

A SYNTACTIC MODEL FOR THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES

Teodoro A. Llamzon

The purpose of this study is to find out whether a syntactic model could be devised which would provide a framework for the description of the syntactic structures of Austronesian languages. If so, such a model could also provide a basis for the comparative study of this family of languages, be it classification or reconstruction, since description of languages must necessarily precede most types of comparative work. (Anttila 1972:3).

This paper is divided into three parts. Part I will discuss the grammatical model used to describe Tagalog, the language on which Pilipino, the National Language of the Philippines, is based. Part II will show how the model is applicable to a number of Austronesian languages. Finally, Part III will point out the advantage of doing comparative work on languages whose structures have been described according to the same model.

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE OF TAGALOG

In his book *Language*, Bloomfield made the following comments:

The era of exploration brought a superficial knowledge of many languages. Travelers brought back vocabularies, and missionaries translated religious books into the tongues of newly-discovered countries. Some even compiled grammars and dictionaries of exotic languages. Spanish priests began this work as early as in the sixteenth century; to them we owe a number of treatises on American and Philippine languages. These works can be used only with caution, for the authors, untrained in the recognition of foreign speech-sounds, could make no accurate record, and, knowing only the terminology of Latin grammar, distorted their exposition by fitting it into this frame. Down to our own time, persons without linguistic training have produced work of this sort; aside from the waste of labor, much information has in this way been lost. (1933:7)

In other words, Bloomfield's working principle in linguistic description

Amran Halim, Lois Carrington and S.A. Wurm, eds *Papers from the Third International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, vol.2: *Tracking the travellers*, 37-46. *Pacific Linguistics*, C-75, 1982.
© Teodoro A. Llamzon

is to account for the structures of a given language *on its own terms*. One should not try to 'distort' the description of a language by making its structures fit a certain grammatical model, but instead devise a model that would account for the structures of the language.

Following this lead, I have tried to see if first of all a syntactic model could be devised which would account for the structures of my mother tongue, Tagalog. If found adequate for Tagalog, it might then be possible to use the same framework for the description of other Philippine languages. The result of my work was published in Llamzon 1976, which contained a description of the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language. Here I would like to summarise briefly the structures on the sentence level, limiting the discussion to the basic sentence types of Tagalog.

There are at least three basic sentence types in Tagalog, namely, the monadic, diadic and triadic solidarities. The fourth type, quadradic solidarity, with four obligatory constituents, is not well attested. Examples of monadic solidarity (with one obligatory constituent) are: *lumílingdól* 'there is an earthquake' and *may táo* 'there is someone' (the opposite of *walang táo* 'there is no one').

Diadic solidarity (with two obligatory constituents) is illustrated by *lumalákad akó* 'I am walking', *si pédro ang pulís* 'Pedro is the policeman', *pulá ang bulaklák* 'the flower is red', and *maágang kumáin si pédro* 'Pedro ate early'.

Triadic solidarity (with three obligatory constituents) is exemplified by *nagpatáy nang manók ang iná* 'the mother killed a chicken', *naging sundálo si pédro* 'Pedro became a soldier', *nagpumilit ang batang sumáma* 'the child insisted on coming along', *kasinglaki ni huwán si pédro* 'Pedro is as big as Juan', *maaáring malí si hosé* 'Jose may be wrong', and *gusto kong kumáin nang manggá* 'I want to eat a mango'.

Quadradic solidarity (with four obligatory constituents) is not well attested, and the following sentence is considered as triadic by some Tagalog speakers but as quadradic by others: *nagbúhos ang táo nang túbig sa bangáq* 'the man poured water into the jar'.

All the four types of solidarities may be expanded by the addition of adverbial phrases, noun phrases functioning as indirect object or as a noun phrase in the possessive case, and by the insertion of prepositives and/or enclitics. It is clear that this classification of sentence types is based on form rather than on function, and that the assignment of sentence structures to one of the four basic sentence types is based on the obligatory rather than the optional constituents of the sentence.

