High and Low Applicatives: Evidence from Lai

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0. Introduction

Applicative constructions indicate that a semantically peripheral object has a more central morphosyntactic (and sometimes discourse) status than would otherwise be expected for it; i.e., they involve treating an oblique more like a direct object. The object associated with an applicative construction's morphology is referred to as the *applicative object*; an object associated with the non-derived verb (a patient/theme) is referred to as the *base object*. More conservative approaches to defining applicative constructions require that there be an overt *marker* of the construction occurring in the construction's verb; less conservative approaches are willing to countenance abstract, silent applicative elements. For further details, see Peterson, forthcoming.

Depictive secondary predicates, or simply *depictives*, are syntactically dependent predicates occurring in conjunction with a main predicate which predicate something of one of the participants involved in the main predicate, the *controller*. They are non-finite adjuncts and do not function as a modifier to their controller; e.g. *Bob_i left the party drunk_i*, in which *drunk* is the depictive secondary predicate and *Bob* is its controller, as indicated by the subscript indexing (based on Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004).

In this paper, I will first discuss applicative constructions in Lai (Tibeto-Burman, Western Burma) and establish their essentially asymmetrical character (in the sense of Bresnan and Moshi 1990).¹ Next, I will outline Pykkänen's recent high/low applicative typology (2001, 2002) and extensions of it proposed by McGinnis (2001a and b); this typology is motivated in part by possible interpretations for depictive secondary predicates in conjunction with applicative constructions. I will then consider evidence, focusing on the interpretation of depictive secondary predicates in Lai applicative constructions, which bears on the issue of the high/low applicative typology. From this evidence, I will urge

¹ Many thanks go to Ken VanBik (and other speakers of Lai consulted by him) for providing and discussing the data used here. Lai's applicative constructions are treated in significantly more detail by Peterson (1998).

caution in the extension of this typology to account for more widely cited applicative construction asymmetries.

1. The Lai family of applicatives

Lai has the family of applicative constructions illustrated in (1)-(7).

- (1) -piak: benefactive/malefactive (/substitutive) applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-piak
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-BEN
'He weeded the field for me.'
- (2) -tse?m: additional benefactive applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-tse?m
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-ADD BEN
'He weeded the field for my benefit (in addition to his own benefit).'
- (3) -pji: comitative applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-pji
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-COM
'He weeded the field along with me.'
- (4) -hno?: allative/malefactive applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-hno?
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-ALL/MAL
'He weeded the field to my detriment.'
- (5) -ka?n: prioritive applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-ka?n
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-PRIOR
'He weeded the field ahead of/before me.'
- (6) -taak: source applicative
làw ?a-ka-thlo?-taak
field 3SS-1SO-weed₂-SOURCE
'He left me and weeded the field.'
- (7) -naak: instrumental applicative
tuhmùý làw ?a-thlo?-naak
hoe field 3SS-weed₂-INST
'He weeded the field with a hoe.'

Some other noteworthy typological features of the language include split-ergative marking of grammatical relations and generally verb-final syntax.²

² Peterson 2003 provides a grammatical sketch of Lai covering these and other features.

2. Lai applicative constructions as asymmetrical

Below are several diagnostics used to typologize applicative constructions:

- order of objects with respect to the verb
- coding of objects by verbal pronominal morphology or agreement
- case marking of objects
- availability of object participants for other valence-affecting constructions (e.g. passive)
- interpretation of object participants in reflexivization/reciprocalization
- availability of objects for relativization
- availability of objects to act as controllers in cross-clausal coreference relationships
- potential for objects' quantifiers to float
- potential for objects to act as controllers for depictive secondary predicates

In Lai, with the exception of the instrumental applicative, which is the only applicative construction that usually does not have an animate applicative object, applicative constructions are essentially asymmetrical in their treatment of multiple objects. Criteria for judging the relative status of objects involve either a categorical or a gradient distinction between the objects—in some cases only the applicative object has access to a property, to the exclusion of a cooccurring patient, and in other cases the unmarked interpretation is that the applicative object exhibits the property, though an alternative reading in which the patient object instead exhibits the property cannot strictly be ruled out.

