

## **Information Structure, Word Order and Differential Marking in Kelabit**

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### **1. Introduction**

- ❖ This paper explores the interaction between voice, word-order, case-marking and information structure in the Kelabit language of Northern Sarawak.
- ❖ Kelabit is a Western Austronesian language spoken mainly in the Fourth and Fifth divisions of Sarawak, Malaysia (Martin 1996).
- ❖ It is part of the **Apad Uat** subgroup of Northern Sarawak which also includes Lun Bawang/Lundayeh and Sa'ban (Kroeger 1998) and is transitional between so-called 'Philippine-type' and 'Indonesian-type' languages (Clayre 2005, 2014, Hemmings 2016).
- ❖ Data in this presentation is taken from fieldwork in Bario between 2013-2014 and 2017.
- ❖ Like other Western Austronesian languages, Kelabit has a system of symmetrical voice alternations. These are alternations in the mapping of arguments to functions without changes in the resulting transitivity.
- ❖ The voice alternations correlate with word order since Kelabit has a fixed post-verbal position for its non-subject argument, but the subject is more flexible and can occur post-object, pre-verbally or clause-finally.
- ❖ Moreover, although the function of nominal arguments is indicated via word-order rather than case, a reduced system of case-marking exists in the pronominal system. In the undergoer voice construction, NOM and GEN forms are used differentially to mark non-subject actors.
- ❖ Hence, in expressing two participant events speakers make a choice of voice, word order and case (and, of course, prosody).
- ❖ The main aim of this paper is to consider how information structure interacts with the syntactic choices that speakers make and what this can tell us about WAN voice systems and information structure more generally.
  
- ❖ The route map is as follows:
  - Voice, word-order and case-marking in Kelabit
  - Information structure & word order
  - Information structure & differential marking
  - Conclusions

### **2. Voice, word-order and case-marking in Kelabit**

- ❖ In order to discuss word-order and case-marking it is necessary to introduce the Kelabit system of symmetrical voice alternations (Himmelman 2005, Riesberg 2014).
- ❖ The Kelabit voice system encodes three verbally-encoded alternations: actor voice, undergoer voice, and instrumental voice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is a peripheral construction and will not be further discussed in this paper

- ❖ These differ in their verbal morphology, which corresponds to a different semantic argument being mapped to subject (**bold**). However, unlike passive and antipassive, non-subject actors and undergoers are mapped to core arguments (*italics*) and the result is multiple different types of transitive clause:

(1) *Kelabit*

a. **Actor Voice**

Nengelaak    *nuba'*                    **tesineh nedih.**  
 PFV.AV.cook    rice                                    mother 3SG.POSS  
 'Her mother cooked rice.'

b. **Undergoer Voice**

Linaak            *tesineh nedih*                    **nuba'**  
 PFV.UV.cook    mother 3SG.POSS                    rice  
 'Her mother cooked rice.'

**Table 1.** Grammatical functions in AV and UV

	<b>subject</b>	<b>non-subject core (object)</b>
Actor voice	actor	undergoer
Undergoer voice	undergoer	actor

- ❖ The system shares some characteristics with Philippine-type systems (in that there are more than two voices and voice morphology combines with TAM-morphology). However, unlike Philippine-type systems there is no restriction against definite undergoers in AV, likewise it is possible to find indefinite undergoers in UV.
- ❖ So, a key question is: what is the function of these alternations? What determines the choice of AV or UV?

## 2.1 Word Order

- ❖ Assuming the grammatical functions in Table 1, Kelabit is a fixed VO language. However, the position of the subject is flexible:<sup>2</sup>

(2) *Kelabit Word Order (Actor Voice)*

a. **Pre-verbal**

**La'ih sineh** ne-kuman    *bua'*    *kaber.*  
 man    DEM    PFV-AV.eat    fruit    pineapple  
 'The man ate pineapple.'

b. **Post-object**

Ne-kuman    *bua'*    *kaber*                    **la'ih sineh** *ngimalem.*  
 PFV-AV.eat    fruit    pineapple                    man    DEM  
 'The man ate pineapple.'