The framework presented here differs radically from that used by Bloomfield and other linguists, including more recent ones. In his book *Tagalog texts with grammatical analysis* (1917), Bloomfield employed a grammatical framework that was essentially diadic, which required a subject and predicate for every sentence, except the exclamatory and impersonal-anaphoric types. While such a framework was suitable for Indo-European languages, it certainly was not adequate for Tagalog. For example, in the light of the subject-predicate framework he employed, Bloomfield analysed expressions like *umúulán* 'it is raining' and *taginít na* 'it is summer already' as belonging to the non-predicative sentence of the impersonal-anaphoric type. (1917:152). It simply is not true that *umúulán* or *taginít na* are anaphoric, because these expressions can have no subjects and as such there are no subjects that can be deleted.

Bloomfield's lead on the analysis of Tagalog sentence types has been followed by linguists down to our own day. Schachter and Otnes (1972:546-547), for example, classify the sentences expressing natural phenomena like *umulan* 'rain' and *umáraw* 'be sunny' as "derived sentences that occur as predicates of topicless sentences". (Ramos (1974:107), using Fillmore's case grammar model, says that "certain verbs that belong to the natural phenomena set take obligatorily suppressed instrumental force". She, therefore, analyses *umulan* as the surface verb form of an original structure *umulan* (ang ulán) 'rained (the rain)', in which *ang ulán* is 'suppressed'. McFarland (1976:2) calls *umulan* 'it is raining' a "topicless sentence ... a statement which contains no sequence which also occurs as the topic of a basic sentence, and to which no such sequence can be added". Finally, De Guzman (1978:272), following the lexicase model, classifies verbs that refer to 'natural occurrences' as "phenomenal verbs ... a subclass of verbs (which) derives from norms marked [+ phen], and ... mean the occurrence of an event involving the natural phenomena designated by N. Unlike other verbs, they are marked for not co-occurring with a nominative actant".

All these descriptions recognise and explicitly state that there is a sentence type in Tagalog which does not have a 'topic/subject/nominative actant'. The implication is that the sentences of this type cannot be considered basic, since all basic sentences are bipolar, i.e. they have a subject and a predicate, and any sentence that lacks either can only be considered as 'anaphoric', 'derived', or a 'subclass'. While the grammatical model that posits this rule is adequate for most if not all the Indo-European languages, it certainly is not suitable for the great majority of Philippine languages.

To see whether this view was prevalent only with linguists who had worked on Tagalog but not with those who had worked on other Philippine languages, I tried to look at some of the more recent structural descriptions of a number of languages, and discovered that the same grammatical framework was employed in classifying sentence types. Thus, for example, Wolfenden's (1971) grammar of Hiligaynon also posits bipolar construction for the clause patterns, although he concedes that "the second pattern consists of only a predicate with or without modifiers of the headword. In these types of clauses, there is an obligatory absence of a topic". (1971:212). Similarly, Forman's analysis of Kapampangan sentences like *umuran ya* 'it's raining', and *lilintik ya* 'it's showering' is that they belong together with greetings, curses and exclamations and should be classified as minor sentences "which do not have the bipartite subject-predicate construction of the major sentence types". (1971:126).

Outside the Philippine family of languages, the usual framework of grammatical description is likewise that of the bipolar subject-predicate or topic-comment structure. Thus, Soebardi (1973) fails to mention sentences like *hujan* 'it is raining', because it does not have this bipolar structure of the major sentence type; nor could it be classified under minor sentences, since it does not belong to the *ada*, the anaphoric response, to the vocative sentence types, nor to exclamations and greetings. Similarly, Walker (1976) divides all the sentences in Lampung into two types: major and minor sentences. "Major sentences have at least one topic constituent, which, however, may be deleted, and at least one comment constituent. Minor sentences have only one constituent, which functions as a comment, never as a topic". His major sentence types with topic deletion are anaphoric in nature (1976:12).

The contention of this paper is that this grammatical model which requires a bipolar or diadic structure of subject-predicate or topic-comment for all the basic structures of the language is not suitable for most, if not all, the

languages we have seen so far. The reason is that in these languages, there are monadic structures which are just as basic as the diadic sentences with subject and predicate.

It is, therefore, necessary to look for another grammatical system that can account for all the basic structures of this family of languages; a system that classifies sentence types according to their obligatory constituents — 'monadic', if it has one; 'diadic', if it has two; 'triadic', if it has three; and 'quadratic', if it has four. A model which requires bipolarity for all the basic sentences of a language simply will not be able to describe the languages mentioned above on their own terms.