For the remainder of the paper, I will concentrate on the behavior of just one of these constructions, the comitative applicative. Comitatives either involve use of the comitative applicative construction, marked by *-pii* (as in (8)), or an oblique marker *=hee* (seen in (9)).

(8) comitative applicative object:

lǎwthlawpaa=niʔ	hŋaaktsiapaa	ʔa-kál- <u>pii</u>
farmer=ERG	boy	3SS-go2-COM

‘The farmer left with the boy.’

(9) oblique comitative object:

lǎwthlawpaa	hŋaaktsiapaa= <u>hee</u>	ʔa-kál
farmer	boy=COM	3SS-go1

‘The farmer left with the boy.’

2.1. Properties exhibiting strict asymmetry

Several properties exhibit a strict asymmetry between the objects in applicative constructions like the one in 8. That is, for these properties, only the comitative applicative argument can exhibit the property.

2.1.1. Object agreement

Lai verbs bear agreement prefixes for subject and object and, if relevant, a suffix which marks object plurality.

- (10) ?a-ma? ?a-ń-zu?l-pii
 3S-PRON 3S SUBJ-2S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed him with you.’
- (11) ?a-ma? ?a-ka-zu?l-pii
 3S-PRON 3S SUBJ-1S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed him with me.’
- (12) naŋ-ma? ?a-ka-zu?l-pii
 2S-PRON 3S SUBJ-1S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed you with me.’
- (13) ?kay-ma? ?a-ń-zu?l-pii
 1S-PRON 3S SUBJ-2S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed me with you.’
- (14) *naŋ-ma? ?a-ø-zu?l-pii
 2S-PRON 3S SUBJ-3S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed you with him.’
- (15) *kay-ma? ?a-ø-zu?l-pii
 1S-PRON 3S SUBJ-3S OBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘He followed me with him.’

As may be seen in (10)-(15), any preverbal object marking refers to the applicative object in applicative constructions; there are limitations on this according to the relative person status of the two objects (in this language’s applicative constructions the base object must not be first or second person if the applicative object is third person).

It is in fact possible to have marginal marking for base object number, but only if it is clear from context or from morphological considerations that the number marking does *not* refer to the applicative object (e.g., a verb with a first person applicative object would never have postverbal object marking that refers to first person, as in 16).

- (16) ka-làw ʔàn-ka-thloʔ-pii-hnaa
 1S POSS-field 3P SUBJ-1S OBJ-weed₂-COM-PL OBJ
 ‘They weeded my fields with me.’

This sort of marginal base object marking occurs elsewhere in languages which have an otherwise asymmetrical treatment of objects in applicative constructions, e.g., Huichol number-based verbal stem suppletion (discussed in Comrie 1982).

2.1.2. Reciprocalization/reflexivization

Next, reciprocalization or reflexivization in Lai involves reflexive object markers appearing in the prefixal object marker position.

- (17) sayàapaa ʔàn-ʔii-puak-pii
 teacher 3P SUBJ-RECIP/REFL-carry₂-COM
 ‘They carried the teacher with each other (i.e., both worked to carry him).’
but *‘They carried each other with the teacher (i.e., the teacher worked with each of them in order for them to carry each other in turn).’

Considering the possible interpretation of (17), reciprocalization/reflexivization in applicative constructions always involves coreference between an agent and the applicative object; the base object may never be understood to be coreferential with the agent.

2.1.3. Purposive clause control

In addition, control in one type of purposive clause construction involves coreference between the subject of the purposive clause and either the subject or an object of the main clause.

