

## ACTOR VOICE IN KARO BATAK

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Karo Batak is a Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) language of north-western Sumatra. There are approximately 600,000 speakers in the main Karo-speaking area, a fertile highland plateau which borders the large volcanic Lake Toba. Karo is the second largest of the Batak group; its major bordering languages are Acehnese and several other Batak languages of which Toba Batak is the largest and best known. Partly due to the relatively inaccessible highland location the Karo language and cultural traditions have remained largely intact.

Of the twenty-four groups that the WMP languages are currently, though tentatively, divided into (Ross 1994), the Batak languages as a whole fall into the North-west Sumatra/Barrier Islands group that comprises Gayo Batak, and languages of the Barrier Islands such as Nias. Nothofer (1992: 39) claims that this group of languages shares certain features with those of northern Sulawesi and the southern Philippines, all of them related by virtue of their outlying location in the Western Austronesian-speaking area. His theory is that Paleo-Hesperonesian languages once covered much of the WMP area but were eventually replaced in Western Indonesia and Western Malaysia by Hesperonesian languages. At the same time geographically outlying areas retained a greater part of the vocabulary of the ‘Paleo’ group.

A detailed descriptive grammar of Karo Batak is available (Woollams 1996). The current paper, which has a more theoretical orientation, is part of a work in progress. The overall aim is to describe the Karo system of verbal prefixation and how it relates to valency alternations, and thereby to help place Karo Batak in a typological categorisation of WMP languages, as well as to address some relevant sub-grouping issues.

### 1.1 Overview of major voice alternatives in Karo

As in other WMP languages, Karo Batak has two alternative voice forms represented by verbal prefixes descended from the earlier focus system, described, for example, by Starosta, Pawley and Reid (1982). The basic, active voice of transitive constructions in Karo is derived from the earlier “undergoer” focus construction whose verbs formerly had an *i-* prefix. In spoken discourse these verbs no longer have a prefix but, for expository purposes, they are represented here with a  $\emptyset$ -<sup>1</sup> prefix. Their argument structure is as follows. The formal expression of their pronominal A(ctor) argument is by affixed or enclitic pronominal forms and, for full lexical NP actors, strict  $\emptyset$ -verb-NP order. By comparison, pronominal (P)atient/undergoer arguments are expressed by free-form pronouns, and neither pronominal nor lexical undergoers are positionally constrained. (Table 1 in the next section, 2.1, shows the complete pronominal paradigm.) The following examples, wherein the  $\emptyset$ - verb forms are highlighted, illustrate these constraints. The preferred word order is verb-initial though pragmatic and syntactic factors frequently result in changes, seen for example, in the interrogative constructions in (2).

- (1) *ku=darami*      *dahin*      *si=mbaru*  
1SG= $\emptyset$ =seek      work      REL=new  
'I am looking for a new job.' (C)<sup>2</sup>

1 The use of  $\emptyset$ - as a citation form distinguishes it from bare stem, prefixless intransitives and retains the connection these forms have with the written *i*-prefixed forms from which the  $\emptyset$ - forms are derived.

2 The letter C or W following an example indicates the source of data – conversation or written.

- (2) *kai nge deba baba=na*  
 what NGE<sup>3</sup> other Ø=bring=3

*baba=na beras.*

Ø=bring=3 rice

‘What else did they bring?’ ‘They brought rice.’ (C)

- (3) *ndai darami bibi aku jah e*  
 just now Ø=seek auntie 1SG there DEM  
 ‘Just now Auntie was just looking for me there.’ (C)

The alternative voice, based on the earlier “actor” focus constructions, is represented in Karo Batak by a homorganic nasal prefix, *N-*. While a number of verb stem initials are simply prefixed, others are replaced by the equivalent nasal phoneme. Apart from marking a large number of intransitives (Section 2.1), the *N-* prefix also occurs with two-place semantically transitive verbs. In these constructions it is the A argument which is less positionally constrained. However, the P argument, when it is overt, is in a fixed position following the verb. But, unlike the the A argument of the Ø- verb constructions, a pronominal P is not affixed. The suffix *-sa* on the verb in example (5) does not represent a pronominal argument, but merely cross-references a previously mentioned P argument. Example (4) illustrates use of the verb stem *tukur* ‘buy’ with Ø- prefix and (5) with the nasal form of this stem, *nukur*.

- (4) *tukur bapa=na ah motor nge kap*  
 Ø=buy father=3.GEN DEM car NGE EMPH  
 ‘His father bought a car (for him).’ (C)

- (5) *kalak e pe la nggit nukur=sa*<sup>4</sup>  
 others DEM EMPH not *N=wish N=buy=SA*  
 ‘In fact, others may not want to buy it.’ (C)

## 1.2 Outline of paper

This paper is mainly an exploration of the conditions that determine the use of the *N-* prefixed verbs in two-place constructions in Karo and of the status of the undergoer argument of these constructions. The paper is based on the examination of three texts, two of them recorded conversations<sup>5</sup> of approximately one, and half an hour's duration each transcribed and translated with assistance from a native speaker, and the third of about four thousand words of written narrative, told mainly in third person form. The written forms of the language use a verbal prefix, *i-*, in place of the Ø- form; this is discussed in more detail in Section 2 where an outline description of the verbal prefixes of Karo is given. The distribution of the two prefixes is also discussed in this section.

Section 3 elaborates on the morphosyntax of the basic transitive constructions, the Ø- constructions, but the main discussion (Section 4) concerns the morphosyntax and function of the *N-* verb forms. It was found that across all sets of data examined, the *N-* verb forms occur predominantly in shared argument subordinate constructions. The semantic and syntactic parameters used to determine and define subordination in Karo are examined in Section 4.3.

Two discourse “emphatic” particles in Karo have been found to be syntactically obligatory in many instances, and to occur in fixed positions; they cannot therefore be properly defined as

<sup>3</sup> The particles *nge* and *me* and *pe* will not be translated in inter-linear glosses – see discussion in this section and Section 5.

<sup>4</sup> For the time being the suffix *-sa* is glossed as it stands. Section 4.2 deals with its function in more detail.

<sup>5</sup> For this I wish to thank Ramli Ginting and his family, particularly his mother who has since died and to whom a record of my respect is appropriate. Sincere thanks are also due to Andyda Meliala and Edimon Ginting.

discourse particles (Section 5). They appear to be currently in the process of functional change, being distributed in some contexts as obligatory clitics on noun phrases and in others as positionally free particles. One possible analysis of these particles is that they are derived from erstwhile Philippines-type case markers.

## 2.1 Overview of Karo verbal affixes

There are four main verbal prefixes:  $\emptyset$ - (or *i*- in formal, written language), *N*-, *er*- and *ter*-. A set of ‘bare stem’ intransitives are monomorphemic. There are also three valency increasing affixes: the causative prefix *pe*- and two applicative suffixes: *-i*, and *-ken*. Many verbs derived with *-ken* have become lexicalized, for example, *bere* is often best glossed as ‘allow’, but *bereken* is generally used to mean ‘to give or hand over something concrete’. One other verbal suffix, *-en*, has limited productivity. Applied to intransitives it indicates more than one participant.

Native speakers appear to consider the prefix *i*- to be a freely variable allomorph of  $\emptyset$ -, used mainly for emphasis, and it is the form most frequently found in written language (see Figure 1 below). While the *i*- constructions have nearly the same pronominal paradigm and distribution as the  $\emptyset$ - constructions, the *i*- constructions (and the now infrequently used *ni*- constructions<sup>6</sup>) are best considered as passives. Two criteria in particular are evidence of a distinction between the  $\emptyset$ - and *i*- forms. These are the absence of an identifiable Actor argument with nearly 100% of the *i*-/*ni*- constructions, as well as their very low frequency in spoken discourse. In the spoken language a much larger percentage of the  $\emptyset$ - constructions occur with overt expression of A. Although the relationship between these forms is obviously of historical significance, neither the *i*-/*ni*- verbs, the intransitive *er*- verbs or the *ter*- verbs will feature in their own right in this paper. Example (6) typifies the use of the *i*- form from the conversation set, one of the few examples of an *i*- verb from either conversation set.

- (6) *La bere=na idayaken juma ah e*  
 not agree=3 I-sell land DEM DEM  
 ‘He does not agree to the land being sold.’ (C)

The nasal prefix, *N*-, is not only found in two -place constructions with semantically transitive verbs but it, or a homophonous form, is also used to derive a large number of semantically and syntactically intransitive verbs as exemplified in (7). Many of the remaining intransitives, such as those seen in this example, are bare stem forms.

- (7) *E maka tedis me si Naktaki, ng=andung ia, berkat ia*  
 then stand ME PN Naktaki N-cry 3 depart 3  
 ‘Then Naktaki stood up, crying, and departed.’ (W)

The intransitive nasal prefix will be assumed for the purposes of the current paper to be a homophone of the *N*- prefix under discussion, not intrinsic to the discussion and not from henceforth separated from the stem in interlinear glosses.

The *er*- prefix is extremely productive, deriving basically one-place intransitive verbs from substantives. The *ter*- forms are derived statives, glossable in most instances as predicative adjectives. They have a similar pronominal paradigm to the  $\emptyset$ -/*i*- forms. They occur more frequently in the written than in the spoken style.

The pronominal paradigms and their distribution are shown in Table 1 below. With the exception of the A argument of the  $\emptyset$ - verb forms, all pronominal arguments, including the

<sup>6</sup> Himmelmann (1996: 126) notes that in some South Sulawesi languages the occasional presence of a proclitic for 1st person in a paradigm that otherwise uses post clitics is suggestive of incipient IRREALIS mode marking, but generally Karo does not show any alternations. With very few exceptions 1st person forms are prefixes. However, this issue needs further investigation and is probably of diachronic significance, relevant to which is the apparent lack of *i*-/*ni*- forms with 1st person.

single argument of intransitives, are independent pronouns. The form of the  $\emptyset$ - verb construction's pronominal A argument, as a verbal affix or clitic, gives these constructions an ergative character. As is common across WMP languages these "ergative" Actors have the genitive form except that in Karo the first person forms are prefixes rather than genitive suffixes.

TABLE 1. Pronominal paradigms

	<b>Independent pronouns</b>	<b>Actor affixes/ clitics of <math>\emptyset</math>-verbs</b>	<b>Genitive affixes/clitics</b>
1SG	aku	ku-	-(ng)ku
2SG (formal)	kam	-ndu	-ndu
2SG (familiar)	kam/(eng)ko/mu	-ko	-m
3SG	ia	-na	-na
1PL INCL	kita	si-	-(n)ta
1PL EXCL	kami	kami	kami
2PL	kena	kena	kena
3PL	kalak	-na/ kalak	kalak

## 2.2 Distribution of the two major voices

The proportional distribution of voice forms for both spoken and written style is shown in Figure 1. It shows that there are a larger number of *i*- forms over  $\emptyset$ - forms in the written style, and also a higher proportion of *N*- forms in the written style than in the spoken style. This may be accounted for by the fact that there are relatively higher numbers of complex constructions in written language.

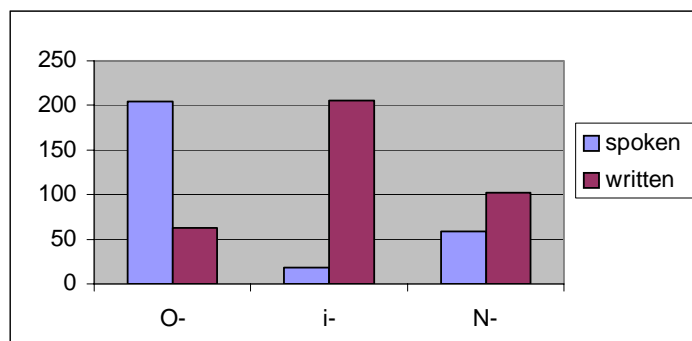


FIGURE 1<sup>7</sup>. Distribution of verbal prefixes in written and spoken styles.

More significantly it shows that the overall numbers of *N*- verb constructions, whether occurring in spoken or written language, are fifty percent, or less, than the  $\emptyset$ -/*i*- verb constructions. Relevant to this distribution is that three major<sup>8</sup> lexical items, *ukur*, 'think/thought', *ate* 'wish/want' and *nin* 'say (reportative)', exhibit nominal morphology and have therefore not been counted as verbs, although they function as such.

<sup>7</sup> The columns represent the number of forms per style type, standardized to 5000 words. (The spoken data contains approx.4000 words and the written data approx.10,000 words). The figures do not include the three nominal forms discussed here. Woollams (1996:12) gives a 7:3 ratio of undergoer:actor voice.

<sup>8</sup> The combined number of these three nominal forms is 309, compared to 408  $\emptyset$ - verbs, in the spoken data, for example.

The noun-verb distinction in Western Austronesian (WAN) languages is not as distinct as in European languages and the Karo  $\emptyset$ - verbs are a case in point. Not only is the form of these verbs the same as that of the bare stem, in addition, their ergative patterning pronominal A arguments have (with the exception of the 1<sup>st</sup> person prefixed forms), the same form and position as the genitive post-nominal or suffixed pronominal possessors. Only when a lexical item regularly takes other verbal morphology can they truly be analysed as verbs. The highlighted form of *ukur* in example (8) can be glossed as either a verb or a noun. Occasionally the three common forms listed above are to be found with distinctive verbal morphology, such as an *er*- or *N*- prefix, as on *ukur* in example (9).

- (8) *Enda enggo lanai bagi ukur si Naktaki*  
 DEM PAST never same think PN Naktaki  
 ‘Naktaki thought it was never the same.’ (W)

or: ‘Naktaki’s thoughts were that it was never the same.’

- (9) *Beru Rengga Kuning melimber kal akap=na ng=ukur=i=sa*  
 Beru Rengga Kuning dizzy very  $\emptyset$ -feel=3 N-think-TRS=SA  
 ‘Beru Rengga Tuning felt dizzy thinking about it.’ (W)

### 2.3 Summary of Section 2

This section has described the verbal prefixes of Karo, drawing attention to the similarity in form between the *N*- prefix which forms intransitive and semantically transitive verb stems alike. The differential distribution between this prefix on semantically transitive stems, and the undergoer voice  $\emptyset$ -/*i*- prefix, was shown in Figure 1. This figure also highlights the difference between the distribution of the two forms of undergoer voice prefix,  $\emptyset$ - used predominantly in spoken styles of language, and *i*-, used in written styles. The latter form appears to function more as a passive prefix in spoken language.

## 3 Morphosyntax of undergoer voice ( $\emptyset$ - verb) constructions

### 3.1 Position and form of the arguments

The ergative patterning of the undergoer voice ( $\emptyset$ - verb) forms, through the affixation of all three personal pronoun actors, is shown in examples (10) – (12).

- (10) *Erkai suan=ndu?*  
 what  $\emptyset$ -grow=2SG?  
 ‘What are you growing?’ (C)
- (11) *Ku=suan gundari markisah ras jaung*  
 1SG- $\emptyset$ -grow now passionfruit and corn  
 ‘I am growing passionfruit and corn at present.’ (C)
- (12) *Suan=na jaung ka sitik cina e ka sitik*  
 $\emptyset$ -grow-3 corn EMPH little chillie DEM EMPH little  
 ‘They only grow a little corn and a few chillies.’ (C)

The preferred predicate-initial order of Karo is reflected in the V A (X) P order of (12) in particular where full nominal A arguments, like the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person suffixed pronouns, must immediately follow the verb. Unlike the restricted position of the A argument, the position of the undergoer P is extremely flexible, and frequently precedes the verb as in (13).

- (13) *sen pe galang-galang bereken=na man.bang<sup>9</sup>-ku*  
 money EMPH big-REDUP  $\emptyset$ -give=3 DAT=1SG  
 ‘Indeed he gave a lot of money to me’. (C)

<sup>9</sup> The final alveolar of the preposition *man/ban* assimilates to the following velar.

The use of the emphatic particle PE with the undergoer in this example is optional. Nevertheless an emphatic particle of one description or another marks most examples of preverbal arguments. Presumably the marking serves to highlight the pragmatic significance of the clause-initial position of the fronted argument. Also seen in example (13) is the dative preposition, *man ba-*, which marks benefactives and recipients, as well as reflexive anaphors.

Karo allows three choices of referential form: a lexical NP, a pronoun or ellipsis. Both core arguments of the  $\emptyset$ - form verbs (and intransitive Ss) may be optionally elided. The verb stem *dayaken* ‘sell’ (the most frequently occurring verb stem in one conversational text) is useful for examining the distribution of zero expression of its A and P. The distribution of verbal form across clause types, as well as the number of overt arguments accompanying the 41 total mentions of this stem, is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2. showing the distribution of the verb stem *dayaken* across clauses.

Verb prefix:	$\emptyset$ -		<i>i</i> -		<i>N</i> -		TOTAL
Clause type:	Main	Subord	Main	Subord	Main	Subord	
No. of expressed arguments							
2	6	1	0	0	0	0	7
1	7	8	2	2	0	1	20
0	8	4	0	0	0	0	12
Unclear					0		2
TOTALS	21	13	2	2	0	1	41

### 3.2 Syntactic status of the arguments

That the  $\emptyset$ - verbs (or *i*- verbs, in the case of written language style) are the most frequent construction type can be seen from Figure 1. The primary grammatical relation of these ergative patterning constructions is the undergoer. There is a strong tendency for this argument to be identifiable and particular (rather than general) but this is not an absolute constraint. It and the actor, A, demonstrate a number of core properties outlined below. Some of the examples in the following tests are elicited or taken from other sources as no illustrative examples were available from the data.

#### (i) Relativisation

The basic gap strategy used for relativisation in Karo is exemplified first of all with an intransitive S in (14). A relativiser, *si*, always precedes a relative construction.

- (14) *Reh ni=na kalak si [medem i Jambur]*  
 come word=3.GEN people REL [sleep in meeting house]  
 ‘The people [who slept in the meeting house] said to come in.’ (W)

In (15) the relativised and gapped argument is the undergoer of an *i*- verb construction.

- (15) *berkat nulusi turang=na si*  
 depart N=search for brother=3.GEN REL  
 [*sope i=tandai=na ndube*]  
 [before I=recognise=3 previous]  
 ‘(She thought she would) depart to look for her brother [whom she had once known].’  
 (W)

An A argument is normally relativised by the use of a *N-* verb construction (see Section 4.1, example (26)), but the A argument of the  $\emptyset$ -*i-* verb constructions can also be relativised, using a strategy of pronominal retention, if there is not an equivalent *N-* verb to satisfy the requirements of an actor subject, as example (16), an elicited example, shows.

- (16) *Guru ng=ergai murid si [ingit=na pelajaran]*  
 teacher N=scold pupil REL [ $\emptyset$ -forget=3 lesson]  
 ‘The teacher scolded the child who forgot her lessons.’

Woollams (1996: 293) gives examples whereby possessor and dative arguments can also be relativised by this same strategy.

(ii) Quantifier float

A quantifier such as *kerina* ‘all’ in the following examples, will always be understood to belong with the P argument of a  $\emptyset$ -*i-* verb construction. Thus in (17) whatever the arrangement of the constituents, *kerina* modifies the undergoer, not the actor argument of *ihamati* ‘respect’.

- (17) *jelma kerina i-hamati=na*  
 (/i=hamat=na kerina jelma /jelma i=hamati=na kerina)  
 people all I-respect=3  
 ‘He (the king) respected everyone.’ (W)  
 \*‘Everyone respected him.’ (But for this gloss see example (29) below, the *N-* verb equivalent.)

(iii) Imperatives and reflexivisation

The  $\emptyset$ - construction is the form used for imperatives, and reflexives as in (18) (an elicited example) and (19), where the actor is always the antecedent of the reflexive anaphor.

- (18) *Ku=pekpek bang=ku*  
 1.SG=  $\emptyset$ -hit DAT=1.SG  
 ‘I hit myself.’

In (19) the anaphor is preceded by an optional dative pronoun, *man*. The significance of these examples is that the reflexive anaphor agrees in person with its antecedent in both (18) and (19), which follows, unlike that of an *N-* verb reflexive anaphor which has an invariant form (see Section 4.1).

- (19) *Si=tandai=lah rusur man ban=ta*  
 1.PL.INCL= $\emptyset$ -know=EMPH often DAT=1.PL.GEN  
 ‘We often indeed know ourselves.’ (W)

In imperatives the addressee, the actor/agent, is freely omitted, as in (20), unlike the situation in Tagalog for example.

- (20) *Gaburi lebe enca ge ban baturna,*  
 $\emptyset$ -hoe first then  $\emptyset$ -make border  
 ‘Hoe it first, then make the border.’ (C)

(iv) Omission and control of arguments

As shown above in Table 2, the expression of either argument of the  $\emptyset$ - constructions is unnecessary in spoken discourse, and once the identity of either A or P is established they may be omitted in contexts where their reference will be understood, or where it is irrelevant. In (21b) which was uttered immediately after (21a) the undergoer subject has been omitted.

- (21)a. *ku=idah ia rusur ku rumah enda*  
 1.SG- $\emptyset$ -see 3 often at house DEM.PROX  
 ‘I often see her at this house.’ (C)

- b. *ku=idah [-] rusur aku usur lewat arenda*  
 1.SG= $\emptyset$ -see [-] often 1SG often PASS here.DEM  
 'I see her often. I often pass here.' (C)

In (22a) the ergative, A, of the  $\emptyset$ - construction dependent clause is omitted, while example (22b) makes it clear that the omission of A in (21a) for the  $\emptyset$  form is not obligatory in this same syntactic context.

- (22)a. *Lanai aku ngasupadi la [-] dayaken juma e*  
 No longer 1SG able if not [-]  $\emptyset$ - sell garden DEM  
 'If (I/we) don't sell the land, I am not able (to help her).' (C)

- b. *Adi gundari ku=dayaken ate=ku juma Padan*  
 If now 1SG= $\emptyset$ -sell wish=my garden Padan  
 'If I sell now, I want it to be the Padan garden.' (C)

Typically *N*- constructions are used for reduced complements where the shared argument is A of both clauses, and as such, is deleted from the second clause, as in the second clause of (23). This example not only shows omission of the  $\emptyset$ - verb A from the first clause, but that this same actor can control omission from the second, the embedded dependent, clause. In most constructions of this type the main clause actor is overtly expressed.

- (23) *Emaka [-] dayaken juma e [muat enem.puluh juta]*  
 so [-]  $\emptyset$ -sell land DEM [N-get sixty million]  
 'So (we'll) sell the land [to get sixty million].' (C)

$\emptyset$ - construction actors may also be controllees. Examples are 22(a and b) above and (24) below. While they may be omitted, they are normally retained, the conditions under which they are omitted being dependent on the form of the main clause predicate.

- (24) *adi bagenda la bere=na [dayaken]*  
 if thus not agree-3 [ $\emptyset$ -sell]  
 'If he doesn't agree to sell...' (C)

When the undergoer is controllee, a  $\emptyset$ - construction is also used in the second clause, as in (25), where *ia* 'he' is both subject of the matrix and omitted undergoer of the  $\emptyset$ - construction *ku-jumpai* 'I meet (him)' that occurs in the complement.

- (25) *Adi kari ia ng=git ndo*  
 if later 3 N-want allow  
 [ku=jumpai [-] se=kali nari] ni=na  
 [1SG-meet TRS [-] one.time again] word-3.GEN  
 'Later he would be willing if [I met (him) another time], he said.' (C)

The various controllers of deletion in these examples are: unexpressed  $\emptyset$ - verb A in example (23), expressed  $\emptyset$ - verb A in (24), and intransitive S in (25). The  $\emptyset$ - construction P controls deletion with verbs such as *suruh* 'order' and *sangka* 'expect',<sup>10</sup>

Dependent clause controllees have been shown to be the A of  $\emptyset$ - clauses, whether overt as in (22b), or unexpressed as in (22a) and (24). The P of a dependent  $\emptyset$ - clause is an unexpressed controllee in (25).

<sup>10</sup> Woollams (1996: 313-4) provides an excellent and detailed discussion on the GENibilities of a raising analysis for these verbs.

### 3.3 Summary of Section 3

The  $\emptyset$ - verb forms which have a morphologically ergative pattern through the affixation of their pronominal forms, are the most frequent type in main clauses. Neither the A nor the P of these clauses is obligatorily expressed in main clauses. The expression of arguments in  $\emptyset$ -verb dependent clauses is largely determined by the main clause predicate. Syntactic tests such as relativisation, quantifier floating and the ability of their arguments to be controllers and controllees of deletion support an analysis of their undergoer arguments as the primary grammatical relation of these constructions. Their actor (ergative) arguments also show core properties in their capacity to control reflexive anaphors, and deletion in dependent clauses, as well as their to capacity to be deleted controllees. Their capacity to be represented through ellipsis includes imperative constructions.

### 4. 'Actor voice' N- verb constructions

The morphosyntax of the *N*- verb forms and their function in both main and subordinate clauses will be examined in the first part of this section. A number of these verbs occur with a suffix *-sa*, and this is examined in Section 4.2. This suffix is criterial in the analysis of the *N*-forms. Section 4.3 examines the use of these constructions in main clauses, and Section 4.4 the interaction of the *N*- constructions with various parameters of subordination.

#### 4.1 Distribution and basic morphosyntax of N-verb constructions

The most obvious syntactic feature of the *N*- forms is their distribution. Out of 109 examples of *N*- forms analysed from one of the conversational data sets two stems occurred in the *N*-form only; these were two complement taking predicates (CTPs). Out of the remaining 79 *N*-form clauses only twenty, or 25%, occurred in main clauses. There was a similar distribution across the remaining data sets. Example (26) is an *N*- form main clause from the written data.

- (26) *Raja Singkel pe enggo piga-piga kali ng-uji Beru Rengga Kuning*  
king Singkel PE PERF many times N-test BRK  
'The king of Singkel had tested Beru Rengga Kuning many times.' (W)

The usual order of these clauses, seen in this example, is **A (X) V P**. In these constructions the position of the undergoer, P, is fixed; it must immediately follow the verb (compare the fixed position of A in the undergoer voice constructions). The A argument of the actor voice constructions is almost invariably clause-initial. Its position is generally not as flexible as that of the P argument of the undergoer voice. The orders of the two voice types are schematized below: they can be compared to those of Classical Malay (Cumming 1991: 107 & 151ff.) and Toba Batak (Schachter 1984). They are:

undergoer voice *i*- verb clauses:      **V(erb)~A [P]**  
actor voice *N*- verb clauses:            **[A] V(erb)~P**

where the tilde (~) indicates, for the argument that immediately follows it, a fixed and uninterrupted position with respect to the verb and, conversely, the square brackets ([ ]) indicate relative freedom of position for the argument they enclose. These two orders give an impression of mirroring, typical of many WMP languages. However in the case of the undergoer voice forms, the pronominal A arguments are bound forms while the pronominal forms for the actor voice forms are independent pronouns. Only when the suffix *-sa* is present on the actor voice, *N*- forms, is there a real impression of mirroring. However as *-sa* is not an argument, as will be shown in Section 4.2, the impression of formal equivalence is false for Karo.

The A argument of the *N*- forms is the primary grammatical relation, the subject of these constructions, as the following tests indicate. But unlike the non-subject A argument of the  $\emptyset$ -forms the P argument of the *N*- forms does not satisfy the same tests for core status.

(i) Relativisation

The subject, A, is omitted through the normal gap strategy of relativisation in Karo, as in the following.

- (27) *lang aku la ka min aku si [n=ukur e ya]*  
not 1SG not EMPH POL 1SG REL [N=buy DIST.DEM EMPH]  
'I am not the one who is buying it.' (C)

There is no strategy, including the pronominal retention used to relativise the A argument of  $\emptyset$ -form, whereby the P of the *N*-forms can be relativised. Therefore the following example, the *N*-form equivalent of (15) above where the P was relativised, is unacceptable in an *N*-form, even with pronominal retention.

- (28) \**turang=na si [sope ia n=andai (ia) ndube]*  
brother=3.GEN REL [before 3 N-recognise (3) previous]  
'her brother whom she had previously known'

The conclusion to be drawn from this, and other tests for core status, is that the P of the *N*-verbs is non-core.

(ii) Quantifier float

In example (17) above, the P argument of a  $\emptyset$ -construction was quantified. The quantifier, *kerina* 'all' could not have been understood to have applied to the A argument. But, with the use of the *N*-verb form, it is the A argument that is understood to have been quantified.

- (29) *kerina jelma nge=hamati ia*  
(*jelma ngehamati ia kerina*) / (*jelma kerina ngehamati ia*)  
all people N-respect 3  
'They all respected him.'

The one order that is not possible is \**jelma ngehamati kerina ia* because P no longer immediately follows the verb.

(iii) Reflexives and imperatives

Reflexives (exemplified in (30)), and some imperatives, can be constructed with the *N*-verb form, but they do not form the canonical type. With reflexives, the reflexive anaphor of the *N*-forms is marked with a dative preposition, *man ba-*, that is suffixed with an invariant 3<sup>rd</sup> person marker *-na*, unlike the  $\emptyset$ -form reflexives where the dative preposition has person marking that agrees with the anaphor.

- (30) *Kam m-uji ba=na usur*  
2SG N-praise DAT-3 always  
'You are always praising yourself.'

Imperatives, uncommon in the *N*-verb form, can omit the actor/agent as with the  $\emptyset$ -forms.

(iv) Omission and control of arguments

In main clauses overt expression of the actor subject is optional, as the following shows.

- (31) *N-darami nakan i Jakarta ni=na*  
N-look rice in Jakarta word-3.GEN  
'“(He is) looking for rice in Jakarta”, he said.’ (C)

In subordinate clauses there is obligatory omission of the actor subject in reduced clauses when the actor is controlled by a main clause argument (see examples (23) above and (32) following). In (32) there are three clauses and both the subordinates in this complex sentence contain *N*-form verbs. The main clause (the last clause in linear order) has an adjectival predicate *jengang* 'astonished' and the controlling argument is its single argument (S), *aronna*

*kerina* ‘all her workers’. The dependent clause of this matrix clause is the *ngidah* ‘see’ clause (the first clause in linear order). *Aronna kerina* of the matrix controls deletion of the A of *ngidah* ‘see’. The P of the *ngidah* clause then controls deletion of the A from the next dependent clause which contains the *N*- form of the verb *ngersak* ‘mount’. The A argument of both dependent clauses is obligatorily omitted.