STRUCTURE OF SOME AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES

To see if the grammatical framework described above can be used to account for the structures of other Austronesian languages, it was used to describe other Philippine languages, namely *Waray* (spoken on the island of Samar), *Bikol* (spoken on the southern part of the island of Luzon) and *Ibanag* (spoken in the Cagayan valley of northern Luzon). In addition, the model was also tried on *Bahasa Malaysia*, and the Indonesian languages of *Sasak* (on Lombok island, east of Bali) and *Acehnese* in Bandar Aceh in northern Sumatra). Finally, it was also employed in the description of the sentence types of Samoan, a language spoken on the island of Samoa in Polynesia.

The result in all instances was positive, and examples from the various Austronesian languages mentioned above are given in the Appendix of this paper. It may not be far-fetched to say that the model is perhaps applicable to many more, if not all, Austronesian languages.

The question now arises: what is the implication of all this to the comparative study of the Austronesian languages? Provided the model is valid and can adequately describe the structures of the Austronesian languages on their own terms, it should be a contribution towards facilitating the work of comparativists. As Blust (1974:2) sees it, syntactic comparative material can be organised in terms of the following scheme:

PERFECT comparisons:

1. identical
2. non-identical

IMPERFECT comparisons:

3. structurally non-identical, but all morphemes that occur are cognate
4. structurally identical, but only some morphemes are cognate
5. structurally identical, but no morphemes are cognate
6. structurally non-identical, and no morphemes are cognate

Imperfect comparisons pose problems, since a great number of inferences have to be made in justifying the reconstructions reached. On the other hand, fewer inferences need be made, if similarities (or even better identities) are found in the syntactic structures of the various languages being studied. It would, therefore, help if an identical framework is employed in the description of a group of languages belonging to the same family of languages, provided that such a framework adequately accounts for their structures.

APPENDIX

This section contains examples of the various sentence types of the following languages:

1. WARAY - a language spoken on the islands of Samar and Leyte in the Philippines - from Piczon-Llamzon 1973:88-89:

- Quadradic* - pagqúulíq palaq ni huwán han líbru
'Juan has just returned the book.'
- Triadic* - nagqíhaw an binatáq hin manúk
'The maid killed a chicken.'
nagpírit an irúy na kumáqun an bátaq
'The mother insisted that the child eat.'
nagin (mahúsay ~ mádri) an darága
'The lady became (beautiful ~ a nun).'
- Diadic* - nakáqun hi ándris
'Andres is eating.'
(prisidínti ~ buútan) hi Kennedy
'Kennedy is (president ~ good).'
- hi huwán an sundálu
'Juan is the soldier.'
- Monadic* - nalínug
'There is an earthquake.'
naurán
'It is raining.'
may(ada) ísdaq
'There is fish.'

2. BIKOL - a language spoken in southern sections of the island of Luzon - from Parma 1971:71-76:

- Quadradic* - ipigbakál ni huwán an ákiq nin lápis
'Juan bought the pencil for the child.'
- Triadic* - nagbakál nin siráq si laláki
'The man bought fish.'
puwídi sa laláki an kupiyáq
'The hat can possibly fit the man.'
kaipúhan kan ákiq an sapátus
'The child needs a pair of shoes.'

Diadic - malínig an salúg
'The floor is clean.'
 duktúr si pídrú
'Pedro is a doctor.'
 naghíhibíq an ákiq
'The child is crying.'

Monadic - nagtátagití
'it is showering.'
 nagurán
'it rained.'
 iguwá nin bisíta
'there is a visitor.'

3. IBANAG - a language spoken in the Cagayan valley in northern Luzon, Philippines - from Bauza 1972:77-81:

Quadratic - niyarádu nakketséru ta ummá in nuwáng
'The farmer used the carabao to plow the field.'

Triadic - pakanán ni huwán ikkítu
'Juan feeds the dog.'
 iyáwaq namméstra illíbru
'The teacher will give the book.'

Diadic - mapiyá si dóming
'Doming is good.'
 lumákag i abbíq
'The child walks.'

Monadic - magurán
'It will rain.'
 nakkilikiláq
'The lightning flashed.'

4. SASAK - a language spoken on Lombok island, Indonesia - from fieldnotes with Mr Lalu Wiramaja of Mataram, Lombok, as informant:

Quadratic - beruq tian leman pokén
'I have been to the market.'

Triadic - áli ñəmbəlí mánok
'Ali killed a chicken.'
 bápaq jári gúru
'Father has become a teacher.'
 kúrsu ini ajína satus dólar
'This chair costs 100 dollars.'

