

Syntax-relevant verbal morphology in Mongsen Ao

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I provide examples from “A Grammar of Mongsen Ao” (2007) [1] below. In the first 2 examples, the verb *kəp* ‘strike’ is used both intransitively (1) and transitively (2). The author mentions that the examples show ambitransitivity and not core argument ellipsis due to the fact that the example (1) is the first mention of the eggs in the discourse. Without any changes to the verb’s morphology, the verb can take on different valency depending on the pragmatic context. There are no overt case markers on the arguments as, the author mentions, core case marking is not syntactically motivated in Mongsen Ao.

- (1) *ùphəla həntsə tʃu kəpsàzəkʃuk.*
ùphəla həntsə tʃu kəp-sà-zək-tʃuk.
red.junglefowl egg DIST strike-SEPARATE-SEND-PFV.PST
‘Red Junglefowl’s eggs were cracked and scattered.’

- (2) *nəŋ tʃútə ùphəla həntsə kəpsàzəkʃuk.*
nəŋ tʃútə ùphəla həntsə kəp-sà-zək-tʃuk.
2SG why red.junglefowl egg strike-SEPARATE-SEND-PFV.PST
‘Why did you crack and scatter Red Junglefowl’s eggs?’

Verbs in their bare form express past tense and the verb template has eleven positions, i.e. one prefix, a root and nine suffixes. In practice, semantic restrictions prevent the use of all eleven positions. The author favors a cyclical approach where the selection of a verb root would restrict the selection of the following suffix, in turn the suffix restricting the next one, and so on.

The nominalizing prefix *-tə* has several uses, one of which is to act as a verbless clause complement. In this usage, it seems as though there are no arguments to the deverbal nominal (3).

- (3) *anu la taɯa.*
a-nu la tə-aɯ-a.
NRL-child TOP NZP-be.good-VSF
‘As for the children, they’re good.’

Another usage of *-tə* is mentioned as ‘purposive nominalization’ (4).

- (4) *tətsəŋtsə wəlìkàʔ,*
tə-tsəŋtsə wə-lìkàʔ
NZP-visit go-CONTEMP
‘When [she] had gone to visit, ...’

The reciprocal/collective suffix *-təp* is used to either indicate collective action, i.e. ‘VERB together’ or reciprocal action, i.e. ‘VERB each other’. When it’s appended to a verb to be used reciprocally (5), the verb becomes intransitive, essentially altering the verb’s valency.

- (5) *tuŋnət tʃu atʃu ku áŋ ahju laŋlitəpə̀.*
 tuŋnət tʃu a-tʃu ku áŋ a-hju laŋ-li-təp-ə̀.
 3DU DIST NRL-DIST LOC just NRL-word reply-RECP-PRS

‘They two argue back and forth with each other there.’

The causative suffix *-i?* is another suffix that changes the valency of the verb (6).

- (6) *səjukəju?*
 sə-tʃuk-i?-ì-ù?
 die-PFV-CAUS-IRR-DECL

‘I will make him die.’

Glossary

2 = second person, 3 = third person, CONTEMP = contemporative converb, DIST = distal, DU = dual, LOC = locative, NRL = non-relational prefix, NZP = nominalizing prefix, PFV = perfective, PRS = present, PST = past, RECP = reciprocal, SEND = ‘send’ lexical suffix, SEPARATE = ‘separate’ lexical suffix, SG = singular, TOP = topic, VSF = vacuous stem formative.

References

- [1] Alexander Robertson Coupe. *A Grammar of Mongsen Ao*. 2007.