PHRASAL EMOTION PREDICATES
IN THREE LANGUAGES OF EASTERN INDONESIA

Marian Klamer

0. Introduction

In many languages emotions are expressed by combining a verb with a body part noun, for example English My heart bleeds ‘I am sad’, and Choctaw Nok-libisa ‘to have a hot neck’ = ‘to be in a passion’.

In this paper we examine similar noun-verb combinations in three related Austronesian languages of Eastern Indonesia: Kambera, Tetun, and Buru, spoken on the islands of Sumba, Timor, and Buru, respectively. The data are from Klamer 1998, Van Klinken 1999, Grimes 1991 and Grimes, personal communication, July 2000.

The noun in the VN combinations in these languages refer to actual body parts, for example, ‘liver’, ‘waist’, ‘head’, or to entities related to bodily functions, such as ‘saliva’ or ‘breath’, or to locational nouns that express bodily locations, e.g. ‘inside’ or ‘back’.

(1) Kambera: eti ‘liver’, ngaru ‘mouth’, etc.:
   hamu eti
   be.good liver > ‘have a good liver’ > ‘be happy’
   mbana ngaru
   be.hot mouth > ‘have a hot mouth’ > ‘be hot-tempered, malicious’

(2) Tetun nawan ‘breath’, laran ‘inside’, etc.:
   nawan sa’e
   ‘have ascending breath’ > ‘be angry’
   breath ascend
   laran moras
   ‘have a sick inside’ > ‘be sad, upset’
   inside sick

(3) Buru lale ‘inside, content, character, desire, intention’:
   lale-n dofo
   inside-Poss be.straight > ‘to have a straight inside’ > ‘be just’

**Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Universiteit Leiden
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2 The actual order of the verb and the noun is VN in Kambera, NV in Tetun, and variable in Buru, so whenever I use ‘VN’ in this paper, this is intended as mnemonic for “phrasal predicates formed by a combination of a verb and a noun – in any order”.
Apart from describing emotions, the VN combinations also function to describe appearances of character or body. This paper will focus on those that express emotions.

We will see that, on the one hand, the VN combinations behave as a lexical unit: the two items form a semantic unit, with a conventionalized meaning that is not a literal sum of its parts, but is a metaphorically derived interpretation. In addition, the two items can also function as one base for morphological derivations, and can be expressed as a syntactic unit, a compound verb. On the other hand, they behave like syntactic phrases, because in the regular case, syntactic rules may manipulate both elements separately so that they are expressed as syntactically discontinuous elements. It is this paradoxical behaviour of the VN predicates that the present paper is concerned about. It pursues three aims:

(i) to provide a typological overview of the VN predicates and their expression in three genetically related Austronesian (Central-Malayo-Polynesian) languages of Eastern Indonesia,

(ii) to accommodate the paradoxical behavior of the predicates within a lexicalist view of syntax, and

(iii) to propose a scenario for the grammaticalization of these emotion predicates.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 1, I show that the VN predicates in Kambera, Tetun and Buru are syntactically expressed in both continuous and discontinuous configurations. I argue that the discontinuous configuration is the one used most generally and productively. I also show that, while permitting syntactic separation, the VN predicates constitute single semantic words on a number of criteria. In section 2 I present semantic, syntactic and morphological evidence that the VN combinations can be analyzed as lexical units, paying particular attention to their behaviour in morphological derivation. In section 3 I address the question of how such phrasal predicates are to be accounted for within a lexicalist view of syntax. My proposal follows up on proposals made by Ackermann and Lesourd (1997) for Hungarian ‘pre-verb verb (PV V)combinations, and Jackendoff (1997) on idioms like bury the hatchet, that can be analyzed as metaphorical semantic compounds. Canonically, a lexical entry contains the specifications of only one item (e.g., a stem, or a derivational morpheme), and is always a zero-level syntactic item. In this paper it is proposed that a lexical entry must be allowed to contain specifications of two or more words, i.e. that a lexical entry can be a syntactic phrase. This accounts for the fact that the V and the N in the emotion predicates at hand are expressed as two separate syntactic constituents, while at the same time the VN predicate is being treated as one morphological and semantic unit. In section 4 I propose a historical scenario for the development of the VN emotion predicates.

1. Continuous and discontinuous syntactic expression of VN predicates

I propose that the conceptual structure of VN predicates like Kambera hamu eti ‘have a good liver’ > ‘be happy’, Tetun nawa n sa’e ‘have ascending breath’ > ‘be angry’, and Buru lale-n dofo ‘to have a straight inside’ > ‘be just’ minimally includes the three entities in (4), which belong to the word classes in (5). For the sake of concreteness, I have entered the Kambera items from example (7).