Diadic - bápaq tínduq
'Father is asleep.'
 bále bəlí
'The house is big.'
 áli polísi
'Ali is a policeman.'

Monadic - újan
 'It is raining.'
 génter
 'There is thunder'

5. BAHASA MALAYSIA - the national language of Malaysia.

Quadradic - kertas diperbuat daripada kayu
 'Paper is made out of wood'

Triadic - ali pecahkan pasu
 'Ali broke the vase.'
 dia menjadi askar
 'He became a soldier.'
 ali ialah presiden
 'Ali is the president.'

Diadic - rumah besar
 'The house is big.'
 ada orang
 'There is a man.'
 ali berlari
 'Ali runs.'
 itu ali
 'That is ali.'

Monadic - banjir
 'There is a flood'
 hujan
 'it is raining'

6. ACEHNESE - a language spoken in northern Sumatra, Indonesia - from Marhiah 1973, and fieldnotes with Halim Majid of Banda Aceh as informant:

Quadradic - nék gû pûnan čučo gûh fatimah
 'Grandma names her granddaughter Fatimah.'

Triadic - si agam ji koh nalung
 'The boy cut grass.'
 gobnya kajût kû prèsidèn
 'He became president.'
 urûng jeh poh asè nyan
 'The man killed that dog.'

Diadic - urûng sakét
 'The man is sick.'
 awakjeh ji plung
 'They run.'
 si din čarong
 'Din is clever.'

Monadic - banjir
 'There is a flood.'
 hujan
 'It is raining.'
 khung
 'There is a drought.'

7. SAMOAN - a language spoken in Samoa, a Polynesian island - from fieldnotes with Corporal Afamasaga of Dieppe Barracks, Sembawang, Singapore, as informant:

Quadratic - o lona tamā ua fa'anoa ina iā peta
 'The father named him Peter.'

Triadic - tamā ua tapē le pua'a
 'Father killed a pig.'
 o sione ole pelesetene
 'John will become president.'

Diadic - fale telē
 'The house is big.'
 ua moe sione
 'John sleeps.'
 ole tamaloa leoleo
 'The man is a policeman.'

Monadic - ua timu
 'It is raining.'
 faititili
 'There is thunder'
 uila
 'There is lightning.'

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANTTILA, Raimo

- 1972 *An introduction to historical and comparative linguistics*. New York: Macmillan.

BAUZA, Humberto G.

- 1972 A sketch grammar and lexicon of the Ibanag language. M.A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University.

BLOOMFIELD, Leonard

- 1917 *Tagalog texts with grammatical analysis*. University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 3/2-4. Urbana, Illinois.

- 1933 *Language*. London: George Allen and Unwin; New York: Henry Holt.

BLUST, Robert A.

- 1974 Proto-Austronesian syntax: the first step. *Oceanic Linguistics* 13:1-15.

GUZMAN, Videia P. De

- 1978 *Syntactic derivation of Tagalog verbs*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.

LLAMZON, Teodoro A.

- 1976 *Modern Tagalog: a functional-structural description*. *Janua Linguarum Series Practica* 122. The Hague: Mouton.

McFARLAND, Curtis D.

- 1976 *A provisional classification of Tagalog verbs*. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

MARHIAH, Syarifah

- 1973 A contrastive study of Acehnese and English syntax. Fakultas Keguruan Universitas Syiah Kuala, Darussalam, Banda Aceh.

PARMA, Marcial T.

- 1971 Basic grammatical structures and lexical forms of Bikol. M.A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University.

PICZON-LLAMZON, Petrona

- 1973 Elements of modern Waray. M.A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University.

RAMOS, Teresita V.

- 1974 *The case system of Tagalog verbs*. PL, B-27.

SCHACHTER, Paul and Fe T. OTANES

1972 *Tagalog reference grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

SOEBARDI, S.

1973 *Learn Bahasa Indonesia: pattern approach*. 3 vols. Yogyakarta:
Kanisius-Bhratara.

WALKER, Dale F.

1976 *A grammar of the Lampung language: the Pesisir dialect of Way Lima*.
Jakarta: Badan Penyelenggara Seri NUSA.

WOLFENDEN, Elmer P.

1971 *Hiligaynon reference grammar*. PALI Language Texts: Philippines.
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.