Kambera: pronominal clitics and thematic roles
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1. Introduction

In this paper I will discuss one particular aspect of Kambera, namely: how lexical entries of predicates determine the syntactic expression of their arguments. I will focus on intransitive predicates, and discuss how the semantic or thematic roles of their single arguments (or: subjects) are paired with the way they are expressed in the sentence. In other words: we will see how the single argument of intransitive verbs can be expressed in the sentence. On the basis of these facts, I will argue that in Kambera there is no one-to-one correspondence between lexical argument structure and the morphosyntactic marking of verbal arguments. I will consider the consequences this has for (a) de status of the theta-criterion, thematic or theta-roles and theta-marking in linguistic theory, and (b) for the formal account of intransitive clauses in Kambera. But before doing this, I will first give an overview of the structural properties of Kambera that are relevant to this discussion.
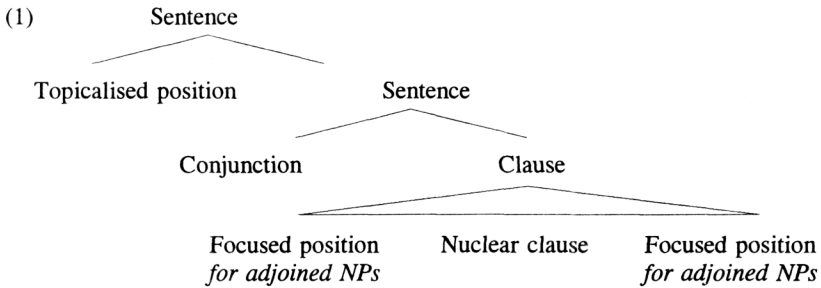
Kambera is a head-marking language (Nichols 1986), in the sense that it has rich marking on the head of the clause: the verb, by pronominal, aspectual and modal clitics. Pronominal clitics mark the person, number and case (Nominative, Accusative, etc.[1]) of definite[2] verbal arguments on the verb. NPs that are crossreferenced on the verb are optional and used for disambiguation or emphasis. I therefore assume the pronominal clitics to have argument status, while their coreferent NPs are adjuncts (cf. Klamer 1994). Kambera word

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[1] Morphological nominative, genitive, dative and accusative 'case' in Kambera is not the same as grammatical 'Case' (GB) and it does not mark 'grammatical functions' or 'roles' (FG, RRG) in a one-to-one fashion, as will become clear in the course of this paper. On the other hand, these particular morphological case labels for the pronominal clitics are not chosen arbitrarily either: they relate the pronominal clitics to the most central or unmarked syntactic and semantic function of the verbal argument that they mark (cf. the discussion below).

[2] There is one exception to this: an indefinite subject NP may be marked on the verb in certain specific constructions that are functionally similar to passive constructions in other languages (Kambera has no passive, cf. Klamer 1994: 79, 323-326; 1995): in these constructions the subject is neither in focus, nor the discourse topic. An illustration of such a construction is given in (i):

(i) Na-$_j$ hoba -ya$_k$ ìu$_j$ nú
     3SN- swallow-3SA shark there
     A shark$_j$ swallowed him$_k$ there/He$_k$ was swallowed by a shark$_j$ there

order facts suggest that the verb, together with its clitics and adverbs, forms one syntactic constituent. I will use the term 'nuclear clause' to refer to this constituent. A nuclear clause may on its own constitute a complete sentence and is thus the core of the clause and the sentence. If a clause contains NPs, I assume them to be adjoined to the nuclear clause; their positions are distinct from the topicalised (or left-dislocated) position in that they are adjacent to the nuclear clause and are within the scope of the conjunction. This is shown in (1):
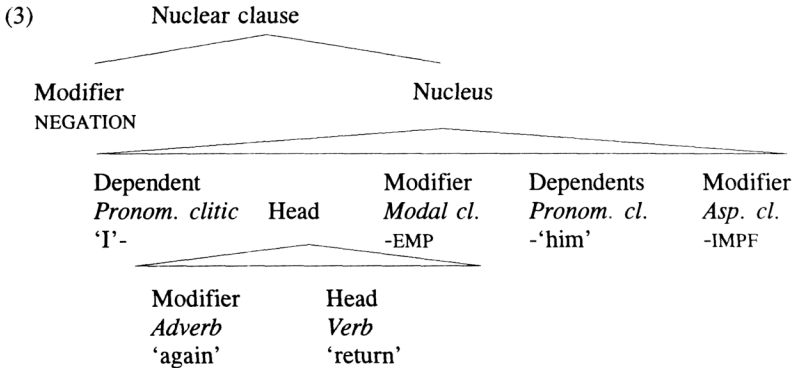
(1)   Sentence