<sup>2</sup> Not all orders have the same discourse frequency. Orders in which the actor precedes the undergoer, and the verb + non-subject argument are ordered together, seem to be favoured.

c. **Clause-final**  
 Ne-merey *nuba'* ngen edteh anak **la'ih sineh**  
 PFV-AV.give rice to one child man dem  
 'That man gave rice to a child'

d. **Post-object**  
 Nekuman **la'ih sineh** *bua' kaber*  
 PFV-AV.eat man DEM fruit pineapple  
 'The man ate pineapple.'

(3) *Kelabit Word Order (Undergoer Voice)*

a. **Pre-verbal**  
**Bua' kaber** kinan *la'ih sineh*  
 Fruit pineapple UV.PFV.eat man DEM  
 'The man ate pineapple.'

b. **Post-object**  
 kinan *la'ih sineh* **bua' kaber** ngimalem  
 UV.PFV.eat man DEM fruit pineapple yesterday  
 'The man ate pineapple yesterday.'

c. **Clause-final**  
 Kinan *John* ngimalem **neh** **bua' kaber** **nedih**  
 UV.PFV.eat John yesterday PT fruit pineapple 3SG.POSS  
 'John ate his pineapple yesterday'

- ❖ It is also possible to have hanging topics in the left periphery and background topics in the right periphery (both co-referenced by a pronoun).<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Similarly, arguments can appear in an initial (or pre-verbal) position via clefting (with the relativisers *suk/nuk*) and pseudo-clefting/inversion (with the particle *teh*).

**Table 2.** Word order in Kelabit

Voice	Word Order							
Actor Voice	X	(A)	V	(A)	U	(A)	X*	(A)
Undergoer Voice	X	(U)	V		A	(U)	X*	(U)

<sup>3</sup> A hanging topic need not appear in the main clause - it can be syntactically autonomous (Lambrecht 1994):

(i) [Tapi bulu' sineh]<sub>HT</sub>, kiteb *neh* **pa'up** **bukuh ih**  
 but bamboo DEM UV.PFV.cut 3SG.GEN end edge PT'  
 'but that bamboo, he had cut both ends off' (folk story, BAR17082014CH\_08)

A background topic is illustrated below (and not discussed further):

(ii) **neh** **ieh** mirup *ebpa'*, [dedtur sidih]<sub>BT</sub>  
 DEM 3SG.NOM AV.drink water, woman DEM  
 'She was drinking water, that woman' (elicitation, BAR20082014CH\_02)

## 2.2 Case Marking

- ❖ In Kelabit, case-marking is restricted to a subset of the pronominal paradigm in 1SG, 2SG, 3SG and 3PL:

**Table 3.** Kelabit Pronouns

	NOM	GEN
<b>1SG</b>	uih	kuh
<b>2SG</b>	iko	muh
<b>3SG</b>	ieh	neh
<b>3PL</b>	ideh	deh

- ❖ They 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:
  - NOM: subjects
  - GEN: non-subject actors and possessors
- ❖ However, in Kelabit NOM is used for both subjects and non-subjects in AV:

(4) *Kelabit Pronouns*

a. **Actor Voice**

**Uih**                    ni'er    *ieh*  
 1SG.NOM            AV.see 3SG.NOM  
 'I see him.'

- ❖ Moreover, NOM and GEN alternate as a means of expressing UV actors:

(5) *Kelabit Differential Marking*

**Undergoer Voice**

a. Seni'er            *kuh*                    **t=ieh**  
 UV.see            1SG.GEN            PT=3SG.NOM  
 'I saw him'

b. Seni'er            *uih*                    **t=ieh**  
 UV.see            1SG.NOM            PT=3SG.NOM  
 'I saw him'

- ❖ In the next sections, we will explore how information structure effects choice of word order and choice of case.
- ❖ We will then consider the implications for our understanding of the interface between information structure and other levels of grammar, and Western Austronesian voice.

## 3. Word Order and Information Structure

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

- ❖ Among the most important information structure roles are topic and focus:
  - Topic is an entity that the speaker identifies and about which a proposition is made (Krifka 2008): topic-comment
  - Focus is the informative part of the proposition and indicates the presence of alternatives (Krifka 2008): focus-background
  - It may be important to distinguish between establishing topics and continuing topics, and contrastive topics/contrastive focus...
  
