1. INTRODUCTION

Is transitivity a discourse-derived relationship as claimed by Hopper (1983:71)? This paper addresses this question along with the question: At what grammatical level do the features of transitivity operate?

Hopper & Thompson (1980:280, 294) claim that transitivity is a global property of clauses but that it is the discourse function of grounding which underlies clause level distinctions in degrees of transitivity. Thus, high transitivity correlates with foregrounding and low transitivity with backgrounding (op. cit. 294). Hopper (1983:74) further states that the features of transitivity (cf. sec. 2.1) are discourse features which have typological effects on the morphosyntax of the clause. He says, "...no approach to grammar (morphology and syntax) that separates LOCAL (more or less: clause level) from GLOBAL (more or less: discourse level) factors can work" (op. cit. 68).

This paper shows how the features of transitivity primarily operate at a LOCAL level in Banggi and that there is no direct correlation between transitivity and discourse level grounding.

I begin with a theoretical framework for discussing transitivity (sec. 2.1) and Banggi morphosyntax (sec. 2.2). This is followed by a discussion of transitivity in Banggi (secs. 3 & 4) and discourse-pragmatic grounding (sec. 5).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Transitivity

Transitivity is traditionally understood as a property of an entire clause in which an action is "carried-over" or transferred from the semantic agent to the semantic patient. Givon (1984:20) points out that two prototypical conditions are associated with the notion of transitivity.

1) There is a visible volitional controlling agent.
2) There is a visible result-registering patient.

Hopper & Thompson (1980:280) claim "that languages universally possess morphosyntactic structures which reflect the degree of Transitivity of a clause." For them, transitivity is not a dichotomy (transitive or intransitive) but a continuum (cf. Givon 1984:152).

Hopper & Thompson identify ten features of transitivity which are concerned with the effectiveness with which the action is transferred from the semantic agent to the semantic patient. They are as follows (1980:252).  

**FEATURE**
1. PARTICIPANTS
2. KINESIS
3. ASPECT
4. PUNCTUALITY
5. VOLITIONALITY
6. AFFIRMATION
7. MODE
8. AGENCY
9. AFFECTEDNESS OF P
10. INDIVIDUATION OF P

**HIGH TRANSITIVITY**
2 or more participants
A and P
- action
- telic/perfective
- punctual
- volitional
- affirmation
- reals
- A high in potency
- P totally affected
- P highly individuated

**LOW TRANSITIVITY**
1 participant
- non-action
- atelic/imperfective
- non-punctual
- non-volitional
- negation
- irrealis
- A low in potency
- P not affected
- P non-individuated

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Each of the above features involves a different facet of the effectiveness or intensity with which the action is transferred from the agent to the patient in a clause. Taken together, they allow clauses to be characterized as more or less transitive. The more features a clause has in the “high transitivity” column, the more transitive the clause.

Hopper & Thompson (1980: 252-53) and Hopper (1983: 74) define the above features in the following manner.

1. Participants: A clause with both an agent and a patient is more transitive than a clause with only one of these.
2. Kinesis: Clauses which signal an action of some kind, involving movement in either patient or agent, are more transitive than those in which no action is signaled. Actions can be transferred from the agent to the patient but states cannot. E.g. “I hugged Sally” vs. “I like Sally.”
3. Aspect: An action viewed from its endpoint, i.e., a telic action, is more transitive than an action viewed as only partly carried out.
4. Punctuality: A clause whose predicate occurs without a perceptible transition between onset and conclusion is more transitive than one whose predicate has discernible duration.
5. Volitionality: A clause whose action is carried out deliberately by the agent is more transitive than one whose agent is acting without intention.
6. Affirmation: Affirmative clauses are more transitive than negative clauses.
7. Mode: Clauses containing a predicate which reports a real occurrence are more transitive than those which report an event that did not occur or that occurred in a non-real world.
8. Agency: A clause whose agent is human or animate is more transitive than one whose agent is inanimate or incapable of spontaneous action.
9. Affectedness of patient: A clause that contains a patient which is physically affected by the action of the verb is more transitive than one whose patient is not affected.
10. Individuation of patient: Clauses whose patients are definite or referential are more transitive than clauses whose patients are indefinite or non-referential.

Hopper & Thompson found that the features of transitivity co-vary extensively and systematically. This led them to formulate the TRANSITIVITY HYPOTHESIS: “If two clauses (a) and (b) in a language differ in that (a) is higher in Transitivity according to any of the features 1 - 10, then, if a concomitant grammatical or semantic difference appears elsewhere in the clause, that difference will also show (a) to be higher in Transitivity...” (1980: 255).

The transitivity hypothesis is stated in such a way that the transitivity features can be manifested either morphosyntactically or semantically.

2.2 Role and Reference Grammar
The theoretical framework for this discussion of morphosyntactic structures in Banggi is role and reference grammar which is outlined in Foley & Van Valin (1984).