- (32) [Ng-idah ia [ng-ersak kuda ndai]] jengang aron=na kerina  
 [N-see 3 [N-mount horse DEM]] astonish worker=3.GEN all  
 ‘Seeing her mount that horse all her workers were astonished’. (W)

In subordinate clauses that have a degree of independence, however, such as those introduced by a complementiser, the A or S of the subordinate clause is not controlled by an argument from the matrix (though it may be coreferential with it), and is not deleted. Therefore in (33), introduced by the complementiser *adi*, ‘if’, the A *aku* ‘I’ is not deleted.

- (33) *adi aku sekali n=jumpai ia*  
 if 1SG once N-meet 3  
 ‘if I ever run into him’ (C)

Omission of the P argument of the *N*- forms can occur, the most common occurrence being when the suffix *-sa* is present on the verb.

Control of deletion of a coreferential argument in subordination is allowed for the A of a main clause from an *N*- construction, but due to the infrequency of *N*- form main clauses this is rarely observed, except in the case of two *N*- form CTPs mentioned above.

The possibilities for control by the undergoer of *N*- form clauses needs further investigation at this stage. There were no examples encountered in the data but Woollams (1996: 317, example 8.155) cites one example. In the elicited examples which follow, while control of deletion by the  $\emptyset$ - verb undergoer in (34a) is allowed, control by the *N*- form undergoer in (34b) is not possible.

- (34)a. *Ku=idah ia [sangana n=uan=i galuh]*  
 1SG- $\emptyset$ -see 3 [while N=plant=TRS banana]  
 ‘I watched him planting bananas.’

but with the *N*- form this is not possible:

- b. \**Aku ng=idah ia [sangana n=uan=i galuh]*  
 1SG N=see 3 [while N=plant-TRS banana]

#### 4.1.1 Summary of morphosyntax of N-verb forms

The actor voice *N*-form verbs differ from the undergoer  $\emptyset$ - forms not only in distribution, occurring as they do predominantly in subordinate clauses, but it is also apparent from various tests that the P argument of these constructions does not have the core properties that pertain to the A of the  $\emptyset$ - constructions. While the A argument performs like the S of intransitives or both core arguments of the  $\emptyset$ - constructions with regard to control phenomena, the P argument does not.

The suffix *-sa* that occurs on a number of the *N*- verbs is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2 The N-verb form suffix *-sa*

The suffix *-sa*, which has an allomorph *-ca* used after stem-final alveolars, has been analysed by Woollams (1996: 116) as a third person pronoun, an alternative to the independent 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun, *ia*. It is exemplified in one of its contexts in the following example.

- (35) *maka ngadi me ia ng-ajar=i=sa*  
 then stop ME 3 N-learn=TRS=SA  
 ‘then she stopped teaching them’ (W)

While examples such as this one appear to sustain a straightforward analysis of *-sa* as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person undergoer pronoun, a number of other examples cannot. In the next example the undergoer, *kuningndu* ‘your yellow (medicine)’, is concurrently present as a full lexical NP. Here *-sa* appears to cross-reference, rather than to replace, the undergoer.

- (36) *Ia kang ng-oreng=sa kuning=ndu*  
 3 INTER N-fry=SA yellow=2SG.GEN  
 ‘Did she cook up your yellow medicine?’ (C)

If *-sa* in this example is a cross-referencing morpheme, then the *N-* verbs are the only constructions whereby an argument is cross-referenced. That it is not a 3<sup>rd</sup> person cross-referencing morpheme, however, is illustrated by the following example which contains both *-sa* on the *N-* form of the verb as well as an overt P, the 1st person inclusive independent pronoun, *kita*.

- (37) *Morah ate=na natap=sa=kita kerina*  
 resentful feeling-3GEN N-see=SA=1PL.INCL all  
 ‘He must feel resentful to see us all.’

Woollams, too, has examples like these, with 2nd person undergoers. In such instances he interprets *-sa* as a perfective marker, an analysis that is incompatible with his own (and my) analysis of the *N-* form constructions in main clauses as imperfective.

It is, in fact, unusual to find 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person undergoers of these verbs, and an animacy hierarchy such as that of Silverstein outlined by Hopper and Thompson (1980: 273), which ranges from personal pronouns at the high end through to inanimate NPs at the low end, is applicable to the potential realisation of the P of the *N-* verb forms. As noted, first and second pronouns, and even 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns (which never represent inanimates in Karo), occur very infrequently in this role. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the context when extra marking in the form of the suffix *-sa*<sup>11</sup> appears on *N-* forms is precisely this one, when the undergoer is a pronoun, or when the undergoer is an NP which is both referential and individuated. All of these properties are consistent with those categories occupying the higher positions on the animacy hierarchy. The conclusion that is drawn from this marking therefore is that the *N-* forms are marked with *-sa* when their undergoers are individuated and referential (that is when they are being tracked in the discourse (see Du Bois and Thompson 1991), qualities which are otherwise restricted to the P of the  $\emptyset$ - verb forms.

#### 4.3N-verb main clause constructions

The comparatively small number of *N-* forms in main clauses have a limited range of functions. The main two of these are the topicalisation of the actor argument and the expression of imperfective aspect. The latter function is more common with reduplicated forms; these have not been included in this analysis.

The expression of imperfective aspect is tied to that of irrealis mode, though there is not a one-to-one correspondence in Karo because a morpheme that can be glossed as a future marker, *kari*, has only been found to date to occur with undergoer voice verbs. The use of the *N-* form is by no means a major strategy for expressing either imperfective aspect or irrealis

<sup>11</sup> Communication with D. Zorc reinforces my hypothesis that this is likely to be cognate with the oblique case marker SA in Philippines languages such as Tagalog where it is used to mark individuated (specific) NPs. In Karo it has been reanalyzed as a verbal suffix, from its position as a probable prepositional case marker on the immediately following P argument.

mode. Normally the undergoer voice forms are used with an appropriate aspect or temporal marker, as their co-occurrence with the future marker well illustrates.

The irrealis nature of the *N*- form main clauses can be seen in the difference between the glosses of the following two examples.