- ❖ It is well-known that information structure can affect word-order:
  - In many ‘discourse-configurational’ languages, there is a tendency to place topic before comment (Lambrecht 1994)
  - In other languages, focus information comes before background (Mithun 1992)
  
- ❖ Kelabit follows Mithun’s “principle of newsworthiness” to a certain extent, since there is a tendency to place focus/contrasted information in the initial (pre-verbal) position (cf. Dery 2007 for similar discussion relating to Tagalog).
- ❖ This applies in both narrow focus and predicate focus contexts, and can be seen in spontaneous examples from the corpus, as well as through information structure tests.
- ❖ However, there is no one-to-one link between position and information structure role, since non-subject arguments can be focused in the immediately post-verbal position, initial subjects may also be topics and non-subject actors in post-verbal position are often continuing topics (see section 4).

### 3.1 Focus-initial with narrow focus

(6) *Question-Answer Pairs, Narrow Focus*

**Focused Actor**

Q. **Iih** nemupu’ *John?*  
 who AV.PFV.hit John  
 ‘Who hit John?’

A. [**Andy**]<sub>focus</sub> nemupu’ *John?*  
 Andy AV.PFV.hit John  
 ‘Andy hit John’

**Focused Undergoer**

Q. **Iih** pinupu’ *Andy?*  
 who UV.PFV.hit Andy  
 ‘Who did Andy hit?’

A. [**John**]<sub>focus</sub> pinupu’ *Andy*  
 John UV.PFV.hit Andy  
 ‘Andy hit John’

- ❖ In fact, it is ungrammatical to have wh-questions (focus information) clause-finally:

(7) *Kelabit wh-questions*

a. **Actor voice**

\*nemupu' John [iih]<sub>focus?</sub>  
AV.PFV.hit John who  
For: 'who hit John?'

b. **Undergoer Voice**

\*pinupu' Andy [iih]<sub>focus?</sub>  
UV.PFV.hit Andy who  
For: 'who did Andy hit?'

❖ Initial subjects (either pre-verbal or clefted) may also have corrective focus:

(8) *Corrective Narrow Focus*

**Context: did Andy hit John yesterday?**

Na'am Andy nemupu' John ngimalem...  
NEG Andy PFV.AV.hit John yesterday  
'Andy didn't hit John yesterday...'

a. **Contrasted Actor**

[Paul]<sub>focus</sub> teh suk nemupu' ieh  
Paul PT REL PFV.AV.hit 3SG.NOM  
'It was Paul who hit him (John)'

b. **Contrasted Undergoer**

[Paul]<sub>focus</sub> teh suk pinupu' neh  
Paul PT REL UV.PFV.hit 3SG.GEN  
'It was Paul that he (Andy) hit'

c. **Contrasted Adjunct**

[edto ma'un]<sub>focus</sub> t=ieh pinupu' neh  
day before PT=3SG.NOM UV.PFV.hit 3SG.GEN  
'It was the day before that he hit him'

d. #pinupu' neh t=ieh [edto ma'un]<sub>focus</sub>  
UV.PFV.hit 3SG.GEN PT=3SG.NOM day before  
For: 'he hit him the day before' (not yesterday)

e. **Contrasted Verb**

[nemepag]<sub>focus</sub> ieh t=ieh  
AV.PFV.slap 3SG.NOM PT=3SG.NOM  
'He slapped him'

### 3.2 Focus-initial with predicate focus

- ❖ Similarly, verb-initial structures (particularly in AV) are associated with predicate focus:

(9) *Question-Answer Pairs, Predicate Focus*

**Focused predicate**

Q. Enun tu'en neh?  
 what UV.IRR.do 3SG.GEN  
 'What is he doing?'

A. [Kuman bua' kaber nedih]<sub>focus</sub> t=ieh  
 Av.eat fruit pineapple 3SG.POSS PT=3SG.NOM  
 'He's eating his pineapple' (elicitation, BAR19082014CH\_03)

**Focused predicate**

Q. Naru' enun deh?  
 AV.do what 3PL.GEN  
 'What are they doing?'

A. [Nibu lati' dedih]<sub>focus</sub> deh ridtu' inih  
 AV.plant field 3PL.POSS 3PL.GEN time dem  
 'They're currently planting their fields' (elicitation, BAR19082014CH\_03)

- ❖ Similarly, yes-no questions targeting the predicate must be initial:

(10) *Kelabit yes-no questions*

a. **Predicate Focus**

Ken [neluka']<sub>focus</sub> John?  
 Q PFV.fall John  
 'Did John fall?'

b. \*Ken John [neluka']<sub>focus</sub>?  
 Q John PFV.fall  
 For: 'did John fall?'