Foley & Van Valin (1984) provide a framework for classifying the verbs of any language which is based on Dowty’s theory of verbal semantics (Dowty 1979). They claim that ACTOR and UNDERGOER, the two arguments of a transitive predicate, are universal semantic macro-roles (1984: 30) which constitute an interface between syntactic relations such as subject and semantic relations such as case roles (op. cit. 32). They consider the prototypical ACTOR to be an agent and the prototypical UNDERGOER to be a patient (op. cit. 60). The mapping of the semantic roles agent and patient onto ACTOR and UNDERGOER is equivalent to the ‘cardinal transitivity relationship’ defined by Hopper & Thompson (1980: 253). However, other deep structure case roles may map onto the two macro-roles ACTOR and UNDERGOER (Foley & Van Valin 1984: 59). Either ACTOR or UNDERGOER can occur as the single argument of an intransitive verb (op. cit. 27).

3. OVERVIEW OF BANGGI

Banggi is a North-western Austronesian language spoken by about 1,400 people on the islands of Banggi and Balambangan in the Kudat District of Sabah, Malaysia.²

3.1 Pivot
Like other Philippine-type languages, Banggi has a pivot system, the domain of which is the verbal clause. “The pivot of a syntactic construction is the NP which is crucially involved in it, i.e., it is the NP around which the construction is built” (op. cit. 110). The pivot is marked by a special particle introducing the NP, or a special set of pronouns in place
of the NP, or word order. The verb is usually affixed, primarily indicating the situation type (cf. sec. 3.2) and not the semantic role of the referent encoded by the pivot NP. The pivot system marks a special syntactic relationship between the predicate of a clause and one NP in the clause.

In this paper, pivot is described in terms of ACTOR and UNDERGOER. The ACTOR is the person or thing that performs, instigates or controls the state or action expressed by the predicate. The UNDERGOER is the person or thing affected by the state or action expressed by the predicate.

ACTOR and UNDERGOER are the two core arguments in a clause. The core arguments are not marked for case except for nominals that refer to humans. Prepositions mark the non-core or oblique arguments in a clause. Non-pivot ACTORS which are pronouns are marked for oblique case. Word-order is used to distinguish between the core arguments with the pivot argument occurring first.

Since both transitivity and pivot relate to the clause, it is not surprising that at times a correlation has been sought between the two. Hopper & Thompson (1980: 288 - 94) point out that in Tagalog, if the pivot of a clause is a patient (UNDERGOER), then the UNDERGOER must be referential. Conversely, if the UNDERGOER is referential, it must normally be marked as the pivot (op. cit. 289). Therefore, in Tagalog, UNDERGOER pivot clauses are more transitive than ACTOR pivot clauses since the UNDERGOER pivot clauses mark referential or highly individuated patients. ACTOR pivot clauses tend to occur when the patient (UNDERGOER) is non-individuated or non-referential. In Sama, a language of the Southern Philippines, all pivots must be definite and referential (Walton 1986: 4).

3.2 Verb Classes

Banggo uses a system of verbal semantics and a system of verbal affixes to distinguish verb classes. The concept of deriving one verb form from another is not applicable in terms of the primary verb classes. Variations are not derivations from some assumed basic organization; rather they are the organization. The choice of variants is functionally motivated. With respect to the major verbal situations recognized by Foley & Van Valin (states, achievements, activities and accomplishments), each class has a different affix.

3.2.1 Static Verbs

States are static situations which are ongoing. The logical structure of static verbs is predicate' (x) where x = patient. The single argument of a one-place static predicate is a patient which maps onto UNDERGOER. These verbs are derived from adjectival roots and noun roots. The static verb class marker is m-. Before the consonants /g,l,r/, an epenthetic vowel is inserted following the m-. Before vowels, m- is realized as /m-/; otherwise m- assimilates to the point of articulation of the following consonant. The following illustrate static verbs:

1) Sia mo  - lompukng (m - lompukng).
   he ST - fat
   'HE is fat.'

2) Louk nti m - aal (m - aal).
   fish this ST - expensive
   'THIS FISH is expensive.'

3.2.2 Achievement Verbs

Achievements are dynamic situations which are initial-endpoint-oriented. They refer to non-volitional changes of state which a patient experiences or undergoes. The logical structure of achievement verbs is BECOME predicate' (x) where x = patient. The patient maps onto the macro-semantic role UNDERGOER. These verbs are derived from adjectival roots and verb roots.

Achievement verb clauses can contain an effector which is usually marked by the oblique preposition ga4.

Achievement verbs which are derived from adjectival roots are morphologically marked by kVm-. Before vowels and the consonants /p,b/, kVm- is realized as /kVm-/; otherwise it is realized as /-Vm/. The morphophoneme /N/ is a copy of the first vowel in the root. The following illustrate achievement verbs which are derived from adjectival roots:

3) Ndou kim - ingad (kVm - ingad).
   not. I ACH - near
   'I do not get near.'

4) Molok ou l - om - lompukng (kVm - lompukng).
   scared I *(ACH-fat
   'I am scared I will get fat.'

Achievement verbs which are derived from verb roots are morphologically marked by mV-. Before vowels and the consonants /p,b/, mV- is realized as /m-/.