- (18) ʔa-traʔ-law-naak tsaa dín=ʔaʔ
 3S SUBJ-cry₂-NEG-NOMLZR sake PURP=LOC

 sayàapaa=niʔ sakaappaa làwthlawpaa ʔa-zuʔl-pii
 teacher=ERG hunter farmer 3S SUBJ-follow₂-COM

 ‘The teacher followed the farmer with the hunter_i so that he_i wouldn’t cry.’
or ‘The teacher followed the hunter with the farmer_i so that he_i wouldn’t cry.’

Given the possible interpretations of (18), the controller of the 3sS pronominal prefix in the dependent clause verb of this purposive clause construction must be the applicative object; it cannot be the base object.

2.2. Gradient object properties

Some object properties are not categorical, though the unmarked interpretations of sentences with the relevant features are nevertheless ones in which the property is exhibited by an applicative object rather than a base object; given appropriate circumstances, however, the base object may also exhibit the properties in question.

2.2.1. Occurrence with discourse deictics

For instance, Lai has several postnominal modifiers with complex discourse status semantics, similar in many respects to articles, though by no means coterminous with them, as seen in (19).

- (19) sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa kháa sakaappaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter 3S SUBJ-follow₂-COM
unmarked: ‘The teacher followed the hunter with the farmer.’
marked: ‘The teacher followed the farmer with the hunter.’

In view of judgments concerning the interpretation of sentences like (19), although it is not categorical, speakers’ most natural interpretation is that a discourse deictic occurring with one of the objects in an applicative construction is associated with the applicative object rather than the base object.

2.2.2. Left-dislocation

Also, Lai may left-dislocate (usually phonologically heavy) participants in a construction which otherwise has elusive motivations, seen in (21), for a basic sentence like (20), along with their possible interpretations.

- (20) sayàapaa =ni? làwthlawpaa sakaappaa ?a- zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer hunter 3S SUBJ-follow₂-COM
 ‘The teacher followed the farmer with the hunter / the hunter with the farmer.’
- (21) làwthlawpaa sayàapaa=ni? sakaappaa ?a- zu?l-pii
 farmer teacher=ERG hunter 3S SUBJ-follow₂-COM
unmarked: ‘The teacher followed the hunter with the farmer.’
marked: ‘The teacher followed the farmer with the hunter.’

The second interpretation of (21) is more likely if the undislocated object is associated with a discourse deictic, thereby causing it to be preferentially interpreted as the applicative object. The point to be drawn from this example is that the unmarked interpretation of a left dislocated NP in a sentence involving an applicative construction is that it is the applicative object, though a reading on which the left dislocated entity is the base object is not entirely ruled out.

2.2.3. Wh-questions

Finally, wh-questions in Lai either involve fronting of a wh-word or leave the wh-word in situ (both of these possibilities pattern the same way), as in (22) and (23).

- (22) ?ahaw=da? sayàapaa=ni? làwthlawpaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 who-INTERR teacher=ERG farmer 3SS-follow₂-COM
unmarked: ‘Who did the teacher follow the farmer with?’
marked: ‘Who did the teacher follow with the farmer?’

- (23) ?azày sakaappaa=da? sayàapaa=ni? làwthlawpaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 which hunter=INTERR teacher=ERG farmer 3SS-follow₂-COM
unmarked: ‘Which hunter did the teacher follow the farmer with?’
marked: ‘Which hunter did the teacher follow with the farmer?’

Given these interpretations, it is more natural for a wh-question word relating to one of the object participants in an applicative construction to refer to the applicative object, although a question word actually can also refer to the base object.

3. The high and low approach to applicatives

3.1. The basic high/low account

Pylkkänen (2001, 2002) proposes a new structural typology of applicatives, primarily to account for a number of aspects of their semantics, including the possibility of an applicative object controlling a secondary depictive predicate and the potential for certain predicate types (unergative and static) to applicativize. The typology distinguishes high vs. low applicatives depending on where an applicative head merges, as indicated in (24) and (25).³

- (24) High applicative: the applicative head merges above the verb

³ (24) and (25) are based on McGinnis's (2001b) depiction of the relevant structures.