(4) a. STATE/EVENT b. THEME c. LOCATION
(6) a. mbaha ‘be wet’ b. eti ‘liver’ c. na maramba ‘the king’
(7) *Mbaha eti -nanya -ka na maramba*

be.wet -3s.Subj -Prf Art king

"The king is pleased" (lit. "The king has a wet liver")

Syntactically, a clause with an emotion predicate such as *mbaha eti* 'have a wet liver' is an intransitive clause – a subject-predicate combination as in (8):

(8) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRED</th>
<th>SUBJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clause</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the three lexical items of (4)-(6) are unified with the two syntactic functions in (8), the result can be either one of the two syntactic structures in (9):

(9) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V state/event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[mbaha]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[eti]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[na maramba]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. 

| S |
| PRED |
| SUBJ |
| V state/event |
| N theme |
| N location |
| [mbaha] |
| [eti] |
| [na maramba] |

Structure (9a) is illustrated in (7). Structure (9b) is illustrated in (10):

(10) 

| Mbaha -nanya -ka na cti-na na maramba |
| be.wet -3s.Subj -Prf Art liver -3s.Poss Art king |

"The king is (feeling) pleased" (lit. "The king's liver is wet")

In (9a) and (7) we have a complex predicate that is made up of the verb and its Theme -- the body part noun. This is a synthetic construction: the predicate is (like) a compound verb construction, and has a lexicalized interpretation as expressing an emotion. In a clause with such a compound verb, the only argument that is left to become the grammatical subject is the locational argument -- the possessor of the body part.² This

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1 I assume that a locational argument in Kambera, Buru and Tetun can be grammatically expressed as nominal possessor or as oblique adjunct. Structural evidence for relating location to nominal possession in Kambera is presented in Klammer (1998a: 198-199).

2 In Buru, a verbal compound can also be derived by incorporating an adjunct nominal (Instrument, Manner, Time, Location) in a similar way (Grimes 1991:231, 276, 339):

(i) 

| Da hai tu bohi-n bika-t |
| 3s follow with rear-3sPoss protrude-Nom |

"He followed with his bottom sticking out"
subject is interpreted as the experiencer of the emotion expressed by the predicate. In (8a) the subject of the clause is na maramba ‘the king’, the possessor of eti ‘liver’. In (8b) the subject of the clause is na eti-na na maramba ‘the king’s liver’.

In (9b) and (10) we have an emotion predicate whose V and N are expressed discontinuously. Here the syntactic predicate consists of one verb and the body part noun is expressed in a separate NP. In this case, the subject NP is made up of the Theme (the body part noun), and its Location (the possessor of the body part). The NP with the body part noun is the head, and it is modified – possessed -- by the following NP. Note, however, that the interpretation of (9b) is identical to that of (9a). That is, the possessor NP in (9b) is interpreted as the experiencer of the emotion. The emotion is expressed by the V and the possessed body part N, even though these belong to different constituents in syntax. In other words, the interpretation of the VN combination is always the same; whether it is expressed continuously or not.

In Kambera and Tetun, one and the same predicate allows for both possibilities. In Kambera the discontinuous expression is allowed for all types of body part nouns, while the continuous construction (where the N is incorporated into the predicate) is only possible when N= eti ‘liver’ -- compare (11b) with (7):

(11) a. Mbana-nanya -ka na ngaru-na na maramba
   be.hot-3s.Subj-Prf Art mouth-3s.Poss Art king
   ‘The king is (feeling) malicious’
   b. * Mbana ngaru -nanya -ka na maramba
   be.hot mouth -3s.Subj-Prf Art king

In Tetun, both the continuous and the discontinuous construction are equally allowed without any apparent difference in meaning (Van Klinken 1999: 199-200). This is illustrated in (12a,b), where the auxiliary at(u) can, but need not, be positioned between the noun and the verb:

(12) a. Nia at nawan sa’e onan
    3s Irr breath ascend Imm
    ‘He is about to get angry’
   b. Nia nawan at sa’e onan
    3s breath Irr ascend Imm
    ‘He is about to get angry’

Van Klinken (1997:206-7) reports that all Tetun VN predicates may in principle be expressed as two separate syntactic constituents when they are modified by the auxiliaries atu ‘Irrealis’, keta ‘don’t’ and sei ‘still’, and the adverbs hetak ‘increasingly’ and bei ‘also’. In (13b), the negation keta intervenes between N and V, in (14b) it is the auxiliary keta:

(13) a. Keta neon kadolik
    don’t emotion tremble

(ii) Da hai boh.biha-k
    3s follow bottom protrude-App
    He followed with his bottom sticking out

It is generally agreed on that the incorporation of adjuncts is a distinctly lexical process, not a syntactic one (cf. the discussion in Spencer 1995).