Bonggi clitics[1]

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1. Introduction

Linguistics, like society in general, has its trends and megatrends. When ideas are in vogue, there is a strong tendency to see them everywhere, even where they do not belong. One linguistic category which is in vogue is clitics because they represent the meeting point or interface between morphology, syntax, and phonology. However, partially due to its current popularity, the term clitic is both commonly used and misused. It is not difficult to find the term clitic applied to some data in a linguistic paper, but yet be unable to determine from that very paper if the data in question is actually a clitic or not. One reason for this is the absence of a criterial definition for what counts as a clitic; instead, we are faced with a list of tendencies and typical features which are associated with clitics.

This paper does not purport to provide a solution to the problems describe above, nor is it my intention to provide an overview of clitics or problems raised by clitics since these are readily available (e.g. Zwicky 1977, Jeffers & Zwicky 1980, Klavans 1982, Klavans 1985, and chapter 9 of Spencer 1991). Instead, I present clitic-like data from an Austronesian language to illustrate some of the problems in distinguishing clitics from independent words and affixes.

The primary data for this paper comes from Bonggi which is a Western Austronesian language spoken by approximately 1,400 people on Banggi and Balambangan islands in the Kudat District of Sabah, Malaysia (see Figure 1).

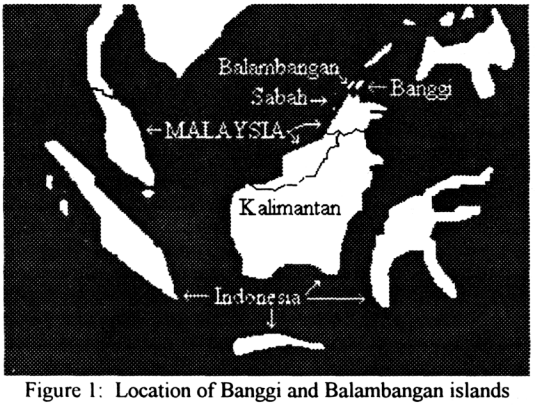

Figure 1: Location of Banggi and Balambangan islands

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[1]Three events at the 1993 LSA Linguistic Institute at The Ohio State University stimulated my interest in clitics: 1) class lectures by Arnold Zwicky; 2) a class on morphological change by Brian Joseph; and 3) a workshop on second position clitics conducted by Arnold Zwicky and Aaron Halpern. I am grateful to Arnold Zwicky for his comments during that time on my "Notes on Bonggi clitics." I also wish to thank James Johansson and Paul Kroeger for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Because clitics share some properties of independent words as well as inflectional affixes (Zwicky 1992a:269), we need to carefully distinguish them from both words and affixes. However, my intention is not to provide a general list of tests for distinguishing independent words, clitics, and affixes since such lists are readily available (see Zwicky & Pullum 1983 for tests which distinguish clitics from affixes; Zwicky 1985 for tests which distinguish clitics from independent words; and Zwicky 1992a for tests which distinguish words and affixes). Instead, I present clitic-like data from Bonggi, and address the issue of whether the data in question are actually clitics or not by referring to different tests when applicable.

I begin in §2 with a brief overview of Bonggi morphosyntax. In the context of this overview, I discuss two nonpronominal clitic-like items (*si* and *ni*) with a view to determining their status as words, clitics, or affixes. §3 deals with the question of whether or not Bonggi has pronominal clitics, and §4 reviews the conclusions of the paper, points out areas for further research in Bonggi, and makes some speculations on clitics in Borneo.

2. Overview and two nonpronominal clitic-like items

Bonggi verb morphology (like Tagalog and other Western Austronesian languages) cross-references one NP in every verbal clause. In basic clauses this NP is the subject. Sentence (1) illustrates a basic transitive clause containing two core nominal arguments with the subject preceding the verb.

(1) *Si* *Tali* *ng-orikng* *piasu.*
NOM Tali ACT.ACL-dry coconut[2]
'***Tali*** is drying coconut.'