- ❖ Verb-initial order is also used for corrective focus on the predicate (verb + non-subject):

(11) *Corrective Predicate Focus*

Na'am Andy nemupu' John ngimalem...  
 NEG Andy AV.PFV.hit John yesterday  
 'Andy didn't hit John yesterday...'

a. **Predicate Focus**

[nemepag Paul]<sub>focus</sub> t=ieh  
 AV.PFV.slap Paul PT=3SG  
 'He slapped Paul'

b. \*[pipag]<sub>focus</sub> neh [Paul]<sub>focus</sub>  
 UV.PFV.slap 3SG.GEN Paul  
 For: ‘he slapped Paul’

c. #ieh [nemepag Paul]<sub>focus</sub>  
 3SG.NOM AV.PFV.slap Paul  
 For: ‘he slapped Paul’

❖ Moreover, focus-background order is generally preferred following hanging topics:

(12) *Hanging Topics*

a. **Actor Voice (actor topic)**

[Paul kedieh]<sub>HT</sub>, [nekuman bua' ebpuk]<sub>focus</sub> t=ieh  
 Paul EMPH.3SG AV.PFV.eat fruit passion PT=3SG.NOM  
 ‘As for Paul, he ate passion fruit’

b. **Undergoer Voice (undergoer topic)**

[Bua' ebpuk suk na'ai]<sub>HT</sub>, [kinan Andy]<sub>focus</sub> n=idih  
 fruit passion REL afore UV.PFV.eat Andy PT=DEM  
 ‘As for the passionfruit, Andy ate it.’

❖ There are spontaneously occurring examples where the verb+undergoer are in focus and appear in initial position:

(13) *Kelabit Verb-initial Order*

a. [kuman bua' ih tupu]<sub>focus</sub> t=idih  
 AV.eat fruit PT only PT=3PL.NOM  
 ‘They are just eating fruit’ (pear story, BAR31072014CH\_06)

b. pengeh ineh, am dadan, mirat edteh anak i'it bah  
 after DEM NEG long INTR.appear one child small EXCL  
 ‘Not long afterwards, a small boy appeared’

[ngimet edteh tupi]<sub>focus</sub> t=ieh  
 AV.wear one hat PT=3SG.NOM  
 ‘He was wearing a hat’ (pear story, BAR01082014CH\_02)

❖ Thus, Kelabit has a tendency to put newsworthy or focus information first.

### 3.3 Post-verbal focus and initial topics

❖ However, focus-initial orders are not the only option for expressing focus (either as an answer to a *wh*-question or with corrective focus)

❖ Non-subject arguments can be focused *in-situ* (so long as they are followed by the aboutness/continuing topic):



(14) *Kelabit Narrow Focus*

a. **Actor Voice**

nekuman      *enun*    **teh**    **Peter**    ngimalem?  
AV.PFV.eat    what    PT      Peter    yesterday  
'What did Peter eat yesterday?'

b.    nekuman      [*bua'*    *kaber*]<sub>focus</sub>      [**t=ieh**]<sub>topic</sub>                      ngimalem?  
AV.PFV.eat    fruit    pineapple      PT=1SG.NOM    yesterday  
'What did Peter eat yesterday?'

c. **Undergoer Voice**

Kenen            *ihh*      **neh**    **bua'**    **kaber**            **sineh?**  
UV.IRR.eat    who    PT      fruit    pineapple      DEM  
'Who will eat the pineapple?'

d.    Kenen            [*Peter*]<sub>focus</sub>      [**neh**    **bua'**    **kaber**            **sineh**]<sub>topic</sub>  
UV.IRR.eat    Peter                      PT      fruit    pineapple      DEM  
'Peter will eat the pineapple'

e.    [**Dih**]<sub>topic</sub>      *kenen*                      [*la'ih*    *dih*]<sub>focus</sub>.  
it                      UV.IRR.eat      man    DEM  
'It will be eaten by the man.' (elicitation, BAR19082014CH\_03)