    Topicalised position   Sentence

            Conjunction   Clause

            Focused position   Nuclear clause   Focused position
            for adjoined NPs   *for adjoined NPs*

Consider the example in (2). In this sentence, the head of the clause is the verb *beli* 'return', which is modified by the adverb *hili* 'again'. The subject is marked with the nominative proclitic *ku-*, the enclitics are modal clitic *-ma*, pronominal object clitic *-nya* and aspectual *-pa*. Enclitics must appear in this order (modal-pronominal-aspectual).[3]

(2)   Nda ku-   hili   beli   -ma -nya -pa
        NEG 1SN-   again   return -EMP -3SD -IMPF
        I am not going back to him again

In (3) the expansion of the nuclear clause in (2) is given. Observe that the NPs are not part of the nuclear clause, and are outside the scope of the negation *nda*.

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[3]   Apart from ordering restrictions like these, Kambera clitics are subject to other idiosyncratic restrictions as well, cf. Klamer 1994.

(3)   Nuclear clause

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        _____/_____
Modifier                      Nucleus
NEGATION
     _____/_____
Dependent          Modifier      Dependents    Modifier
Pronom. clitic  Head   Modal cl.   Pronom. cl.    Asp. cl.
'I'-              -EMP         -'him'        -IMPF
        _____/\_____
    Modifier    Head
    Adverb      Verb
    'again'     'return'
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Now we know the basic structure of a Kambera sentence, let us look at the pronominal enclitics more closely. Kambera pronominal clitics are genitive, accusative or dative (or a combination of these, e.g. genitive plus dative indicating continuative aspect, this will be discussed below). The four main clitic paradigms are listed in (4):

(4) *Kambera pronominal clitics:*

	NOMINATIVE	ACCUSATIVE	DATIVE	GENITIVE
1s	ku-	-ka	-ngga	-nggu
2s	(m)u-	-kau	-nggau	-mu
3s[4]	na-	-ya	-nya	-na
1p(inc)	ta-	-ta	-nda	-nda
1p(exc)	ma-	-kama	-nggama	-ma
2p	(m)i-	-ka(m)i	-ngga(m)i	-mi
3p	da-	-ha	-nja	-da

The morphological case labels for the four clitic paradigms in (4) are not chosen arbitrarily: they relate a clitic to the most central (or unmarked) syntactic and semantic function of the verbal argument that it marks, and are as follows. Nominative marks the subject of a transitive or intransitive verb. In (5) the verb *palu* 'hit' is transitive, the subject (*na tau wutu* 'the big/fat man') is marked on the verb with a nominative clitic, the object with an accusative. In (6), the verb *tambuta* 'drop out' is intransitive, the subject (*na ài* 'the tree') is marked on the verb with a nominative proclitic. The brackets indicate that

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[4]   The third person singular pronominal clitic has a male, female or neutral pronominal translation. In translations I will only give the male form.

the NPs are optional; the pronominal clitics are not optional.

(5) (Na   tau   wútu)   na- palu -**ka**   (nyungga)
     ART person   be fat   3sN- hit -1sA   I
     The big man hit me (lit. the big man he-hit-me I)

(6) (Na   ài)   **na-**   tambuta   dàngu   amung
     ART tree   3sN-   drop out   with   root
     That tree is uprooted (lit. that tree it is dropped out with root)

In (7) the applicative verb *kei(ng)* 'buy X for Y' has two object arguments. Its indirect object is crossreferenced on the verb with the dative clitic *-nja* while the direct object (*rí* 'vegetable') is not marked on the verb because it is indefinite.