The verb *ngorikng* 'to dry' is an accomplishment verb expressing a single change in state which is brought about by an actor.[3] This verb and other accomplishment verbs have two core arguments, actor and undergoer, either of which can occur as the subject.[4] For example, in (1) the actor (*Tali*) is the subject, whereas in (2) the undergoer (*piasu* 'coconut') is the subject. There are four semantically defined verb classes in Bonggi: states, achievements, activities, and accomplishments (cf. Boutin 1994 and Van Valin 1993). Both the verb class and the semantic macrorole of the cross-referenced NP can be determined from the verbal affixation. In (1) the prefix *ng-* indicates that the verb is an accomplishment and that the cross-referenced NP

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[2]The NP which is cross-referenced by the verb appears in **bold** in the English free translation. The subject NP occurs in *italics* in the English free translation. When an NP is cross-referenced by the verb and it is also the subject, it occurs in ***bold-italics*** in the English free translation. The symbol '=' is used for clitics and '-' for affixes, following Zwicky (1977) and Klavans (1985). Abbreviations used in this paper include: ACL accomplishment verb, ACH achievement verb, ACT actor, ACY activity verb, CAU causative, d dual, DAT dative case, DEF definite, EMPH emphatic, exc exclusive, GEN genitive case, IMP imperative, inc inclusive, NC noncontrol, NNOM nonnominative case, NOM nominative case, p plural, PASS passive, PERF perfective aspect, PRF perfect, PST past tense, s singular, and UND undergoer.

[3]For a discussion of accomplishment verbs in Bonggi see Boutin (1994, §2.4).

[4]Actor and undergoer are macro-semantic roles. Actor refers to the entity which instigates or controls the action expressed by the verb. Undergoer refers to the entity affected by the action or state expressed by the verb (cf. Van Valin 1993:43ff.).

(*Tali*) is an actor.[5] In (2) the suffix *-in* indicates that the verb is an accomplishment and that the cross-referenced NP (*piasu*) is an undergoer.[6]

(2) *Piasu* *kiring-in* *n* *Tali.*
coconut dry-UND.ACL NNOM Tali
'Tali is drying ***coconut***.'

In both (1) and (2) the cross-referenced NP is the subject and precedes the verb, whereas the other core argument follows the verb. This is the unmarked order in elicited clauses. In common typological terms, Bonggi is strongly VO with some constructions having VS order and others SV order.[7] VS order is used in presentational clauses to introduce new entities into the discourse (cf. Andrews 1985:80), and to refer to entities already on the scene in the discourse. SV order is used to re-introduce or switch a topic, and in passive constructions (e.g. (4)). It must also be used in transitive clauses if the S is a personal name (e.g. *Tali* in (1)).

Bonggi distinguishes personal nouns from common nouns. Personal nouns include personal names (e.g. *Tali* in (1) and (2)), nicknames, and some kinship terms. Personal nouns are preceded by a case marker, but common nouns are not.[8] For example, in (1) *Tali* is preceded by *si*, indicating that *Tali* is a personal noun and the clause subject; however, *piasu* 'coconut' is not preceded by a case marker since it is a common noun.[9] Similarly, in (2) the subject *piasu* 'coconut' is not preceded by a case marker, but nonsubject *Tali* is preceded by *ni* (*n* is a phonological variant of *ni*), indicating that *Tali* is a personal noun and non-nominative case.

The semantic basis for the distinction between personal nouns and common nouns is animacy. Personal names and some kinship terms are higher in animacy than common nouns which refer to people. Only non-collateral consanguineal kinship terms in the first and second generation above the speaker and addressee are treated as personal nouns; that is, the speaker's and addressee's parents and grandparents.[10]

Si 'NOM' and *ni* 'NNOM' are the only two case markers which can precede personal nouns.[11] Although these two case markers have been written here as independent words following standard orthographic practice, *si* and *ni* are clitic-like; thus, the question arises as to whether or not they are independent words, clitics, or

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[5]The prefix *ng-* involves nasal substitution. For a discussion of nasal substitution in Tagalog see de Guzman (1978).

