

## Is ‘GIVE’ the most typical ditransitive verb? A counterexample from Ainu (oral or poster)

A ditransitive construction is defined as one consisting of an underived (ditransitive) verb, an agent argument (A), a recipient argument (R), and a theme argument (T); three-argument constructions containing participants with other semantic roles are not regarded as ditransitive (Mal’chukov et al, forthcoming). Much of the research on ditransitive constructions has been focused on the properties of the verb ‘give’ (e.g., Haspelmath 2005) which is often regarded as by far the most typical ditransitive verb because of its high formal and semantic transitivity (Kittilä 2006). I will discuss a case from the moribund Southern Hokkaido dialects of Ainu which might present a counterexample to Kittilä’s (2006: 604) Universal 1: “If a language has only one ditransitive trivalent verb (on the basis of any feature of formal transitivity), then that verb is ‘give’”. Ainu, a genetic isolate, is polysynthetic, agglutinating, predominantly head-marking with SV/AOV constituent order; morphological expression of arguments is tripartite. Arguments do not inflect for case: S, A and O are distinguished by their relative position in sentence structure and by obligatory verbal cross-referencing; obliques are marked by postpositions. The difference between intransitive and transitive verbs is clear-cut since they employ different verbal cross-referencing. Monotransitive and ditransitive verbs (the latter being conceived here as any three-argument verbs) are differentiated only by the number of unmarked objects. Ainu possesses a double-object construction as the only possible ditransitive type, since there is no morphosyntactic distinction between the two objects with respect to alignment properties (1b).<sup>1</sup> Ditransitive verbs are an open-ended class; there are 147 verbs in my corpus, and with one exception all of them are derived, either by applicative derivation with *e-*, *ko-*, *o-* (85 verbs, e.g. *e-ko-isoytak* ‘tell **about sth to sb**’, *e-ko-iyok* ‘sell **sth to sb**’, *ko-puni* ‘offer **sth to sb**’, *e-pakasnu* ‘teach **sth to sb**’), or causative derivation with the allomorphic *-e/-te/-re* (43 verbs, eg. *nukar-e* ‘show **sth/sb to sb**’ lit. ‘make/let **sb** see **sth/sb**’), or both (18 verbs, eg. *e-sik-te* ‘make **sth** be full **with sth**’). There is no genuine underived verb ‘give’, the respective meaning is rendered by a (lexicalized) causative form *kor* ‘have **sth/sb**’ (1a) > *kor-e* ‘make/let **sb** have **sth/sb**’ (=‘give **sth/sb to sb**’)(1b). The only underived ditransitive is the verb *o* ‘put/place **sth(PL) on sth**’ (2b) which has a monotransitive counterpart *o* ‘be at some place, get on **sth(PL)**’ (2a). On structural grounds it would be possible to ignore this example and to hypothesize that there are no ditransitive verbs in Ainu, as in languages such as Tzotzil, Tsimshianic languages and !Xun (König and Heine, Ms), since the only underived ditransitive exhibits a different case frame, viz. A-L(ocation)-T, rather than A-R-T (cf. the definition above). However, the only underived ditransitive may be entered, on the semantic basis, in a small group of lexical causatives which are derived with a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the two parallel interpretations of the imperative clause (1b) in (i), it is the R object that is cross-referenced on the verb, and in (ii) it is the T object that is cross-referenced on the verb. I use the following abbreviations: A =transitive subject; Agent, CAUS =causative, COHR =cohortative, COP =copula, INC =inclusive, L = location, O =object, PL =plural, POSS =possessive, R =recipient, REP.EV =reportive evidential, S =intransitive subject, sb =somebody, SG =singular, sth =something, T =theme, vd =ditransitive verb, vt =transitive verb.

hardly predictable “suffix” **-V** (**-e/-u/-o/-i**) and thus may be regarded as “nearly genuine ditransitives” (3). It might not be accidental that in Udihe as well, ‘give’ is outranked in transitivity by ‘dress’, lit. ‘put on’ (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001:524). I assume that the situation in Ainu may not really be unique if the discussion on ditransitives is extended from A-R-T to also include the case frame A-L-T.

- (1) a. [inan pe]<sub>T</sub> ku=∅=kor kor pirka hawe an?  
 which thing 1SG.A=3.O=have and good REP.EV be.SG  
 ‘Which one should I have?’ (T) (base construction with vt)
- b. [Kani]<sub>R/T</sub> [pon katkemat]<sub>R/T</sub> en=<sub>R/O</sub> kor-e  
 I young lady 1SG.O=have-CAUS  
 i. ‘Give me<sub>R</sub> this young lady<sub>T</sub>’ (lit. ‘let me<sub>R</sub> have this young lady<sub>T</sub>’, i.e. ‘I want to marry her’); ii. ‘Give to this young lady<sub>R</sub> me<sub>T</sub>’ (lit. ‘make this young lady<sub>R</sub> have me<sub>T</sub>’, i.e. ‘I want her to take me as her husband.’) (T. Satoo, p.c.)
- (2) a. neyta ne yak-ka [pirka usi-ke]<sub>L</sub> a=∅=o ro  
 where COP if-even good place-POSS 1PL.INC=3.O=get.on COHR  
 ‘(Once I bought the tickets,) we can get on (vt) anywhere.’ (vt) (KS)
- b. [nea cep]<sub>T</sub> [cip or]<sub>L</sub> k=∅=o hine  
 that fish boat place 1SG.A=3.O=put and  
 ‘I put (vd) that fish in the boat.’ (KK)
- (3) a. kot ‘(of a cord, string, chain) be attached to sth’ (vt) → kot-e ‘tie up sth to sth’ (vd)  
 b. un ‘be at, belong to sth’ (vt) → un-u ‘fit up sth into sth’ (vd)  
 c. us ‘i. ‘(for inalienable possessee) be attached to sth’; ii. ‘put on sth (footwear, pants)’ (vt) → us-i ‘attach sth to sth, besmear sth with sth (lit. on sth)’ (vd) (T).

#### Sources and references

- KK Nakagawa, H. and A. Bugaeva (forthcoming) *A web-accessible corpus of folktales of the Saru dialect of Ainu by Mrs. Kimi Kimura (1900-1988)*, London University, ELDP.
- KS Bugaeva, A. (forthcoming) *A web-accessible Ainu-Japanese-English conversational dictionary with audio and video recordings by Mrs. Setsu Kurokawa (b. 1913)*, Waseda University, ELDP.
- T Tamura, S. (1996). *Ainugo Saru hoogen jiten* [A dictionary of the Saru dialect of Ainu]. Tokyo: Soofuukan.
- Haspelmath, M. (2005). “Ditransitive constructions: the verb ‘give’”. In: M. Haspelmath, M. S. Dryer, D. Gil and B. Comrie (eds.) *WALS*. Oxford: OUP, 426-429.
- Kittilä, S. (2006). “The anomaly of the verb ‘give’ explained by its high (formal and semantic) transitivity”. *Linguistics* 44.3: 569–612.
- König, C. and B. Heine. (forthcoming). “Are there ditransitive verbs in !Xun?” Ms. TUFs.
- Mal’chukov, A, M. Haspelmath and B. Comrie (forthcoming). “Ditransitive constructions: a typological overview”. Ms, Max Planck Institute, Leipzig.
- Nikolaeva, I. and Tolskaya, M. (2001). *A Grammar of Udihe*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.