(7) (I   Ama)   na- kei -**nja** rí
     ART father   3sN- buy -3pD vegetable
     Father buys vegetables for them (lit. Father he buys them vegetables)

Although often only the indirect object of an applicative verb is marked, it is also possible to cliticize both the indirect object *and* the direct object (in that order) on the verb. This is illustrated in (8), where *-ngga* 'me' marks the indirect object, and *-nya* 'it' the direct object:

(8) (I   Ama)   na- kei -**ngga**   -**nya**
     ART father   3sN- buy -1sD   -3sD
     Father buys it for me (lit. Father he buys me it)

Observe that the direct object is marked with a clitic from the dative paradigm here, whereas in (5) it was marked with an accusative, the latter being the unmarked way to mark a direct object. In (8) a dative clitic is used because of an idiosyncratic restriction in Kambera which states that the second postverbal slot in a clitic cluster may only be filled with a dative clitic.

The genitive marks the possessor of a noun phrase, as *-nggu* 'my' in (9):

(9) Na   uma   -**nggu**   (nyungga)
     ART house -1sG   I
     My house

These are the most typical functions of the pronominal clitics. In the course of this paper we will consider other uses of the pronominal clitics that are, in a sense, derived from their basic uses as they are discussed here. Pronominal clitics are the morpho-syntactic expression of verbal arguments, while their coreferent NPs are optional adjuncts. In other words, pronominal clitics make

verbal arguments visible in syntax, and are therefore comparable to NPs with a pronominal head in languages like e.g. English or Dutch. In the remainder of this paper we will look at how the argument of an intransitive verb is expressed in Kambera syntax. In view of the argument vs. adjunct status of pronominal clitics vs. NPs in Kambera, it goes without saying that we will concentrate on the morphosyntactic expression of this argument by pronominal clitics.

2. Arguments of intransitive verbs

Most models of argument projection have, until recently, assumed that lexical entries of verbs contain syntactic information concerning the projection of their arguments, and that this information determines the properties of a specific level of representation, namely D-structure. In generative approaches predicates are often represented in the lexicon as a thematic grid, their arguments are projected into D-structure and a verb assigns one or two distinct theta-roles to NPs in a sentence. In the proper derivation of a sentence the Projection Principle and Theta criterion play a central role, by ensuring that the lexical information about verbal arguments is represented in the syntax, that each theta role of a predicate must be assigned, and there must be no NP that lacks a theta role. Thematic roles are thus, in a sense, seen as indices for verbal arguments, to keep track of them during the derivation. If these principles are really universal, as they are claimed to be, two important predictions that follow from the theta-criterion should be true for all languages:

(10) *Predictions of theta-criterion:*
    a. It is impossible for an NP to have more than one thematic role
    b. It is impossible that two NPs fall under the same theta role

In the next section I will discuss how Kambera shows that these predictions are false, by showing that there is not a one-to-one relation between theta roles and argument NPs or — in Kambera — pronominal clitics. Although Kambera is quite exceptional in the variation it allows in the marking of intransitive subjects, the claim itself is by no means new: for a long time attention has been drawn to the fact that predictions like the ones in (10) are incorrect, see for instance Dowty 1991, Foley & Van Valin 1984, Jackendoff 1987, 1990, 1993, Van Valin 1990 and the references cited there.

The discussion of how thematic roles are morphosyntactically expressed in Kambera will be centred around the syntactic behaviour of intransitive verbs. With respect to intransitives, it is often assumed that they can be divided into

two lexical classes of so-called 'unergative' and 'unaccusative' verbs.[5] The differences between them are characterized in syntactic terms: in one type the surface subject is also the underlying subject, and in the other the surface subject is the underlying direct object. This distinction between the two classes is represented in the lexicon, and it would entail making a distinction between the argument of an activity verb like *run* (x, external argument, subject, or Agent) and a non-activity verb like *fall* (y, internal argument, object, or Patient) as in (11):

(11) HIT   x   (y)
     RUN   x
     FALL   (y)

In this way, the information concerning the syntactic projection of arguments is specified in the lexical entry of the verb, a specification that derives from their lexical semantics. This lexical specification accounts both for a difference in *semantic* properties and for the fact that these two kind of verbs occur in distinct *syntactic* constructions.