[6]As in (1), the subject in (2) is the NP which is cross-referenced by the verb.

[7]Whether or not Bonggi is predomoninantly SV or VS is still an open question.

[8]Vocatives are the exception to this rule. That is, personal names such as *Tali* are not preceded by a case marker when they occur in direct address (cf. Schachter & Otanes 1972:95 for Tagalog). In fact, when personal names are used in direct address, usually only the last syllable of the name is used, e.g. *Li* is the vocative form of *Tali*.

[9]The discussion here involves core arguments; oblique arguments are preceded by an oblique marker regardless of whether or not they are personal nouns or common nouns.

[10]See Comrie (1981:189) for a similar distinction in Chukchi, a language of north-eastern Siberia.

[11]Besides *si* and *ni*, Tagalog has a third personal-noun marker *kay* (Schachter & Otanes 1972:64; 74; 93).

affixes. However, before addressing this question, we examine their function in nonbasic clauses.

In basic clauses such as (1) and (2) the same argument is both the subject and the NP which is cross-referenced by the verb; however, in some nonbasic clauses the subject and the cross-referenced NP are different arguments in which case *si* 'NOM' marks subjects which are personal nouns, not the argument which is cross-referenced by the verb. For example, (3) is a *nuan* passive construction in which *si* 'NOM' marks the subject *Tali* (an undergoer), and the verb cross-references the actor (*ku* '1sGEN'). Since the actor is not the subject in (3), it occurs in genitive case.

(3) *Si Tali nuan ku ng-atad.*
NOM Tali PASS 1sGEN ACT.ACL-bring
'*Tali* will be brought by **me**.'

In *nuan* passive constructions (eg. (4)) *ni* 'NNOM' marks nonsubject personal nouns. As in (1) and (3), the prefix *ng-* on the verb in (4) cross-references the actor (*Tali*). However, unlike in (1) where the personal noun *Tali* is the subject and thus preceded by *si* 'NOM', in (4) the personal noun *Tali* is not the subject so it is preceded by *ni* 'NNOM'.[12]

(4) *Piasu nuan n Tali ng-orikng.*
coconut PASS NNOM Tali ACT.ACL-dry
'*The coconut* is being dried by **Tali**.'

As can be seen from the examples above, Bonggi has an undergoer cross-referencing construction (e.g. (2)) and a passive construction (e.g. (3) and (4)), both of which present the undergoer as subject. On the one hand, the difference between (1) and (2) is a difference in both subject selection and cross-referencing. In (1) the subject (*Tali*) is an actor which is cross-referenced by *ng-*; whereas in (2) the subject (*piasu* 'coconut') is an undergoer which is cross-referenced by *-in*. On the other hand, the difference between (1) and (4) is a difference in subject selection without a corresponding difference in verbal cross-referencing.[13] Both (1) and (4) cross-reference the actor (*Tali*); however, in (1) the actor is the subject, but in (4) the undergoer is the subject.

Prototypical passive constructions result in nonactor subjects and the defocusing of the actor (Shibatani 1988:91-92). In Bonggi both undergoer cross-referencing constructions (e.g. (2)) and passive constructions (e.g. (3) and (4)) result in undergoer subjects. Similarly, both constructions involve the defocusing of the actor; yet, in general, actors appear to be more defocused in passive constructions than in undergoer cross-referencing constructions.[14]

The data in (5) illustrates three *nuan* passive constructions. In all three passive clauses, the verb cross-references the actor, but the subject (*squirrel*) is a zero

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[12]Recall that /n/ is a phonologically conditioned variant of *ni* 'NNOM'.

[13]Note that the difference between the active construction in (1) and the passive construction in (4) is not simply a difference in subject selection. In the passive, the verb is syntactically marked as derived by the addition of the passive auxiliary *nuan*, while in the active the verb is syntactically basic.

[14]This hypothesis remains to be confirmed by detailed analysis of natural texts.