- (25) Low applicative: the applicative head merges below the verb

In (26a) a depictive may be controlled by the applicative object; in (26b) the applicative object cannot control the depictive. Based on this diagnostic, the Luganda construction is taken to involve a high applicative and the Japanese one is taken to involve a low applicative.

- (26) a. Luganda (Pylkkänen 2002:34)
mustafa	ya-ko-le-dde	katonga	nga	mulwadde
Mutstafa	3SG.PAST-work-APPL-PAST	Katonga	DEP	sick
- ‘Mustafa worked for Katonga; sick_i.’
- b. Japanese (Pylkkänen 2002:32)
taroo=ga	hanako=ni	hadaka=de	hon=o	yon-da
Taro=NOM	Hanako=DAT	naked	book=ACC	read-PAST
- ‘Taro_i read Hanako_j a book naked_{i/*j}.’

Languages for which the applicative object can be a depictive controller furthermore appear to allow applicativization of unergative and static predicates, while those in which it cannot be a controller do not allow applicativization of unergative and static predicates.

3.2. Extensions of the basic account

McGinnis (2001a, b) recasts the notion of high vs. low applicatives in terms of a theory of phases (specifically, high applicatives define a phase; low applicatives do not). Within this general approach, McGinnis claims to derive a number of more widely recognized applicative object asymmetries. Applicative constructions which exhibit a symmetrical treatment of their objects in terms of object agreement and access to passivization are deemed to be high applicatives (2001b:8-9, 13); applicative constructions which exhibit an asymmetrical treatment of their objects in terms of object agreement and access to passivization are deemed to be low applicatives (2001b:9-10, 13-14).

These attempts to extend the high/low typology to account for additional asymmetries thus yield the impression that there is a correlation between a symmetrical treatment of objects in applicative constructions and high applicative

properties on the one hand, and between an asymmetrical treatment of such objects and low applicative properties on the other.

4. The status of Lai

As seen above, Lai is a language with an essentially asymmetrical treatment of applicative and base objects; it therefore should be expected to pattern as a low-applicative language if there is a correlation between asymmetrical object treatment and low applicative status. However, Lai's applicatives pattern as high. Lai can freely applicativize unergative and static predicates, including, for instance, the verbs *run* and *hold*, which Pylkkänen (2002) uses to illustrate this diagnostic for the languages she surveys. Essentially any verb in Lai may appear in the applicative constructions.

The facts concerning the patterning of depictives with applicatives are somewhat more involved. A representative example is (28).

- (27) sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa kháa sakaappaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter 3SS-follow₂-COM
 'The teacher followed the hunter with the farmer.'

- (28) sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa kháa sakaappaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter drunk 3SS-follow₂-COM
 'The teacher_i followed the hunter_j with the farmer_k drunk_{i/j/k}.'

It turns out that the depictive can be controlled by any participant. In fact, we can be more explicit about speaker judgments than this: if the depictive occurs immediately after a particular NP, the unmarked interpretation is for it to be controlled by that NP; if it occurs after the ergatively marked teacher ((29a)), it must refer to that participant, if it occurs after the farmer ((29b)) it may refer either to the farmer or the teacher; and if it occurs after all three NPs ((28)), it may refer to any one of them.

- (29) a. sayàapaa=ni? zuriitbuu?in lawtlaàwpaa khaa sakaappaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG drunk farmer DEIC hunter 3SS-follow₂-COM
 'The teacher_i followed the hunter_j with the farmer_k drunk_{i/*j/*k}.'
- b. sayàapaa=ni? lawtlaàwpaa khaa zuriitbu?in sakaappaa ?a-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC drunk hunter 3SS-follow₂-COM
 'The teacher_i followed the hunter_j with the farmer_k drunk_{i/*j/k}.'

The examples in (30) show the same possibilities for interpretation with all other applicative constructions.