Turning now to intransitives in Kambera, questions like the following are relevant: how are the arguments of Kambera intransitive verbs represented in the lexicon? Is there evidence to distinguish two, or more, lexical classes of intransitive verbs? In order to answer such questions we must establish, for instance, whether the same verb appears in more than one construction, e.g. one in which the single argument patterns with a transitive subject, and another where it patterns with a transitive object. We must also establish, on the one hand, what different semantic/thematic roles intransitive subjects may have, and, on the other hand, how an intransitive argument with one thematic role may be linked to several distinct morphosyntactic forms. What determines the various linkings: are the morphosyntactic properties of intransitive subjects determined by the lexical specifications of the *verb* alone, or by larger structures, perhaps by the properties of the predicate or sentence as a whole? The questions adressed in this paper can thus be summarised as follows:

(12) a. Is there any syntactic or semantic evidence for distinct lexical classes of intransitive verbs which would account for the various morphosyntactic structures that Kambera allows for intransitive clauses?

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[5]   In some Government-Binding approaches, 'unaccusatives' are also refered to as 'ergatives' and 'unergatives' as 'intransitives'. For various reasons (cf. Dixon 1994, Van Valin 1990) the latter terms are misleading so I will not use them fo indicate classes of verbs.

b. Is it possible at all in Kambera to project a grammatical level of representation (say, D-structure) based on the properties of individual lexical entries alone?

With respect to the first question, we will see that there are syntactic and semantic distinctions between the various intransitive constructions, but these distinctions cannot be accounted for by making them part of the lexical entry of *verbs*, so we cannot distinguish different lexical classes of intransitive verbs by their thematic grid. This is because in Kambera there is no one-to-one correspondence between lexical argument structure and the morphosyntactic expression of the verbal arguments. This mismatch occurs in two directions, which I will discuss in turn in the sections 3 and 4.

In section 3 I will show that a single thematic role Agent can have several distinct morphosyntactic *markings* which depend on the aspectual, mood or modality properties of the predicate. This means that we cannot predict the morphosyntactic properties of an argument from its thematic role alone. That is, in Kambera we cannot say something like: 'an Agent argument always occurs in morphological shape M or in syntactic position/construction S'. On the contrary, an Agent argument may occur in various forms and positions, depending on the other properties of the predicate, as we will see.

Next, in section 4, we will observe how the thematic *interpretation* of an intransitive argument may vary depending on its morphosyntactic representation in the sentence. It will be shown that one and the same argument may have either an Agentive or a more Patientive interpretation, the interpretation being determined by the structural properties of the construction the predicate occurs in. In other words, in Kambera we cannot say something like: 'the argument of the verb *die* is always a Patient, the argument of the verb *talk* is always an Agent', because the thematic interpretation of such arguments appears to be variable. Thus, thematic interpretation is not a fixed, stable lexical property and should therefore not be marked as such in the lexical entry of a verb.

These observations provide the answer to the second question in (12), which is: no. Grammatical structure is not driven by the information in one particular lexical entry concerning the projection of its arguments, but rather by the structural properties and the compositional meaning of the entire predicate, of which the meaning of the verb is just one part.

This will result in the conclusion that Kambera intransitive verbs have a single lexical argument that is neither specified as 'external' vs. 'internal', nor for its thematic properties (Patientive vs. Agentive). The thematic interpretation of this unspecified argument does not depend on the lexical specification of the verb but on the construction of the clause as a whole.

3. Single thematic role has many morpho-syntactic markings

Let us consider the various morphosyntactic markings of an Agent argument in Kambera. The same thematic role of Agent may be expressed by maximally four different (combinations of) clitics. I will discuss these in turn.

Firstly, in a simple declarative sentence with no special modal, aspectual or discourse properties[6] the transitive or intransitive subject is marked with a *nominative* proclitic. In (13) a nominative subject is marked on the active intransitive verbs *mài* 'come' and *ngangu* 'eat, have breakfast/lunch/dinner':[7]

(13) *Nominative AGENT subject*

a.   ..hi   **ku-**   mài   yohu
            CNJ   1SN-   come   here
            ..so I came/come here

b.   Nda   **da-**   ngangu   -a
            NEG   3PN-   eat   -MOD
            They don't eat/they don't want to eat/they are not having dinner

Secondly, Agent arguments of transitives and intransitives may be marked with a genitive enclitic. Above, we saw that the central function of a genitive is to mark a nominal possessor (cf. (9)). However, a genitive enclitic may also be used to mark the subject of verbs. Examples are given in (14): the intransitive verbs *mai* 'come' and *ngangu* 'eat' now occur with the genitive subjects *-nggu* 'my' and *-da* 'their'.

