Animacy and the Passive Voice in Kanjobal
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Kanjobal, also called Acatec, (Kaufman, 1986), a Western Mayan language spoken in the Huehuetenango area of Guatemala, shows a great deal of variation in word order. The language, having 15,000 speakers in the towns of San Miguel Acatan and San Rafael La Independencia, is closely related to Jacaltec. This paper is based on work with one young, male informant, Rafael, from San Rafael La Independencia. The work was done entirely away from the speech community.

This paper argues three things: that there are several equally basic word orders for Kanjobal sentences; that it is sensible to regard more than one order as basic in languages in which discourse factors strongly influence word order choice; and that it is not universally true that the order of predicate and arguments in active, transitive sentences is a basic order. Greenberg's (1966) and Comrie's (1981) claims about word order universals are based on observations of the positions in sentences of the grammatical elements of subject and object. It is clear in Kanjobal that thematic roles, and the relative animacy ranks of prononimal or lexical NPs in the roles, are more important determinants of word order than grammatical functions. Animacy status, grammaticalized in Kanjobal, is a discourse and pragmatic phenomenon. In this language an animacy hierarchy for NPs produces variation in word order largely through the choice of grammatical voice. The use of topicalization increases the variation.

The notion that Comrie (esp. pp. 178-193) labels 'animacy', which operates in many languages to constrain the syntax in various ways, might better be called 'intentional agentivity.' Universally, a number of factors having to do with the pragmatics and semantics of pronouns and nouns, and with discourse, seem to be involved, including person, number and definiteness of the nominal, whether it is a pronoun or a noun, whether the referent is human, animal, plant, or inanimate, and, if human, whether the referent is female or male, adult or juvenile. There is a tendency across languages for a sentence having both agent and patient NPs to show a flow of transitivity from an argument whose referent is higher in animacy (or ability for intentional agentivity) to one that is lower. That is, the more animate NP occurs first; it comes to the attention of the hearer first. Comrie (p.187) suggests the hierarchical continuum given as follows:

1/2 person pronouns > human NPs > animal NPs > inanimate NPs

An animacy hierarchy influences morphology and syntax in Kanjobal in a number of ways besides the choice of voice. For instance, nouns referring to humans and animals are marked with classifiers; but nouns whose referents are inanimate objects do not regularly get classifiers (with the exception of natural forces). Also, Kanjobal marks possession by prefixing ergative markers to the possessed noun; possessor nouns whose referents are low on the animacy scale often do not trigger the use of the marking—instead apposition is used—while possessor nouns whose referents are high on the scale always do.

(1a)	Ergative markers					
	1s	jin/w-	-an	1p	co	-on
	2s	ja (w-)		2p	jee (w-)	
	3s	s-/y-	naj/ix	3p	s-/y-	jeb
(1b)	Absolutive markers					
	1s	jin	-an	1p	co	-on
	2s	jach		2p	jex	
	3s		naj/ix	3p		jeb

Table 1. Kanjobal pronominal morphology

The animacy hierarchy can be observed in Kanjobal especially in the morphology of pronominals and the syntax of sentences in which they appear. The language has a complex pronominal system involving pronouns, their phrasal clitics, classifiers, and ergative verbal prefixes. The ergative and absolutive sets of pronominals are given in Table 1, above.

(1a) shows that first person ergative forms, which are short forms corresponding to long forms not shown here, include the clitics *-an* and *-on*. Short form second person ergative pronouns and third person classifiers are accompanied by ergative prefixes; *w-* and *y-* are used if the verb is vowel-initial. (1b) shows that absolutive markers differ from ergative ones by having distinct second person forms and by not associating with verbal prefixes. Note that only first persons, highest in animacy, are partially cliticized; and that use of the ergative prefix is optional when the agent is the second person, for which there are separate ergative and absolutive forms; and that only the ergative third person, for which noun classifiers take the place of distinct pronoun forms, requires a verbal prefix. This last morphological fact may reflect the discourse truth that a third person NP is less likely to be an agent than a second or first person NP. The ergative prefix on the verb serves to indicate that a third person is the agent in the sentence. The third person pronominal, that is, a classifier, may be omitted. A default interpretation of a sentence with omitted pronoun classifier is that the agent and subject of the sentence is singular, human, and male. The third person ergative marker, then, serves to put an expression of third person agency in front of the verb stem.

In terms of agent and patient roles of 1, 2, and 3 person NPs, regular word orders in Kanjobal sentences make the pattern shown in Table 2. Modification of these orders is permissible. Across construction types (active (a,b,c), passive (a,b,c)) the order VPA is favored, giving SVO, OVS, and VOS structures for active sentences and VSOblique and SVOblique structures for passive sentences. The structural preference for VPA is due in large part to the fact that in passive sentences agents are categorically oblique, clause final NPs with adpositions; when the agent is first or second person the agentive marker follows the pronoun. In active constructions in which the agent is third person, but the patient is first or second, one regularly finds the order PVA, that is, an OVS structure. Altogether, this means that in all but active sentences with first or second person agents, the patient precedes the agent.

		active Ss	passive Ss
(a) ag 1 or 2	pat 2 or 3	AVP (SVO)	VPA (VSObliq)
(b) ag 3	pat 1 or 2	PVA (OVS)	PVA (SVObliq)
(c) ag 3	pat 3	VPA (VOS)	VPA (VSObliq)

Table 2. Sentence word orders

Example sentences of each type are given in (1-6).

(1) jin tec' jachan
I kick you-CLIT
I kick you.

(2) jach slactoj txutx naj
you ERG-carry-DR mother POSS/CL^{m}
His mother carried you.

(3) smak' ix naj
ERG-hit CL^{f} CL^{m}
He hit her.

(4) tec'bi'il jin ja wuan
kick-PPART me you ERG-by-CLIT
I was kicked by you.

(5) tec'b'il jach yu naj
kick-PASS you ERG-by CL^{m}
You were kicked by him.

(6) laclitoj jun nene yu txutx
carry-PASS-DR CL baby ERG-by mother
The mother carried the baby.

Passive verbs have the suffixes *b'il, li-,* or-*cha,* among which there are functional differences. Dakin (1976:155) regards *b'il* as a perfect passive participle, and I have glossed it as such here. When only short form pronouns and clitics appear as arguments (that is, when the agent and patient are first and second persons,) only *b'il* will do as a passivizer. When the agent is third person and the patient is first or second person, the pronoun patient often appears before verb. The passive suffix *-li* is commonly used on the verb, although *b'il* is permissible also. Craig (1977:81-83) observes a parallel constraint on passive marking in Jacaltec.

Word order reflects animacy status in Kanjobal. Also, voice interacts with animacy to effect a regular variation in word order. First and second persons tend to be in front of the verb, as agents or patients. There is a preference for placing first person before second person, and first or second person before third in the linear order. The hearer finds out about the first person before the second and about the first or second before the third, regardless of thematic or grammatical role. The working of the animacy hierarchy determines the word order, giving the various structures shown in Table 2, in which, on the one hand, a PA order is favored, but, on the other hand, three different sequences for verb, patient, and agent are found across active and passive sentences. Further, active sentences are SVO, OVS, or VOS. The variety of structures is motivated by the language's preference for placing an NP of higher animacy forward in the sentence.

Although few VOS languages are known (Comrie 1981), Kaufman claims (1986:45) that basic word order in Mayan languages in general is predicate-initial; and that sentences are either VSO or VOS when the arguments are lexical NPs. These are, of course, third person nominals. One of the orders most frequently found in elicited Kanjobal sentences is VOS. When the arguments in transitive sentences are lexical NPs, VOS order is found, as indicated in (c) of Table 2. The VOS order corresponds to a verb-predicate-agent order. Narratives contain a very high percentage of sentences with third person arguments. Presumably, in discourse the same structure is used for any sentence which is a report, observation, or speculation about any people or events outside of the speaker and hearer.

While the simple majority of elicited active, transitive sentences with lexical NP or pronoun classifier arguments are VOS, the VOS order is sometimes abandoned or modified. Deviation from the basic word order in active sentences with third person arguments is possible through the use of VSO order or through topicalization of patient or agent. Of these two options topicalization is by far the more popular. When VSO order is found it has often, but not always, been elicited as a variation of the VOS order for the same sentence. Topicalization focuses attention on the argument whose role the speaker wants to emphasize. Heavy subject NPs are sometimes placed in front of the verb. Fronting a subject to focus position can serve to separate two arguments of equal animacy. Both VSO order and topicalization are shown in (7-9).

(7) smak' naj x"unic mex"a
ERG-hit CL^m Juan table
Juan hit the table.

(8) naj peel ix malin yiitoj jep xuwi bey txomb'al
Cl^m Pedro CL^f Maria ERG-carry-DR CL POSS-bag to market.
Pedro and Maria carried bags to market.

(9) naj antonio smak' naj x"unic
CL^m Tony ERG-hit CL^m Juan
Tony hit Juan.

