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The Morphosyntax of Middle Voice in Uab Meto

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on middle voice in Uab Meto. The point of this study is to describe the morphosyntactic element of the middle voice in Uab Meto. There are three forms of middle voice constructions in Uab Meto, namely reflexive, reciprocal, and lexical. A subject-reflective enclitic demonstrates the middle's reflexivity. *Ma-*, which is usually linked to the verb, signifies reciprocity. *es nok es* "each other" (lit. "one with one") is an additional signal that the construction is reciprocal, but its use is optional. There is a lexical middle verb type that is unmarked and syntactically intransitive. The argument's interpretation depends on the speaker's perceptions of the circumstances.

KEYWORDS: Middle Voice, Morphosyntax, Uab Meto

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INTRODUCTION

The well-known kinds of voice or diathesis are active and passive, but linguists have invented a third type of voice in some languages, known as middle voice. Middle voice, as defined by Lyngfelt and Solstad (2006:2), is a sort of voice that does not exactly qualify as either (typical) active or passive and is located somewhere in between.

There have been many studies dealing with middle voice on many languages by researchers such as Stainbach (2002:3), Shibatani & Artawa (2003), Calude (2004), Ting (2006), Nagaya, (2009), Kardana (2011), Alexiadou & Doron (2012), and Alexiadou (2014).

Saeed (2003:173) provided examples of middle voice in English, such as these *clothing launder nicely*, which demonstrates the success of the non-agent in the action. Saeed emphasizes that the usage of middle voice varies among languages, but that the affective state of the speaker is the most important factor to consider. Booij (2007:197) further said that morphologically, the middle voice marker modifies the subject's standing in relation to the signified action.

As previously noted, middle voice refers to a construction of a sentence in which the subject is an actor and does an action (a) reflexively, (b) for his/her own advantage,

or (c) on his/her own interest. In the case of plural subject, the actor may act upon each other as a reciprocal.

According to what Saeed and Booij underline, the middle in this text relates to a structure in which the subject of a phrase is impacted by the activity represented by the verb in its predicate. The purpose of this work is to characterize the morphosyntactic categories of middle voice in Uab Meto.

Uab Meto is an Austronesian language with around 700,000 native speakers in West Timor. This language is commonly referred to in literature as Dawan, although its speakers, the Atoin Meto, prefer to call it Uab Meto (Benu, 2019).

METHODS

This research seeks to characterize the linguistic phenomena of Uab Meto, particularly those pertaining to the middle voice. Using observation and interviews, data for this study were collected from Uab Meto native speakers. Sometimes, when collecting data, the researcher participated in talks with speakers (informants).

The data were filled by those obtained from the Uab Meto-written Benoa Alekot (Bible). The descriptive-analytic technique and deductive-inductive methodology were utilized to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis on the data revealed that there are three types of middle voice construction, namely reciprocal, reflexive, and lexical. But, before presenting the construction of middle, it is better to take a look at the other two voices, active and passive.

1. *Li mone na n-oet uki na*
child male that 3Sg-cut banana that
'That boy cut the banana'

The verb *oet* or *ote* 'cut' requires two arguments, *li mone na* 'that boy' and *uki* 'banana' in A and O function. It is also shown that the A and O arguments are different reference, that are *li mone na* and *uki*. It is easy to recognize an active voice in Uab Meto because of the morpho-syntactic characteristic. Verb that functions as a predicate in an active clause is always marked by a clitic that agree with the SUBJ (Benu, 2014). Prefix *n-* in the verb *n-oet* is the proclitic to agree with the third person singular subject.

2. *Uki na ma-ote? (nako li mone na)*
banana that PASS-cut (by child male that)
'That banana is cut (by that boy)'
3. *Uki na li mone na es an-ote-n*
banana that child male that that 3sg-cut-3Sg.OBJ
'that banana is cut by the boy'

Data (2) above is an example of passive voice construction in Uab Meto which indicated by the movement of the OBJ *uki na* 'that banana' to SUBJ position while, the SUBJ *limone na* 'that boy' is optionally in the peripheral position. There is a clear identification to determine whether SUBJ of the clause is the patient or agent by the marking on the verb. The verb *ote* is marked by prefix *ma-* without clitic. In the case of

data above, there is no clitic but marked by *ma-* as a prefix. So, *ma-* in that predicate is functioned to form passive clause.

There is another type of construction as seen in data (3) which is done by fronting the object. The enclitic *-n* in the verb is refers to the object *uki na* 'the banana'.

Reflexive middle

Reflexive middle construction, for example in English is indicated by the reflexive pronoun *himself* in O function as in *the boy cut himself*. Reflexive construction in Uab Meto is different with those in English in term of the reflexive pronoun. In Uab Meto, the argument which fills the O slot is appear as a morphological marking that attached to the verb as in the following.

4. *Li mone na n-ote-on*
child male that 3Sg-cut-REF
'That boy cut himself'

Data (4) above shows that the arguments in A and O function are the same reference that indicated by the verb *n'oteon* 'he cut himself'. The proclitic *n-* refers to the argument *li mo ne na* 'the boy' in A function, while enclitic *-on* refers to the same NP *li mone na* 'the boy' but as an O not A. The following data (5) give more clear explanation on the morphosyntactic marking difference.

5. a. *Au u-snait-a hau neu ?nesat*
1Sg 1Sg-lean-CAUS wood PREP wall
'I am leaning the wood at the wall'
- b. *Hau na na-snait-on es ?nesat*
Wood that 3Sg-lean-REF PREP wall
'The wood is leaned (itself) on the wall'
- c. *Au u-snait-ok neu ?nesat*
1Sg 1Sg-lean-REF PREP wall
'I am leaning (myself) on the wall'

Data in (5a) shows that it is in an active construction where *usnaita* 'I am leaning it' takes two arguments in A and O function. The proclitic *u-* refers to the SUBJ *Au* 'I', while *-a* is an affix which indicate the causative process of leaning. In data (5b-c), the same verb is still used but the markings are different. Again, it has to be noted that marking that function as prefix in Uab Meto verbs are indicating the SUBJ of the clause. Based on this understanding, *na-* and *u-* in the verbs are referring to the SUBJ *hau* 'wood' and *au* 'I'. Unlike 4a, the two verbs in the other two clauses are modified by enclitic *-on* and *-ok* which indicate the OBJ of the same SUBJ. In other words, *-on* is indicating O of the same *hau* in A function and *-ok* in 4c is indicating the O of the same *au* in A function. Based on several data presented above, it can be seen that the reflexive markings is varied based on its pronoun.

Table 1. Morphological Marker of Uab Meto

Pronoun	Reflexive marker	Examples			
		Cut (one)self	Lean (one)self	Free (one)self	Turn (one)self
1 SG Au	-ok	<i>oteok</i>	<i>usnaitok</i>	<i>ufetnok</i>	<i>ubainok</i>
1 P.i Hit	-ok	<i>t'oteok</i>	<i>tasnaitok</i>	<i>tafetnok</i>	<i>Tabainok</i>
1 P.e Hai	-om	<i>m'oteom</i>	<i>misnaitom</i>	<i>mifetnom</i>	<i>Mibainom</i>

2 SG	Ho	-om	<i>m'oteom</i>	<i>musnaitom</i>	<i>mufetnom</i>	<i>Mubainom</i>
2 PL	Hi	-om	<i>m'oteom</i>	<i>misnaitom</i>	<i>mifetnom</i>	<i>Mibainom</i>
3 SG	In	-on	<i>n'oteon</i>	<i>nasnaiton</i>	<i>nafetnon</i>	<i>Nabainon</i>
3 PL	Sin	-ok	<i>n'oteok</i>	<i>nasnaitok</i>	<i>nafetnok</i>	<i>Nabainok</i>

Data in table above is clearly shown that there are three morphological markers that function as reflexive pronoun. The example of the use of those reflexive markers can be seen in the data provided in the table.

These data presented in the table are interpreted morphological but also can be in a syntactic construction as seen in the following data.

6. *Au ?-oet au haek am na-then*

1Sg 1Sg.cut 1Sg foot.1Sg.POSS CONJ 3Sg-blood

'I cut my foot and it is bleeding'

The constructions in (6) above is said to be middle voice not because of the type of the verbs but because of the argument O as a part of the body of the A. Thus, the verbs above can be used both for middle and non-middle constructions.

Reciprocal Middle

The prototypical reciprocal situation is defined as one in which "there are two participants, A and B, and the relation in which A stands to B is the same as that in which B stands to A". Dixon (2012:147) gives a formula to define reciprocal as X acts in a certain way towards Y and Y acts in the same way towards X. Therefore, the sentence *John and Bill painted each other* then it can be inferred that *John painted Bill and Bill painted John*.