(30) a. benefactive

sayàapaa=ni? ka-nùpii khaá làwtlawpaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-laak-piak
 teacher=ERG 1S POSS-wife DEIC farmer drunk 3SS-fetch₂-BEN
 ‘The teacher_i fetched the farmer_j for my wife_k drunk_{i/j/k}.’

b. additional benefactive

sayàapaa=ni? ka-nùpii khaá làwtlawpaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-laak-tse?m
 teacher=ERG 1S POSS-wife DEIC farmer drunk 3SS-fetch₂-ADDBEN
 ‘The teacher_i fetched the farmer_j for my wife_k and himself drunk_{i/j/k}.’

c. allative/malefactive

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa khaá sakaappaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-zu?l-hno?
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter drunk 3SS-follow₂-MAL
 ‘The teacher_i followed the hunter_j to the detriment of the farmer_k drunk_{i/j/k}.’

d. prioritive

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa khaá sakaappaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-zu?l-ka?n
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter drunk 3SS-follow₂-PRIOR
 ‘The teacher_i followed the hunter_j ahead of the farmer_k drunk_{i/j/k}.’

e. source

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa khaá sakaappaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-zu?l-taak
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter drunk 3SS-follow₂-SOURCE
 ‘The teacher_i followed the hunter_j leaving the farmer_k drunk_{i/j/k}.’

f. instrumental

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa khaá sakaappaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-hlen-naak
 teacher=ERG farmer DEIC hunter drunk 3SS-deceive₂-INST
 ‘The teacher_i deceived the hunter_j by means of the farmer_k drunk_{i/j/k}.’

It should be further noted, however, if the applicative object is first or second person, as in (31a) and (32a), interpretations in which the controller is the applicative object are highly dispreferred. Instead, there is an alternative in which the depictive predicate is expanded into a full-fledged subordinate clause, as seen in (31b) and (32b):

- (31) a. sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-ka-zu?l-pii
 teacher=ERG farmer drunk 3SS-1SS-follow₂-COM
 ‘The teacher_i followed the farmer_j with me_k drunk_{i/j/?k}.’

- b. zùu ka-riit-buu?in
alcohol 1SS-drunk-SIMULT

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa ?a-ka-zu?l-pii
teacher=ERG farmer 3SS-1SS-follow₂-COM

‘While I was drunk, the teacher followed the farmer with me.’

- (32) a. sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa zuriitbuu?in ?a-ń-zu?l-pii
teacher=ERG farmer drunk 3SS-2SS-follow₂-COM
‘The teacher_i followed the farmer_j with you_k drunk_{i/j/?k}’

- b. zùu na-riit-buu?in
alcohol 2SS-drunk- SIMULT

sayàapaa=ni? làwtlawpaa ?a-ń-zu?l-pii
teacher=ERG farmer 3SS-2SS- follow₂-COM

‘While you were drunk, the teacher followed the farmer with you.’

In sum, Lai’s applicatives have the distributional status of Pytkänen’s high applicatives (given their ability to occur freely with predicates of all types and for their objects to be depictive controllers⁴). However, their status is clearly asymmetrical from the standpoint of the more traditional typological classification.

5. Concluding remarks

The evidence from Lai applicative constructions minimally indicates that the high/low applicative typology is not necessarily equivalent to the symmetrical/asymmetrical typology. Attempts to make such an equation should be subject to further scrutiny.

This outcome is something we should perhaps already expect given McGinnis’ (2001b) treatment of Chichewa. In some respects (in terms of some semantic considerations and also phonological phrasing of the two objects associated with applicative constructions), Chichewa appears to have a high benefactive applicative construction, but this is also the prototype asymmetrical applicative construction following Bresnan and Moshi’s (1990) account, a mismatch which has yet to be fully accounted for.

⁴ At the conference presentation of this paper Alec Marantz rightly pointed out that if in a sentence like (9) a depictive could be controlled by the oblique, it would potentially make the diagnostic irrelevant for Lai due to a restriction Pytkänen places on its application. In fact, it turns out that the depictive cannot be controlled by an oblique in such sentences.

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