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6   Kambera has no tense marking.

7   *Ngangu* 'eat' is an optionally transitive verb, used intransitively in (13b) — hence the possible translation 'have breakfast/lunch/dinner'. In (i) below it is used transitively. In (ia) it has a definite object, the NP being crossreferenced with the object clitic *-nya*; in (1b) its indefinite object *tolu wei* '(some) pork' is not marked on the verb:

(i) a.   ..hi   ku-   nga   -nya   na   tolu   wei
              CNJ   1SN-   eat   -3SD   ART   meat   pig
              ..so I ate the pork

    b.   ..hi   ku-   ngangu   tolu   wei
               CNJ   1SN-   eat   meat   pig
               ..so I ate (some) pork

(14) *Genitive AGENT subject*

a. Mài   -**nggu** pa-   mandura   -bia -pa   yohu
   come -1SG   CTR-   wait a long time -MOD-IMPF   here
   I came (in time) just to wait endlessly here (lit. my coming just to wait endlessly here)

b. Hama   ngangu -**da**   dàngu   ama   -da
   be same eat   -3PG   with   father -3PG
   They eat/ate like their father (lit. same (is) their eating with their father)

This genitive marking of the subject makes clauses resemble possessed NPs, and the external syntax of such nominal clauses is similar to the syntax of possessed NPs.[8] Although the functional properties of nominal clauses are diverse, all nominal clauses share the property that they do not express the main narrative line in discourse: they have a dependent[9] discourse function because they express a circumstance of the main clause. Questions and idiomatic expressions are often nominal clauses too. What is important to note is that nominal clauses have typical mood, modality and aspectual properties that are connected to their dependent discourse function: their *mood* is often irrealis, their *modality* is non-agent oriented.[10] The *aspectual* properties of nominal clauses may vary, they are are the result of the interaction of the non-agent oriented modality of the predicate and the semantics of the verb (cf. Klamer 1994: 94-100).

The third way to express an intransitive subject is by using one of the most salient constructions in Kambera: the continuative aspect construction. This construction marks an intransitive subject of a clause with particular aspectual properties: it is used to express the fact that the event or state expressed by the predicate continues or endures, hence its name. In this construction two pronominal clitics are used: a genitive and a dative, both attached postverbally, in that order. This is illustrated in (15).

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[8] The nominal properties of nominal clauses include the following: they can be specified for definiteness with an article, they can be NPs that are crossreferenced on the verb, and they can be clefted or compared (cf. Klamer 1994: 90-94).

[9] Syntactically, however, they do not have to be dependent clauses, as discussed in Klamer 1994.

[10] That is, the speaker's orientation is on the predicate as a whole — the subject may be agentive, but that property of it is not in focus.

(15) *AGENT subject marked with cluster genitive + dative*

a. Mài   **-nggu-nya**   pa-   ngangu   yohu
   come   -1SG-3SD   CTR-   eat   here
   I've come to have diner here (lit. I'm coming to eat here)

b. Ngangu **-da-nya**   ba   ta-   kabeli
   eat   -3PG-3PD   CNJ   1PN-   return
   They were eating when we returned/went back

In (15a) the subject is marked with the genitive enclitic *-nggu* 'my', in (15b) with *-da* 'their', while the second clitic, which is the 3rd person singular dative *-nya* 'him/her/it' in both sentences, does not seem to have any referential function at all.

This is quite a remarkable construction, because if a pronominal clitic does not have a referential function, why does it occur at all? Elsewhere (Klamer 1994, to appear) I have argued that the dative clitic in this construction does not mark an object but a matrix subject because diachronically this construction must have originated from a structure with an embedded nominal clause. Let me summarize the arguments here. Consider first the clause in (16). In this clause the possessed NP *uma-nggu* 'my house' is the nominal predicate, there is no overt copular verb, and the matrix subject is marked by the dative clitic *-nya*:

(16)   [[Uma   **-nggu**$_{\text{possessor}}$] NP, nominal predicate   **-nya**$_{\text{matrix subject}}$]S
       house   -1SG   -3SD
       It (is) my house

Similarly, in the sentences (15a,b) above, the nominal clauses *mài-nggu* 'my coming' and *ngangu-da* 'their eating' function like the nominal predicate of clause, there is no overt copular verb, and the matrix subject is marked by the dative clitic *-nya*. The analogy between (15a) and (16) is represented in (17):[11]

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[11]   Support for this analysis comes from the well-known fact that in many languages continuative or progressive aspect is expressed using a construction with nominal properties. In Dutch, the progressive aspect is expressed by a copular verb followed by a PP-predicate that contains an NP: the infinitival verb form is preceded by an article and a preposition, as shown in (i). In English, the progressive form of the verb is the same morphological form that is used in nominalisations, as shown in (ii).

(i)   Hij   is   [**aan**   [**het**   rennen]$_{\text{NP}}$]$_{\text{PP}}$
         he   is   to   the   run
         He is running

(17)   [[Mài   -nggu_{possessor subject}] NP, nominal predicate   -nya_{matrix subject}   la Humba]_s
       come   -1SG   -3SD   LOC Sumba
It (is) my coming to Sumba —> I'm coming to Sumba

The continuative aspect construction in (17) can thus be paraphrased as 'it (is) my coming', which renders the interpretation of the continuative construction quite adequately. This analysis has two additional advantages, both pertaining to the status of the dative clitic: (1) in this analysis the dative clitic is not a meaningless empty morpheme, but has a real function: it marks the matrix subject, and (2) the fact that the dative clitic is always third person singular is now explained, because it is used as an expletive subject (like the expletive subject *it* in *it rains*) which is always a third person (sg.) pronoun.

This analysis is probably correct from a diachronic point of view. There is, however, some evidence that suggests that synchronically the construction is no longer analysed as an embedded construction, and that the cluster of genitive and dative clitic has been reinterpreted as marking *one* single argument instead of the two original ones. This now non-embedded structure has very specific aspectual properties: it marks the continuative aspect.

The evidence that this reanalysis has taken place is as follows. In constructions like (16), where the predicate has a truly nominal lexical head, both clitics *can* be separated from each other by additional material, while this is not possible in constructions like (17) where the lexical head of the predicate is a verb. This is illustrated in (18) and (19). In (18) the two clitics[12] can be separated by the pronoun *nyungga* 'I' and the emphatic marker -*ma* (they may occur independently as well, also resulting in grammatical sentences), while this is not possible for the continuative construction, as illustrated in (19).

(18)   [[Uma   -nggu   **nyungga**] -ma   -ya] _S
       house   -1SG   I   -EMP   -3SA
It (is) MY house

(ii)   He is **running**
       His **running**

[12]   The subject of the nominal predicate is marked with an accusative clitic in (18). This is the usual and obligatory marking for subjects of nominal predicates, cf. (39)—(42) below. The dative marking of the matrix subject in (16) is an exception to this rule and is the result of an idiosyncratic restriction (cf. footnote 3 above), which states that in a pronominal clitic cluster, the second slot should always be filled with a dative clitic. Note that the morphological shape of the clitic which marks the matrix subject, i.e. whether it is dative or accusative, is irrelevant for the argument presented here: in (19) both clitics *cannot* be separated from each other by additional material, whether or not the second clitic is dative or accusative is irrelevant.

(19) a. *   [[Mài   -nggu   **nyungga**   -ma -nya/-ya   la Humba]$_S$
        come   -1SG   I   -EMP -3SD/3SA   LOC Sumba
        Intended reading: I am (SURELY) coming to Sumba

    b. *   [[Mài   -nggu   **nyungga**   -nya/-ya   la Humba]$_S$
        come   -1SG   I   -3SD/3SA   LOC Sumba
        Intended reading: I am coming to Sumba [13]

    c. *   [[Mài   -nggu   **-ma**   -nya/-ya   la Humba]$_S$
        come   -1SG   -EMP   -3SD/3SA   LOC Sumba
        Intended reading: I AM coming to Sumba [14]

Because of the impossibility to put any material between the genitive and dative clitic in the continuative aspect construction like the ones in (15) and (19, where the predicates have verbal heads, whereas this *is* possible when the predicate is truly nominal, as in (16) and (18), the two clitics in the sentences in (15) must be considered to be one entity. Synchronically, this cluster has a single referent instead of two: the cluster as a whole marks the subject of intransitive verbs.[15] The paradigm is given in (20), where the 3rd person singular dative clitic -nya is separated by a dot from the genitive for expository reasons:

(20) *Paradigm for subject in continuative aspect*

1s	-nggu.nya
2s	-mu.nya
3s	-na.nya
1p(inc)	-nda.nya
1p(exc)	-ma.nya
2p	-mi.nya
3p	-da.nya

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[13]   A grammatical sentence with this reading would have the pronoun *nyungga* either precede or follow the nuclear clause, the first option being illustrated in (i):
    (i)   **Nyungga**   mài   -nggu -nya   la   Humba
        I   come -1SG -3SD   LOC   Sumba
        I am coming to Sumba

[14]   A grammatical sentence with this reading would have the emphatic clitic *-ma* precede the cluster, as shown in (i):
    (i)   Mài   **-ma**   -nggu -nya   la   Humba
        come   -EMP   -1SG -3SD   LOC   Sumba
        I am coming to Sumba

[15]   The translations and comments given by informants also show no hint that the sentences should be interpreted as embedded structures.

In the paradigm in (20) the dative clitic -*nya* has lost semantic content, its referential function is merged with the genitive clitic, so that the function of the cluster as a whole is simplified.

We have now seen three ways in which an Agent subject can be marked. Firstly, with a nominative proclitic, the unmarked construction used for simple declaratives. Second, with a genitive enclitic, depending on (a) discourse properties of the clause or (b) typical mood, modality or aspectual properties of the clause, or a combination of these. The third way to mark an Agent subject we saw was through the combination of a genitive and an synchronically empty third person singular dative clitic. Although these markings were illustrated for the subjects of intransitive verbs, they can also be used for subjects of transitive verbs.

This is not the case for the fourth type of subject marking, which I will discuss now. In addition to the markings discussed above, an intransitive (but not a transitive) Agent subject may also be *doubly* marked with both a nominative and a dative clitic. This is illustrated in (21), where the subject *I Miri Yehu* is not only marked by the nominative clitic *na-*, but also by the accusative clitic -*ya*.[16]

(21) *Double subject marking with nominative and accusative clitic*

[I	Miri Yehu]$_j$	**na-**$_j$	mài	**-ya**$_j$	la	pinu	tana
ART	Lord Jesus	3SN-	come	-3SA	LOC	top	earth

The Lord Jesus came/did come down to earth

The construction with double subject marking is mostly used to express certain specific moods, like obligation, supposition, expectation or certainty with respect to the state or activities of the subject. In (21) it expresses certainty. In (22a) below it suggests an obligation, whereas sentence (22b), with only a nominative clitic to mark the subject, is a simple declarative statement.

(22) a.

Da-	laku	**-ha**	pa-	rama	haromu
3PN-	go	-3PA	CTR-	work	tomorrow

They must/have to go to work tomorrow

b.

Da-	laku	pa-	rama	haromu
3PN-	go	CTR-	work	tomorrow

They will go to work tomorrow

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[16] Prepositional phrases (PPs) or NPs within PPs cannot be crossreferenced on the verb. That is, -*ya* in (21) neither refers to *la pinu tana* 'to earth', nor to *tana* 'earth', but to *I Miri Yehu* 'the Lord Jesus'. This becomes evident in a sentence where the subject is plural, as in (23) and (25a) below, which both have a plural subject marked by two plural clitics *and* a PP, containing a singular noun. The PP is not marked.