The following illustrate achievement verbs which are derived from verb roots:
3.2.3 Activity Verbs

Activities are dynamic situations which are activity-oriented. They refer to events which involve a volitional actor and which often have no clear endpoint (i.e., atelic events). The logical structure of activity verbs is \( \text{DO} \left( x, \left[ \text{predicate} \left( x \right) \right] \right) \) where \( x \) = agent. The agent maps onto the macro-semantic role \( \text{ACTOR} \) which is always the pivot. Some activity verbs have an additional argument which maps onto \( \text{UNDERGOER} \). However, activity verbs are activity-oriented, even when an \( \text{UNDERGOER} \) is present (cf. Reid 1967: 23). \( \text{UNDERGOERS} \) are typically generic ((7), (9)) or given information (10). If the \( \text{UNDERGOER} \) is pivot, an accomplishment verb is used, with its accompanying morphology.

Activity verbs are marked by \( g- \) or \( \text{-Vm} \). It is difficult to assign a single semantic feature which distinguishes them. Furthermore, the contrast is neutralized in many cases. Before the consonants /l,r,s,t/ \( \text{-Vm} \) is realized as \( /-\text{Vm}/ \) and \( g- \) is realized as \( /gV/ \). Before vowels, \( \text{-Vm} \) is realized as \( /-m/ \) and \( g- \) is realized as \( /g/ \). Before the consonants /p,b,k,g/ the contrast between \( \text{-Vm} \) and \( g- \) is neutralized and realized as a homorganic nasal stop. Before /d/, the contrast is neutralized and realized as \( /-\text{Vm}/ \). In some words, before /s,t/ the contrast is neutralized and realized as \( /n-/ \). The following illustrate activity verbs:

(7) Sia m-ohodn \( \text{-Vm-ohodn} \) louk.
    he \( \text{ACT-eat} \) fish
    'HE eats fish.'

(8) Sia l-om-oon \( \text{-Vm-loon} \).
    he \( \text{'-ACT-oppose} \)
    'HE opposes.'

(9) Ng-g-ahut \( \text{(N-g-ahut)} \) ou karuung.
    SP-\( \text{ACT-carry} \) sack
    'I am carrying sacks.'

(10) Sigalama na ng-gi-limut \( \text{(N-g-limut)} \) diaadn.
    they \( \text{REF SP-ACT-slander} \) me
    'THEY are slandering me.'

3.2.4 Accomplishment Verbs

Accomplishments are dynamic situations which are final-endpoint-oriented (i.e., telic). They refer to a single change of state which is brought about by a volitional actor. Accomplishment verbs are prototypically transitive and final-endpoint-oriented even when the \( \text{UNDERGOER} \) is not present (cf. Reid 1967: 27). Clauses with these verbs have both core arguments \( \text{ACTOR} \) and \( \text{UNDERGOER} \), either of which can be the pivot. Agent maps onto \( \text{ACTOR} \) and patient is the prototypical semantic role which maps onto \( \text{UNDERGOER} \). The logical structure of accomplishment verbs is \( \text{DO} \left( x, \left[ \text{do'(x)} \right] \right) \) \( \text{CAUSE} \left( \text{BECOME} \right) \left( \text{.predicate} \left( y \right) \right) \).

\( \text{ACTOR} \) pivot accomplishment verbs are marked by \( ng- \). Before the consonants /g,d,l,r/, an epenthetic vowel is inserted following \( ng- \). Before vowels, \( ng- \) is realized as \( /ng-/ \); otherwise \( ng- \) assimilates to the point of articulation of the following consonant and that consonant is deleted. The following illustrate \( \text{ACTOR} \) pivot accomplishment verbs:

(11) Si Nunga m-upuk \( \text{(ng-pupuk)} \) kumut.
    P Nunga \( \text{ACC-wash} \) clothes
    'NUNGA washes clothes.'

(12) Sia nga-dabu' \( \text{(ng-dabu')} \) louk dii gimbataadn.
    he \( \text{ACC-fall} \) fish on dock
    'HE drops fish on the dock.'

\( \text{UNDERGOER} \) pivot accomplishment verbs are marked by \( \text{-Vdn} \). They are illustrated in the following:

(13) Pupuh-udn \( \text{(pupuk-Vdn)} \) i Nunga.
    wash-UP.\( \text{ACC} \) NONP Nunga
    'IT will be washed by Nunga.'

(14) Onu dubu-udn \( \text{(dabu'-Vdn)} \) nu?
    what drop-UP.\( \text{ACC} \) you
    'WHAT are you going to drop?'

A few verbs may be morphologically marked as either an \( \text{ACTOR} \) pivot activity verb or an \( \text{ACTOR} \) pivot accomplishment verb. Such pairs illustrate the core meaning distinction between the two types of verbs, viz., activity verbs are activity-oriented, whereas accomplishment verbs are final-endpoint-oriented with the action being transferred to the patient.

The following example, from running text, illustrates the above distinction. In the first sentence, attention is on the act of medicating; in the second, it is on the patient: