuman	*nuba'*	ngimalem]
1SG	AV.think	3SG	real-REDUP	AV.PFV.eat	rice	yesterday

'I thought him truly to have eaten his rice yesterday'

> **CORE PROPERTY:** *AV actor can be raised*

(4c) **Undergoer Voice**

Uih	ngelinuh	**nuba'**	*tu'uh-tu'uh*	[kinan	*neh*	ngimalem]
1SG	AV.PFV.think	rice	real-REDUP	UV.PFV.eat	3SG.GEN	yesterday

'I thought the rice truly to have been eaten by him yesterday'

> **CORE PROPERTY:** *UV undergoer can be raised*

Time Adverbials

(5a)   **Actor Voice**

La'ih   sineh   [nekuman   *bua'*   *kaber*]   **ngimalem**

man   DEM   PFV.UV.eat   fruit   pineapple   yesterday

'The man ate pineapple yesterday'

CORE PROPERTY: *AV undergoer and verb form a constituent*

(5c)   **Undergoer Voice**

[Kinan   *la'ih*   *sineh*]   **ngimalem**   bua'   kaber   sineh

PFV.UV.eat   man   DEM   yesterday   fruit   pineapple   DEM

'The man ate that pineapple yesterday'

CORE PROPERTY: *UV actor and verb form a constituent*

Adjunct Fronting

(6a)   **Fronted AV Oblique**

Ngen   tekul,   **la'ih sineh**   **nen**ekul   *nuba'*

with   spoon   man DEM   AV.PFV.spoon   rice

'With a spoon, the man spooned up rice'

CORE PROPERTY: *AV undergoer cannot be fronted (unlike AV oblique)*

(6c)   **Fronted UV Oblique**

Ngen   tekul,   **nuba'**   s**i**kul   *la'ih*   *sineh*

with   spoon   rice   UV.PFV.spoon   man   DEM

'With a spoon, the rice was spooned up by the man'

CORE PROPERTY: *UV actor cannot be fronted (unlike UV oblique)*

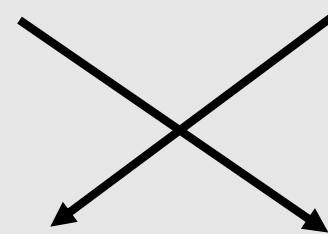# Kelabit

	Actor Voice		Undergoer Voice		
Semantic Roles	A	U	A	U	• Relativisation • Raising
Syntactic Functions	SUBJ	CORE	SUBJ	CORE	• Post-verbal position • Adjunct fronting
	Transitive		**Transitive**		