(15) *Kelabit Corrective Focus*

Na'am **Andy**    *nemupu'*            *John*    ngimalem...  
NEG    Andy    AV.PFV.hit      John    yesterday  
'Andy didn't hit John yesterday...'

a. **Corrected Undergoer**

*nemupu'*      [*Paul*]<sub>focus</sub>            [**t=ieh**]<sub>topic</sub>  
AV.PFV.hit    Paul                      PT=3SG.NOM  
'He hit Paul'

b. **Corrected Actor**

*pinupu'*            [*Paul*]<sub>focus</sub>            [**t=ieh**]<sub>topic</sub>  
UV.PFV.hit    Paul                      PT=3SG.NOM  
'Paul hit him.'

c. **Corrected Adjunct**

*pinupu'*            [*neh*]<sub>topic</sub>            [*edto*    *ma'un*]<sub>focus</sub>            [**t=ieh**]<sub>topic</sub>  
UV.PFV.hit    3SG.GEN            day    before            PT=3SG.NOM  
'It was the day before that he hit him'

- ❖ Secondly, in predicate focus questions, alternative answers are possible (and not infrequently given in elicitation contexts) with topic-comment order:

(16) *Kelabit Predicate Focus*

Q. naru' enun **Peter**?  
AV.do what Peter?  
'what is Peter doing?'

A. neh [Peter]<sub>topic</sub> [kuman bua' kaber]<sub>focus</sub>  
DEM Peter AV.eat fruit pineapple  
'Peter is eating pineapple' (elicitation, BAR19082014CH\_03)

- ❖ Equally, though focus-first order is preferred following a hanging topic, other orders are possible:

(17) *Hanging Topics*

a. **Undergoer Topic**

[Bua' ebpuk suk na'ai]<sub>HT</sub>, [dih]<sub>topic</sub> [kinan Andy]<sub>focus</sub>  
fruit passion REL afore DEM UV.PFV.eat Andy  
'As for the passionfruit, Andy ate it'

b. **Actor Topic**

[Paul kedieh]<sub>HT</sub>, [kinan]<sub>focus</sub> [neh]<sub>topic</sub> [bua' ebpuk]<sub>focus</sub>  
Paul 3SG.EMPH UV.PFV.eat 3SG.GEN fruit passion  
'As for Paul, he ate the passion fruit'

- ❖ Hence, focused subjects always appear in initial position, but non-subjects can also be focused, and subjects can also be topics.
- ❖ An important question for future research is what the difference is between a focused subject, and a focused object, and whether it is related to the difference between contrastive focus and contrastive topic, or different types of focus/focus strength (cf. Van der Wal 2016 for possible diagnostics).
- ❖ Let's now look at differential marking...

#### 4. Differential Marking and Information Structure

- ❖ Differential marking is also known to correlate with information structure cross-linguistically:
  - Differential object marking (DOM) often overtly marks topical objects (Iemmolo 2010, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011)
  - Differential actor marking (DAM) often overtly marks focused/contrasted actors (Fauconnier and Verstraete 2014, McGregor 2010, Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant 2018)
- ❖ In Kelabit, the choice of NOM and GEN appears to follow a similar pattern to DAM – GEN pronouns mark continuing topics (the default function of both actors and pronouns), whilst NOM pronouns indicate focus/contrast.
- ❖ This can be seen from spontaneous examples in the corpus:

(18) *Kelabit GEN as continuing topic*

a. Ieh keli' neh kuyad  
3SG.NOM see PT monkey  
'She saw the monkey'

laya' iat neh ngen kuyad dih  
low spirit 3SG.GEN with monkey DEM  
'And was unhappy about the monkey'

Nalap [neh]<sub>topic</sub> pupu'  
UV.PFV.fetch 3SG.GEN hitting.implement  
'She [Dayang Beladan] fetched something to hit with'

Nukab [neh]<sub>topic</sub> bubpu' daan  
UV.PFV.open 3SG.GEN door hut  
'Opened the door to the hut'

Nalap [neh]<sub>topic</sub> dteh kayuh  
UV.PFV.fetch 3SG.GEN one stick  
'Picked up a piece of wood'

Nulin [neh]<sub>topic</sub> kuyad sineh  
UV.PFV.throw 3SG.GEN monkey DEM  
'And threw it at the monkey'

Am neto' kuyad sineh ne-kasau ieh mudtih lah  
NEG PT monkey DEM PFV-bother 1SG.NOM end PT  
'After that the monkey didn't bother her anymore.'  
(narrative, PDA10112013CH\_01)

(19) *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 beads 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.bead  
'She would make bead caps in the past, of orange beads'

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]<sub>HT</sub>,            senuuk            [uih]<sub>focus</sub>        neh.  
 Like    DEM                    UV.PFV.string    1SG.NOM        DEM  
 'Like that one, I strung that [pointing to the bead cap on the table].'