- (38) a. *Sabna ku=∅-dayaken ate=ku juma e sitik*  
 because 1SG=∅-sell wish=1SG.GEN garden DEM little  
 'Because I want to sell a little bit of this land.'
- b. *Aku n-dayaken juma ate=ku sitik*  
 1.SG N-sell garden wish=1.SG.GEN little  
 'I would like to sell a little bit of land.'

The latter with the *N*- form would be used by a younger person to an older one as a polite way of expressing a hypothetical proposition, whereas the former is used for definite intention. The difference in semantics between these two clauses in terms of intention and the degree of volitionality reflects one of the parameters of transitivity described by Hopper and Thompson (1980). Overall the differential use of the *N*- forms and  $\emptyset$ -forms respectively reflect the low and high clines of transitivity as described by Hopper and Thompson.

Topicalisation of A is found to be a more frequent use of *N*- forms in main clauses. This is accomplished by a fronted A argument and by prosodic cues, as happens in the following utterance, where the first person actor is repeated in an emphatic tone before the speaker continues.

- (39) *aku aku ras bapa-ndu*  
 1SG 1SG and father-2.GEN  
*mbarenda n=jumpai-sa ku pengadilan ah*  
 distant PAST N-meet=SA at court DEM  
 'It was me, me who went to court with your late father.' (C)

Most topicalised constructions of this sort are marked, not only by the fronting of the actor but also by an emphatic particle that follows it.

#### 4.4 N-forms in subordination

Figures show that the vast majority of *N*- forms in spoken and written data occur in subordinate clauses. The Karo *N*- forms are examined here in the context of several syntactic parameters of subordination described by Lehmann (1988) (set out in italics in the following) and Longacre and Thompson (1985).

(i) There is a hierarchical syntactic downgrading of the subordinate clause ranging from parataxis, which involves no hierarchical relation, through to embedding, wherein the subordinate construction is a 'well-defined constituent of the main clause'. *N*- verb clauses show a range of relations here, but consideration of the following minimal pair, (40)a and (40)b from the written data, suggests that parataxis is not one of them.

- (40) a. *E maka tedis me Si Naktaki ngandung ia berkat ia*  
 then stand ME Naktaki cry 3 depart 3  
*i-tadingken-na orang tua-na ras agi-na kitik-kitik denga*  
 I-leave-3 parent-3.GEN and sister-3.GEN small-REDUP still  
 'Then Naktaki stood up, cried, departed, and left his parents and small sister.' (W)

b. *I-buat-na kuda si-gara kuda mama-na*  
 I-take-3 horse REL-red horse uncle-3.GEN

*berkat me ia [nadingken kuta-na] [n-daramiturang-na]*  
 depart ME 3 [N-leave village-3.GEN] [N-look brother-3.GEN]

‘She took the red horse, her uncle’s horse, and departed, leaving her village, to seek her brother.’

Compare *itadingkenna* in (40a) with *nadingken* in (40b). Only (40a), with an intonation break (represented in written form by a comma) after the *berkat* clause, followed by an  $\emptyset$ -/i- verb construction, represents coordination. In (40b) the *N-* construction with *nadingken* is not an independent, coordinated clause like its *i-* equivalent in (40a). The clause under discussion in (40b) fulfils at least some of the criteria for verb serialisation described by Foley and Olson (1985: 28ff.); *nadingken* plus the preceding predicate could be interpreted grammatically as one clause unit. Nevertheless the majority of *N-* verbs do not fulfil the full range of their criteria for serialisation, but nor can they be described as paratactic.

A more extreme example of downgrading and embedding occurs with a few examples where *N-* verbs have been found as objects of prepositions.

(41) *la lit ambaten ibas n-dalanken ujian=na pagi*  
 not EXIST difficulties in N-do exam-3.GEN later  
 ‘(Hopefully) there will not be difficulties later in doing her exams.’ (C)

$\emptyset$ -verbs by comparison appear with a nominalising affix when they occur as objects of prepositions, as in (42) below.

(ii) *The second criterion concerns the syntactic level in the main clause on which the subordinate is dependent, somewhere between the level of the morpheme and the paragraph.* Thompson and Longacre (1985) distinguish three categories of subordinate clause relevant to this criterion, complements, adverbials and relative clauses, each attached at a different level. All three types use *N-* verb clauses in Karo (shown in square brackets).

(a) Adverbials

(42) *maka ia mulih ku rumah [muat-i barang man daya-n-ken]*  
 then 3 return to house [N-take-TRS goods for sell-NOM-KEN]  
 ‘Then he returned to the house [to get goods for selling].’ (W)

(b) Complements

(43) *Kuga ka pe lanai bo ng-asup ia [ng-galar-sa]*  
 how very PE never EMPH N-able 3 [N-pay-SA]  
 ‘However he was never able [to pay for it].’ (W)

(c) Relative clauses have been shown above.

The discussion here, while focussing on the *N-* verbs and their role in complementation and subordination in general, does not imply that such constructions must consist of *N-*verb constructions. The form of the complement taking predicate (CTP) appears to determine the complement type and  $\emptyset$ -verbs also occur in some types of subordinate clauses. The CTP *cubaken* ‘try’ may take a  $\emptyset$ - construction as complement, and in most instances the frequently occurring nominal CTP *ate* ‘wish/desire’ also does.

(iii) In Lehmann’s third criterion he points out that *fully fledged sentences have a number of characteristics that include illocutionary force, mood, aspect/tense, polarity, actants & circumstants. There is desententialisation of subordinate clauses in various ways. N-* clauses tend to have non-finite characteristics such as lack of associated tense/aspect markers, and no person marking or actant .

Analysis of the *N-* verbs from the corpus shows that only those in simple main clauses are accompanied by tense or aspect markers, such as the past tense marker *enggo* in (26) above. In lacking actants in reduced complements the *N-* clauses may be compared with same subject infinitives of English, for example (42), (43).

If any mood is expressed in subordinate clauses there is a tendency cross-linguistically for it to be subjunctive. Subjunctive mood expresses hypothetical, tenuous, non-realis propositions, as do most adverbial clauses, especially purposive, conditional, substitutive clauses. The hypothetical, subjunctive nature of the *N-* constructions accords with the irrealis function of these constructions in main clauses.

