

BENEFACTIVE, APPLICATIVE, AND POSSESSOR-RAISING CONSTRUCTIONS IN BIMANESE¹

MELANIE OWENS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Bimanese, like many languages, allows semantically “non-core” arguments that are ordinarily expressed in oblique phrases to be realized as syntactic objects. This paper focuses on the realization of benefactive arguments as objects, as in (1), while (2) exemplifies the more typical situation, where this non-core argument is instead realized as an oblique:

- (1) Nahu ndawi **wea.ku** Fero pangaha.
 1P make AFF.1 Fero cake
 ‘I made Fero a cake.’
- (2) Nahu ndawi.ku pangaha ru’u Fero.
 1P make.1 cake for Fero
 ‘I made a cake for Fero.’

Bold-faced in (1), but absent from (2), is a morpheme *wea*. From this pattern it may appear that *wea* accompanies, or even SIGNIFIES, the expression of the benefactive argument as an object, yet (3) invalidates this conclusion by showing that *wea* may still be realized when the benefactive is realized as an oblique:

- (3) Nahu ndawi **wea.ku** pangaha ru’u Fero.
 1P make AFF.1 cake for Fero
 ‘I made a cake for Fero.’

Wea also appears in possessor-raising constructions, such as (4), which similarly contain non-core arguments realized as syntactic objects:

- (4) Nahu dompo **wea.ku** janga tuta.na.
 1P cut AFF.1 chicken head.3
 ‘I chopped chicken’s head off.’/ ‘I chopped its head off on the chicken.’

These constructions are characterized by a necessary relationship of inalienable possession between the “raised” possessor and the base object, and by their propensity for malefactive readings. Yet a malefactive interpretation for the possessor is by no means entailed; the most that can be assumed is that these individuals are to some degree *affected* by the event described, by virtue of inalienably possessing the object. Since benefactive objects in double-object constructions, such as (1), can similarly be described as being affected by the event described (albeit with the added information that the effect is beneficial), the morpheme *wea* is glossed as ‘AFF[ected]’. *Wea* has the constant semantic effect of signaling that there is some individual who is in some way affected by the event described, which I represent formally as a relationship between an event and an individual at argument structure, like so:

- (5) AFF < *__event*, *__individual* >

Although *wea* has a constant semantic effect, it does not have a constant syntactic effect whereby a non-core argument is realized as an object. The factors that determine possible

¹ Bimanese, spoken by approximately 400,000 people, is a Central Malayo-Polynesian language on the eastern half of the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia.

expression in double object form are in fact entirely independent of the instantiation of *wea*—one indication of which is the fact that *wea* may even be omitted from benefactive and possessor-raising double-object constructions. Under my argument-structure representation, this lack of syntactic effect arises from the requirement that the individual argument introduced by the AFFect relation must be *fused* (as in Alsina and Joshi 1991) with another argument, resulting in a single syntactic realization, as in the following example, which is a formal representation of (1):

(6) Argument Structure: AFF < make-for <I, Fero, cake>_{event}, Fero_{individual}>

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|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| SUBJ | OBJ | OBJ | OBJ |

Grammatical Relations:

Without anything to fuse *with*, this argument cannot be syntactically expressed, as in (7b) (although note from (7a) that the semantic implication of the existence of an affected individual does remain):

(7) a. Fero ka.raso **wea.na** pingga.
 Fero CAUS.clean AFF.3 plate
 ‘Fero washed the dishes *(for someone)*.’

b. Argument Structure: AFF < wash <I, dishes>_{event}, X_{individual}>

| | | | |
|------|-----|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| SUBJ | OBJ | Ø | Ø |

Grammatical Relations:

But there is one situation in which the affected individual need not be fused, yet still may be syntactically expressed: when the base verb is intransitive:

(8) Nahu hari **wea.ku** Fero.
 1P laugh AFF.1 Fero
 ‘I laughed for Fero.’

These expressions, I argue, are correctly termed “applicatives,” in contrast to benefactive and possessor-raising constructions. I am thus arguing against the trend of collapsing these expressions into one category of “applicative” that has been pervasive ever since Baker 1988.

REFERENCES

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mowens@stanford.edu