❖ There are also several tests that support this analysis:

- If the UV actor is established as a hanging topic, only GEN is a possible in the main clause
- If the UV actor is questioned, only NOM is a possible answer
- NOM is preferred when the UV actor is overtly contrasted

(20) *Kelabit Hanging Topic Test*

c. **GEN marked actor**

[Paul kedieh]<sub>HT</sub>,        kinan            [neh]<sub>topic</sub>        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]<sub>topic</sub>        bua'    ebpuk  
 Paul    EMPH.3SG        UV.PFV.eat        3SG.NOM        fruit    passion  
 FOR: 'As for Paul, he ate passion fruit'

(21) *Kelabit Question-Answer Test*

seni'er            iih            t=ieh?  
 UV.PFV.see        who        PT=3SG.NOM  
 'who saw him?'

a. **NOM marked actor**

seni'er            [uih]<sub>focus</sub>        [t=ieh]<sub>topic</sub>  
 UV.PFV.see        1SG.NOM        PT=3SG.NOM  
 'I saw him'

b. **GEN marked actor**

\*seni'er            [kuh]<sub>focus</sub>        [t=ieh]<sub>topic</sub>  
 UV.PFV.see        1SG.GEN        PT=3SG.NOM  
 For: 'I saw him'

(22) *Kelabit Contrast Test (contrasted actor)*

a. **NOM marked actor**

Pinupu'            [uih]<sub>focus</sub>        [t=ieh]<sub>topic</sub>        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. **GEN marked actor**

\*/#Pinupu' [kuh]<sub>focus</sub> [t=ieh]<sub>topic</sub> pu'un, am dih iko  
 UV.PFV.hit 1SG.GEN PT=3SG.NOM first NEG DEM 3SG.NOM  
 For: 'I hit him first, not you' (i.e. you didn't hit him first)

- ❖ So, in the context of UV actors, GEN marks topics and NOM marks focus for 1SG, 2SG, 3SG and 3PL pronouns.

**Table 5.** Summary of differential actor marking in UV

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

- ❖ However, note that there is also no one-to-one link between form and information structure since NOM can also mark subjects in a variety of positions. As seen above, these can be focus (in initial position) but also topics.
- ❖ Moreover, the use of NOM to mark focused actors in UV is seemingly licensed in contexts where the actor is focused *and* the undergoer is the primary topic. In other cases, actors are contrasted in AV in initial position:

(23) *Kelabit Contrasted Actor*

**Actor Voice**

- a. 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.'

- b. [Uih]<sub>contrast</sub> teh [ne-ngimet inih keneh]<sub>background</sub>  
 1SG.NOM PT PFV-AV.hold DEM he.said  
 'I am the one holding this [the ceiling] up, he said.'  
 (folk story, BAR17082014CH\_06)

- ❖ Hence, differential marking may not only depend on information structure characteristics of the argument encoded, but also on other relevant referents in the clause.

## 5. Conclusion

- ❖ In this paper, I have explored how case-marking and word order are affected by information structure in Kelabit.
- ❖ I have shown that initial position is often associated with focus, and clause-final position with given information (or continuing topics).

- ❖ Similarly, I have argued that the choice of GEN vs NOM for UV actors is determined by information structure, since GEN pronouns reflect continuing topics, and NOM pronouns focus/contrast.
- ❖ However, we have seen that there is no one-to-one link between function, position or form and information structure role:
  - Both subjects and non-subject actors can be topics
  - Both subjects and non-subjects can be focused (in different positions)
  - Initial and post-verbal positions are associated with both topic and focus (only clause-final position is strictly associated with givenness)
  - NOM case can be associated with both topic and focus
- ❖ Consequently, information status is neither uniquely determined by voice, nor by word order nor by case-marking, but via a combination of the three, and the particular encoding typically depends on global information structure properties, i.e. the status of both actor and undergoer (cf. Latrouite and Riester 2018).
- ❖ Thus, expression of information status in Kelabit involves a complex interaction between syntax, semantics and morphology, and the voice system, though independent of the level of information structure<sup>4</sup>, functions to permit different configurations of word order and morphological encoding to allow for different pragmatic readings.

