

The segmentation of motion events in Ilocano

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SYNOPSIS This study is concerned with how languages package information about an event and examines event segmentation (Pawley 1987; Givón 1991; Bohnemeyer et al. 2007) in the motion domain in Ilocano, an Austronesian language of the Philippines. A video-description experiment conducted reveals that Ilocano speakers predominantly use serial verb constructions (SVCs) for describing different types of complex motion events. Building on the results, I examine how those SVCs segment complex motion events, using the scope of temporal modifiers as the criterion. The data collected through interviews show that the way of segmenting motion events in Ilocano is sensitive to the type of motion events that are encoded.

EXPERIMENT: METHOD The experiment was a video-description task in which participants were presented with video clips depicting complex motion events and asked to describe them. The stimuli involve 30 clips for self-motion (e.g. walking into the house, running up the stairs) and 10 clips for ballistic caused motion (e.g. kicking a ball to the wall). Nine Ilocano adults, five females and four males, participated.

EXPERIMENT: RESULT Figure 1 shows the construction types used for the encoding of the two types of motion scenes. I observe that the participants primarily used SVCs and encoded the subevents of complex motion events (i.e. manner-of-motion, cause-of-motion, and location-change subevents) exclusively in verbs. Typical examples of SVCs for each scene type are given in (1) and (2). SVCs are monoclausal constructions consisting of multiple verbs that may function independently as predicates in monoverbal clauses (Aikhnevald 2018).

(1) *nag-taraj dajdjaj=gajjem=ko na-pan nag-tu:roj ?idjaj=MT bajk.*
PFV-run ART=friend=1SG.GEN PFV-go PFV-go.toward LOC=MT bike
'My friend ran toward the MT bike.'

(2) *k<in>ugtaran=na djaj=bo:la nag-paja:to l<in>absan=na ti=pader.*
kick<PFV>=3SG.ERG ART=ball PFV-ascend pass<PFV>=3SG.ERG ART=wall
'My friend kicked the ball and it went up across the wall.'

I also observe that bi-clausal constructions were used only for describing ballistic caused motion events.

THE SEGMENTATION OF COMPLEX MOTION EVENTS The experiment shows that SVCs are the most densely packaged construction available for the encoding of each type of motion events in Ilocano. I examine how those SVCs segment motion events. Following Bohnemeyer et al. (2007), I employ the macro-event property (MEP) as the criterion of event segmentation. An event-denoting construction has the MEP if and only if temporal modifiers (e.g. *now*, *yesterday*, *immediately*) necessarily scope over all subevents encoded by that construction. Ilocano can integrate a manner-of-motion subevent

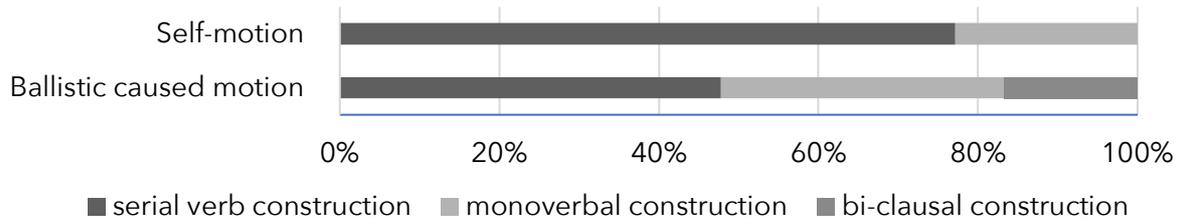


Figure 1. The construction types used in responses

and multiple location-change subevents into one macro-event expression, an expression that has the MEP, since temporal modifiers necessarily scope over these subevents, as shown in 1'. However, it is impossible in Ilocano to integrate causing subevents and location-change subevents into single macro-event expressions. In 2' the modifier *ʔitatta* 'now' scopes over the subevent of ascending and passing but not the subevent of kicking.

(1) *nag-taraj* *dajdaj=gajjem=ko* *na-pan* *nag-tu:roŋ* *ʔidjaj=MT bajk ʔitatta*.
 PFV-run ART=friend=1SG.GEN PFV-go PFV-go.toward LOC=MT bike right.now
 'My friend ran toward the MT bike right now.'

(2) *k<in>ugtaran=na* *djaj=bo:la* *nag-paya:to* *l<in>absan=na* *ti=pader*
 kick<PFV>=3SG.ERG ART=ball PFV-ascend pass<PFV>=3SG.ERG ART=wall
ʔitatta.
 right.now
 'My friend kicked the ball and it went up across the wall right now.'

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION The experiment shows that Ilocano speakers predominantly use SVCs for describing the different types of motion events and occasionally use bi-clausal constructions only for describing ballistic caused motion events. The examination of motion-event segmentation in Ilocano reveals that the integration of subevents depends on the type of motion events. These results also suggest that the absence of constructions that have the MEP for a given scene type may correlate with the frequency of use of looser constructions such as bi-clausal constructions for that scene type.

References

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