When both NPs, lexical or pronominal, are third person, person itself cannot determine a difference in animacy rank between their referents. The use of topicalization does not correspond to a reversed animacy relation between arguments. P>A (patient is greater in animacy than agent) in very few active transitive sentences whatever word order is employed. Violation of the animacy hierarchy, that is, deviation from the expectation that A>P in animacy, occurs most frequently in active sentences when a woman is the agent and a man the patient of the action. There is some, but very little, evidence that gender difference is important in the Kanjobal animacy hierarchy. An example is given in (10).

(10) smak' naj ix
ERG-hit CL^m CL^f
She hit him.

If word order variation is not used to bring to the hearer's attention the fact that regular expectations about agency are not being met in a sentence, what device is used? The other route that is open is voice variation, and this is the one Kanjobal employs. The Kanjobal antipassive voice, which demotes the patient argument and focuses attention on the agent by means of modified word order, is found in sentences both in which the agent is of greater animacy than the patient and in which the patient is of greater animacy than the agent.

(11) jun winaj manon jun chee
CL man buy-ANTIP CL horse
The man bought the horse.

The most common devise for expressing transitive action in which the animacy of the patient is higher than that of the agent is the use of the passive voice with suffixes *-li* and *-cha*. The great majority of elicited passive sentences have patients whose animacy rank is higher than or equal to that of the agents. Many passive sentences provided by the informant are direct correspondences to active sentences provided by investigators. That is, the informant made active Spanish sentences into passive Kanjobal sentences when he felt it was appropriate to do so.

The order of the thematic roles of the NPs is the same as in active transitive sentences that have basic word order. The demoted agent in the oblique phrase follows the sentence's only argument since adpositional phrases regularly follow the arguments in Kanjobal. Topicalization of the agent or patient is possible in passive sentences; however, little use is made of it. When it is, topicalized elements are agent nouns whose referents are animals. Also, some of the fronted agents are heavy NPs, and this may be a factor. Examples are given in (12-16).

(12) mak'li jun nene yu jun noes
hit-PASS CL baby ERG-by CL nut
The nut hit the baby.

(13) tec'li jun winaj yu jun chee
kick-PASS CL man ERG-by CL horse
The horse kicks the man.

(14) mak'li cam naj yu no' lion
hit-PASS dead CL^m ERG-by CL lion
The lion kills the man.

(15) walcha naj yu jun cheen
hit-PASS CL^m ERG-by CL rock
A rock hit him.

(16) no' smis ix ana chiili kawan yune ix malin
CL_a ERG-cat CL^f Ana bite-PASS two-PL POSS-child CL^f Maria
yu no'
ERG-by CL_a
Anna's cat bit Maria's two sons.

Of the passive sentences where A>P, a pattern one expects for active sentences, the semantics of the verb are significant. More than half these sentences have verbs that gloss 'pick up', 'carry', as in sentences (17-18).

(17) laclitoj yunin ix jin txutx yu sno
carry-PASS-DR POSS-child CL^f POSS mother ERG-by POSS-sister
My mother's sister carried her baby.

(18) oc' jun unin tu' catut b'et yiili yu yanap
cry CL child that then ? ERG-pick up-PASS ERG-by POSS-sibling
The child cried and his sister picked him up.

A baby or small child is being carried by an older sibling or adult. Tony Moy suggests (personal communication) that the passive is used here in order to demote the agent and put a natural focus on the child; that is, the agent may be demoted not because it is unusual for older humans to carry children but precisely because it is usual, and the patient of the action is the NP to focus on.

The animacy hierarchy's importance shows up as preference for, rather than categorical selection of, one voice or the other depending on the relative animacy of the nominals; and other factors include the semantics of the verb, the passive suffix used, and the options of changing word order of the agent and patient or topicalizing an argument in order to disambiguate or focus on the role of an NP. This last option is of particular interest since variation in word order is possible in the language. A speaker could choose to use word order modification rather than a switch of voice to call attention to the fact that the patient of the action is of higher rank in the animacy hierarchy than the agent. Instead, most commonly a voice change is effected. There are three basic word orders for active transitive sentences, depending on the persons of the agent and patient.

First and second person agents in passive sentences do not occupy the focus position. They are objects of adpositions. This linear order makes passive sentences with first and second person agents look like passive sentences with third person agents (except

that the pronouns appear in front of the adpositons), and both of these look like active sentences with third person agents and patients in that the NP thematic roles occur in the order: PA. The order PA may then be taken as the unmarked order overall. This is reflected, in terms of grammatical function, as three different basic orders for active transitive sentences: SVO, OVS, or VOS. There seems no good syntactic or discourse reason to take the third of these, VOS (in which both arguments are third person,) as more basic than the other two. Further, given the regular, although variable rather than categorical, use of the passive instead of the active voice when the patient is higher in animacy thatn the agent, there seems no good language-internal reason to regard the patterns for active sentences as more basic than passive ones.

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