

Elaborate voice systems and applicatives as a window to lexical frames

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Fillmore (1976) assumes that verbs evoke frames containing the semantic participants of the event denoted by the verb. His ideas were happily adopted by Austronesianists dealing with elaborate voice systems in which almost every possible participant can be identified on the verb as the subject. Tagalog is known to make even more fine-grained distinctions than only in terms of thematic roles. These distinctions refer to aspects of argument referents, as shown in (1b) and (1c). While *binuksan* evokes the doorway, *ibinukas* evokes the moveable part of the door in the opening event.

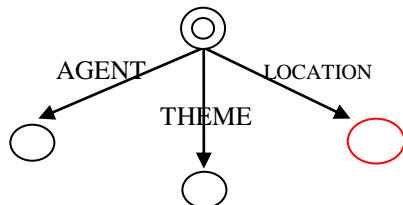
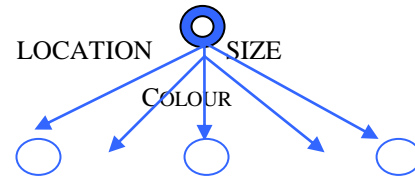
- (1) a. Nag-bukas ako ng pinto.
 AV.RLS-open 1sNom Gen door
 ‘I opened the door.’
 b. B<in>uks-a ko ang pinto.
 <RLS>give-LV 1sGen Nom door.
 ‘I opened the door(way).’
 c. I-b<in>ukas ko ang pinto.
 CV<RLS>open 1sGen Nom door
 ‘I opened the door.’

The applicative affix *pag-* also licenses aspects of the argument referent to be singled out. Affixing *pag-* to the verb form *sulatan* ‘to write on’, which profiles the object written on as subject (2b), licenses the location of the object written on as the referent of the subject (2c). Similarly, affixing *pag-* to *halikan* ‘to kiss (so.)’, which profiles the kissee (3a), licenses an attribute of this kissee to be singled out, here the smoothness of the lips (3b). Note that the attribute profiled by the combination of the affixes *pag-* and *-an* in (3b) has to be relevant to touch, i.e. it cannot refer to the colour (*the blueness of her lips*) or the size.

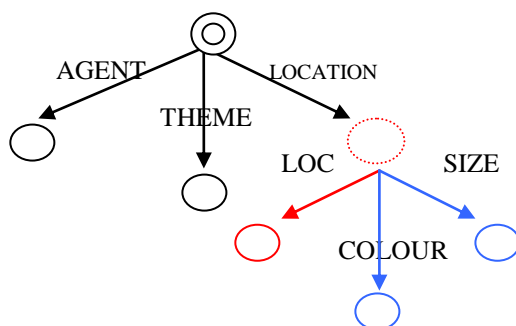
- (2) b. S<in>ulat-an ko ng kuwento ang papel ni Luisa.
 <RLS >write-LV 1sGen Gen letter Nom paper Gen Luisa
 ‘I wrote the story on Luisa’s paper.’
 c. P-in-ag-sulat-an ko ng kuwento ang lamesa ni Luisa.
 PAG<RLS >write-LV 1sGen Gen story Nom desk Gen Luisa
 ‘I wrote the story on Luisa’s desk.’
 (3) a. Pwede-ng ba ko halik-an si Lena?
 May-LK Q 1sGEN kiss-LV NOM Lena
 ‘May I kiss Lena?’
 b. P<in>ag-halik-an nito ang kakinisan ng kanya-ng mga lips.
 PAG<RLS>kiss-LV this.GEN NOM smoothness GEN her-Lk pl lips
 ‘He kissed the smoothness of her lips.’ (modified, cf.
 <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/kwentongkamunduhan/conversations/messages/2>)

Data like these are difficult to account for within thematic role-based linking approaches and are a good point in case for the necessity to think of the meanings of lex-

ical items in terms of richer frame semantic representations. One central question is how frames and frame composition should be modeled. I follow Löbner (2014), according to whom a verb frame is a recursive attribute structure. A verb like *write* evokes participant roles (represented as ellipses in Fig.1), which are viewed as attributes of the verb frame taking certain values in a given sentence. Austronesian voice affixes profile one of these attributes (here in red). Argument frames in turn take their own set of attributes as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig.1. Participant frame for *sulatan*Fig.2. Partial frame for *papel*

Löbner (2014:48) suggests that frame composition be modeled via incorporation of the meaning frame of the argument NPs into the verb meaning frame by inserting them as value nodes of the respective attributes of the verb meaning frame, i.e. for the sentence in (2), the meaning frame of ‘paper’ is the value of the Location attribute of the verb frame in Fig. 1, yielding Fig. 3. The figure shows that adding *pag-* to the verb *sulatan* leads to the profiling of the Location attribute of the Location attribute, i.e the newly profiled arguments stands in the same relationship to its referent as its referent stands to the verb frame.

Fig.3. Participant frame for *pagsulatan* (write on)

*Pag-*affixation signals the speaker’s knowledge that the referent of the subject is further away from the central node of the verb frame. The same is true for (3c), which calls for a more fine-grained analysis of verb meaning in order to capture the nature of the attribute profiled by *pag-*. The data thus provide evidence that frames offer a representation format rich and constrained enough at the same time to capture the variability and the limits to referent choice in the composition of verbs and their arguments.

Fillmore, Charles. (1976). Frame semantics and the nature of language. In *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin and Development of Language and Speech*. Volume 280: 20-32.

Löbner, Sebastian. (2014). Evidence for Frames from Human Language. In T. Gamerschlag et al. (eds), *Frames and Concept Types. Applications in Language and Philosophy*, ed. *Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy* 94: 23-68. Springer