Reciprocal construction in Uab Meto is marked by prefix *ma-* in the verb and optionally *es nok es* 'each other' that stand alone and indicating the reciprocal action. In its use, the reciprocal *es nok es* can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence, but if the prefix *ma-* is omitted, it will make the sentence ungrammatical.

7. a. *Au ok au fe ma-nek*

1Sg 1Sg.with 1Sg.POSS wife REC-love

'I and my wife love each other'

b. *Nati all all kit ma-nek es nok es*

Later all all 1P.i REC-love one 3Sg.with one

'May we love each other'

The two data above show the reciprocal constructions which both of them are grammatical although the absence of *es nok es* in (7a) but it is still recognized as a reciprocal construction by the native speakers. Prefix *ma-* in *manek* may become the indicator that these constructions are reciprocal.

It has to be noted here that the prefix *ma-* has other two functions beside reciprocal, first indicating passive as *kolo na makena (nakan)* 'the bird is shot (by him)' (Benu, 2014), second is indicating possession *au tata maumen* 'my brother is already has a house'. Prefix *ma-* is indicating possession when it is attached to a category of noun (Benu, 2019). Prefix

ma- that indicating passive or reciprocal can be seen in the form of the verb where it attached to as in the following data.

8. a. *Ho m-ken kolo*
2Sg 2Sg-shoot bird
'You shoot the bird'
- b. *Kolo ma-ken-a (nako ko)*
Bird PASS-shoot-RES (from 2Sg)
'The bird is shot (by you)'
- c. *Hit nua kit ma-ken*
1P.i two 1P.i REC-shoot
'Both of us shoot each other'

The first data (8a) is an active, which is indicated by the clitic on the verb. The second (8b) is passive and the third (8c) is medial reciprocal. Both (7b and c) are marked by prefix *ma*, except that the forms of the verbs are different. Fifteen data of passive collected shown that all verbs are vowel-final that needs to be investigated further to find out the function or the meaning of those vowels. Medial reciprocal on the other hand is always a root marked by *ma-*.

Lexical Middle

Beside those middle verbs that morphologically marked as reflexive and reciprocal, there are also verbs in Uab Meto that unmarked but those verb are considered as medial verbs, such as *natpen* 'flies', *naniu* 'take shower', *ntok* 'sits', *nkil* 'combs', and *leu tu* 'kneeling'. These verbs are considered medial verbs because the actor is also the undergoer of the action or the action is done for the actors benefit as seen bellow.

Lexical middles in Uab Meto are unmarked and can only be interpreted based on their semantics. For example, the verb *mkil* 'you comb' can be defined as an activity of tidying the hair using comb. There is a slight difference to distinguish whether this verb is middle or active in the following data.

9. a. *Ho m-kil kau fe he na m-nao*
2Sg 2Sg-comb 1Sg before then 2Sg-go
'You comb me (my hair) before you go'
- b. *(Ho) m-kil fe he na m-nao*
2Sg 2Sg-comb before then 2Sg-go
'Comb (your hair) before you go,

The two *data* above show that the only difference is 3a has *kau* 'I' in O function. In contrast, there is no argument explicitly stated to place the O function but contextually the sentence can be interpreted as 'tidy your hair before go out'. The three examples of

middle shown above are categorized as lexical middle as stated by Shibatani (2002) and Shibatani&Artawa (2003). There are no morphological marking on these verbs. As also mentioned by Saeed, (2003:171) that one of middle types including bodily activities and emotions. The lexical middles found in Uab Meto as mentioned before are included in this types.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion in the previous section, it can be concluded that middle voice in Uab Meto consist of three types, namely syntactic, morphological, and lexical middle. Syntactic middle is shown by reflexive construction. In this type, the arguments in A and O function are co-referential. Morphological middle is indicated by prefix *ma-* attached to the verb in reciprocal construction and the enclitics that agree with the object in reflexive construction. Lexical middles are verbs without any marking. These verbs are syntactically both transitive and intransitive. The existing argument lies on the speakers' conception of the event.

An investigation needs to be done further to this research to classify types of middle verbs from semantics point of view. This will not only applicable to the lexical verb, but also reflexive and reciprocal middle.

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