Pertinent to the lack of actants is the tendency for *N-* verbs, at least those without the suffix *-sa*, to take generic undergoers which in some instances are best interpreted as the intransitive equivalent of the verb. Example (44) illustrates both voice forms sequentially within the same utterance. When the undergoer is specific, marked with a possessive suffix, the  $\emptyset$ - verb is used, and the gloss for the stem *suan* 'grow' is transitive 'I grow X' or 'she plants X'. But a non-specific generic undergoer triggers the *N-* form. It lacks an agentive subject, and the best gloss is an intransitive use of the verb 'grow' as in 'fruits/vegetables grow'. A gerund form 'passionfruit (etc) growing' could have been used for the glosses here.

(44) *kujuma kang ateku kusuan ka rimongku kusuan ka cinangku,*  
*e lit deba nuan markisah lit ka deba nuan terong jepen, lit ka deba, nuan ropa*

In the garden **I like to grow my own oranges** and **grow my own chillies**. **Passionfruit, tamarillos** and choko also **grow there**. (C)

The detailed gloss of the bolded parts is:

*ate=ku ku=suan ka rimo-ngku ku=suan*  
 wish=1.GEN 1SG= $\emptyset$ -grow EMPH orange-1.GEN 1SG= $\emptyset$ -grow

*ka cina=ngku*  
 EMPH chilli=1.GEN

*nuan markisah lit ka deba nuan terong jepen*  
 N-grow passionfruit EXIST EMPH also N-grow tamarillo

In the next example (45) the best gloss for the *N-* verb plus its undergoer is a noun phrase.

(45) *Ku=akap lit nuan prei je*  
 1SG= $\emptyset$ -think EXIST N-grow parsley there  
 'I think there is a parsley garden there.' (C)

(iv) *The fourth relevant criterion deals with explicitness of linking.* *N-* clauses tend not to be introduced by explicit linking devices whereas subordinate  $\emptyset$ - constructions, as well as having fuller sentential properties, are usually introduced by a conjunction as in (46).

(46) *sabab idah=na duit raja melala=kai*  
 because  $\emptyset$ -see=3 money king much=what  
 'Because he saw that the king had lots of money.'

In summary it can be said that according to the criteria used here *N-* verb clauses occur predominantly in subordinate clauses, showing a range of desententialised characteristics, and in some instances are open to an interpretation of verb serialisation in which there is actually no separate clause.

## 5. The particles *me* and *nge* and *pe*

Two particles that occur with extremely high frequency in both spoken and written forms are the particles *me* and *nge*. In many instances they cannot be syntactically omitted and there appears to be a tendency, not absolute, for them to occur in fixed positions as post-positions, associated with particular arguments.

A third particle, *pe*, marked the fronted A argument in 7 out of 12 instances of actor topicalisation in *N*-verb main clauses in the written text. Three other *N*-clause actor subjects were marked by other emphatic lexemes. Both *pe* and *nge* are used in the next example.

- (47) *Anak perana pe dah kam*  
child brother-in-law PE know 2  
*n-darami si-nguda-nguda nge ate-na man empon*  
N-seek REL-young-REDUP NGE wish-3 for marriage  
'You know, there's a friend of your brother, he's unmarried and he is looking for a young girl to marry.' (C)

The particle *me* frequently appears to disambiguate a  $\emptyset$ -/i- verb A from a following undergoer (as in (48)).

- (48) *E mak i-uji raja me Beru Rengga Kuning*  
then I-test king ME Beru Rengga Kuning  
'Then the king tested Beru Rengga Kuning.' (W)

or to replace the actor of a  $\emptyset$ -/i- verb when it has no overt expression (as in (49)).

- (49) *Maka i-bahan me peng-ujin sekali nari kempak Beru Rengga Kuning*  
then I-do ME NOM-test once more to Beru Rengga Kuning  
'Then he performed the test once more on Beru Rengga Kuning.' (W)

The particle *nge* is most often associated with P of  $\emptyset$ - verbs. In (47) it is associated with the undergoer *ia* of *daramen* 'search for'.

- (50) *ia nge ku=akap daramen=na ni=na aron=na*  
3 NGE 1SG= $\emptyset$ -feel  $\emptyset$ -search=3 word=3.GEN worker=3.GEN  
'Her worker said: "I think he is searching for her."' (W)

In (47) above *nge* actually follows the P of the *N*-verb, *singuda-nguda* 'young woman', but its function in this complex sentence, as in many other instances of its occurrence, is as an anaphor of *singuda-nguda* in the subsequent *ate* clause.

Two of these particles *nge* and *me* appear to be in the process of functional change, possibly in the past functioning as NP markers. The main synchronic function of *me* and *nge* is as anaphoric elements, but in many examples they now have a discourse emphatic function, which is the main function of the particle *pe*.

## 6. Conclusion

The undergoer voice constructions,  $\emptyset$ - verbs in spoken discourse and *i*- verbs in formal written styles, are the basic transitive voice of Karo, found predominantly in main clauses. Both the actor (A) and the undergoer (P) arguments exhibit core syntactic properties.

The *N*- forms are most commonly found in subordinate clauses where they allow a common pivot constraint, linking S/A with A. Their non-subject undergoer argument does not exhibit core syntactic properties and these constructions have associated features of low transitivity described by Hopper and Thompson (1980) and summarised by Cooreman (1994: 70).

That the *N-* constructions of Karo Batak seldom occur in main clauses means they cannot be regarded as an alternative transitive construction in Karo as in Balinese, (e.g. Artawa, Blake and Artini, to appear), or Cirebon Javanese (Ewing 1999) for example. Karo does not display the symmetry seen in other WAN languages between the two voices in either marking or distribution.

Karo also has at least two forms of syntactically obligatory particle, *me* and *nge*, which are commonly attached to particular arguments, either as NP markers or as anaphors of these arguments. These particles appear to be in the process of functional change, becoming discourse emphatic particles, as is a third particle, *pe*. The syntactically obligatory nature of the former two particles is possibly unusual in WMP languages in the Indonesian archipelago. The suffix, *-sa*, which occurs with many of the *N-* verbs also has a similar function in that it is an apparent anaphor for specific NPs, and thus in both form and function it is similar to the oblique case marker of Tagalog.

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