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<sup>4</sup>See Brill (2016), Latrouite and Riester (2018), Kaufman (2005) for similar discussion in relation to Tagalog/Amis

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## Appendix

- ❖ In all new/sentence focus contexts, AV/SVO order clauses are common:

(24) *Kelabit Sentence Focus*

Q. Kapeh tebey’?  
How actually  
‘What happened?’

A. **Actor Voice**

[Neh **Peter** kuman *bua*’ *kaber* *nedih* *ngi*]<sub>focus</sub>  
DEM Peter AV.eat fruit pineapple 3SG.POSS at  
‘Peter is eating his pineapple over there’ (BAR19082014CH\_03)

A2. **Undergoer Voice**

[Dih men **John** pinupu’ *Andy*]<sub>focus</sub>  
DEM PT John UV.PFV.hit Andy  
‘John just got hit by Andy’

(25) *Kelabit Sentence Focus* (from beginning of report)

d. **Actor Voice**

[**lun polis** ne-ngenep *teluh burur lemulun*]<sub>focus</sub>  
 police PRF-AV.catch three body people

‘The police have caught three people’ (news report, BAR21082014CH\_01)

❖ In all given contexts, UV/VOS order is common:

(26) *Kelabit All Given*

Q. Ken kinan muh nuba’ ih?

Q UV.PFV.eat 2SG.GEN rice DEF

‘Did you eat the rice?’

A. **Undergoer Voice**

[Mo]<sub>focus</sub>, kinan [kuh]<sub>topic</sub> [n=idih]<sub>secondary topic?</sub>  
 yes, UV.PFV.eat 1SG.GEN PT=DEM

‘Yes, I ate it.’

(27) **Both actor & undergoer given**

S1 neh n=ieh ngalap ibal bua’, bua’ pear nih  
 DEM PT=3SG.NOM AV.pick some fruit fruit pear DEM

‘Then he picks some fruit, some pears’

neh n=ieh nipa-nipa lem takub  
 DEM PT=3SG.NOM AV.pack-REDUP in pocket

‘and starts collecting them in his pocket’

edteh takub ngi pema’un batek nedih  
 one pocket at front stomach 3SG.POSS

‘he has a pocket in front of his stomach’

S2 takub enun nih? takub sapa’?

pocket what DEM pocket shirt

‘what sort of pocket? a shirt pocket?’

S1 takub kelibung t=idih bah

pocket cloth PT=DEM PT

‘It’s a cloth pocket’

senaru’ neh ko’ sapa’ teh kelibung sineh  
 UV.PFV.make 3SG.GEN into shirt PT cloth DEM

‘he made the cloth into a shirt’

[...]



temurun	ieh	let	dingi	keyh
INTR.down	3SG.NOM	from	up.there	PT

‘So he climbs down from up there’

senipa	[ <i>neh</i> ] <sub>topic</sub>	[ <b>neh</b>	<b>buah</b>	<b>nuk</b>	<b>ineh</b> ] <sub>secondary topic?</sub>
UV.PRF.pack	3SG.GEN	PT	fruit	REL	DEM

‘and put the fruit away [in the basket]’ (pear story, BAR31072014CH\_06)

- ❖ These follow the hypotheses put forward in Latrouite and Riester (2018) for Tagalog that voice selection may be related to information structure prominence (or markedness) based on the idea that semantic arguments have default information structure roles:
  - actor = topic
  - undergoer = focus
- ❖ They argue that voice alternations are triggered if an argument has a non-default information structure function:
  - If both arguments are in focus, then the actor is more prominent (since that is a non-default function) – hence AV is likely
  - If both arguments are given/topical, the undergoer is more prominent (since that is a non-default function) – hence UV is likely
- ❖ In cases where both actor and undergoer have default or non-default functions they argue that voice is determined by other factors. It remains to be seen to what extent Kelabit follows similar/different patterns in these cases...