In (23) the double subject marking expresses the expectation that something will *surely* happen or be done:

(23) **Ta-** hei -du **-ta**   la pinu palindi jàka na-mbeni na karimbua
1pN- ascend -EMP -1pA LOC top hill   CNJ 3sN-fierce ART buffalo
(Surely) we will run up the hill if the buffalo gets mad. (lit. we will climb on the hill if the buffalo becomes fierce)

However, the data in (24) and (25) show that we cannot make the generalization that the construction is used for specific moods only. The sentences (24a) and (25a) below do not express a particular mood — they are simply an alternative to (24b) and (25b). Of the two clitics used in the (a) sentences, the accusative, not the nominative clitic, can be omitted without a change in meaning, as shown in (24c) and (25c).

(24) a. **Da-**_j   puru   **-ha**   [da   papalewa]_j
3pN-   descend   -3pA   ART   angel
Angels came down (from heaven) (lit.: they descended them the angels)

  b. **Da-**_j   puru   [da   papalewa]_j
3pN-   descend   ART   angel
Angels came down (from heaven) (lit. they descended the angels)

  c. * Puru   **-ha**   da   papalewa
descend   -3pA ART   angel

(25) a. **Da-** tama   **-ha** la   kurung ba   ku- yaulu   -ha
3pN enter   -3pA LOC room   CNJ   1sN- chase   -3pA
They entered the room when I chased them

  b. **Da-**   tama   la   kurung ba   ku- yaulu   -ha
3pN   enter   LOC   room   CNJ   1sN- chase   -3pA
They entered the room when I chased them

  c. * Tama   **-ha** la   kurung ba   ku- yaulu   -ha
enter   -3pA LOC   room   CNJ   1sN- chase   -3pA

Thus, though a doubly marked subject is mostly used to express certain moods, this is not necessarily so. It has, however, clearly become a marked

construction in that it is mainly used in specific registers (poetic, religious).[17]

There is some reason to believe that the double marking of the subject was used more widely at the beginning of this century. Wielenga (1909) provides some evidence for this. Most of the examples he gives of this construction as it was used at that time (unfortunately, just nine) are considered ungrammatical by present-day speakers. Nowadays, an accusative clitic is no longer used in (26)—(28). Wielenga, however, reports these sentences to be correct (Wielenga 1909:47, 51-53).

(26) * **Na-**   manandang   **-ya**   na   uma-nggu
　　　　3SN-   be beautiful -3SA ART   house-1SG
　　　　My house is beautiful (lit.: it's beautiful my house)

(27) * **Da-**   bokul   **-ha**   da   kalú
　　　　3PN-   be big   -3PA   ART   banana
　　　　The bananas are big (lit.: they're big the bananas)

(28) * **Na-**   rengga   **-ya**   ba   na-   laku
　　　　3SN   hurry   -3SA CNJ   3SN-   go
　　　　He walks quickly (lit.: he hurries when he goes)

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[17]   Can the accusative clitic in this construction be analysed as a 'fake' reflexive pronoun? Perhaps, though it is unclear how such a 'fake' reflexive would be related to true Kambera reflexives. The noun used in reflexive constructions is *wiki* 'self' (which could also be translated as 'own', as in *uma wiki -nggu* 'my own house'). *Wiki* has the structural properties of a noun, not a pronoun. It can be the head of an indefinite object NP of the transitive verbs *hamemu* 'boast (about) X', *wàbahung* 'dump X' as shown in (i) and (ii). It can also form a definite object NP that is marked on a verb, as in (iii). However, an intransitive verb cannot occur in the same construction, as shown in (iv). This rules out the possibility that the accusative clitic in a sentence with double subject marking *directly* marks a definite reflexive NP, like the accusative in (iii) does.

(i)   Ba   da-   hamemu   **wiki**-da
　　　CNJ   3PN-   boast   self-3PG
　　　While they are boasting (lit. if they boast (about) themselves)

(ii)   Ba   na-   wàbahung   **wiki**-na
　　　CNJ   3SN-   dump   self-3SG
　　　And he collapsed (lit. and he dumped himself)

(iii) Ka   ta-   kinju   -ha$_j$ [da   **wiki**   -nda]$_j$
　　　CNJ   1PN-   examine -3SA   ART   self   -1PG
　　　So we (may) examine ourselves (lit. so that we examine them$_j$ ourselves$_j$)

(iv) * Ta-   hei   -ta$_j$ [da   wiki   -nda]$_j$ la   pinu   palindi
　　　1PN-   ascend   -1PA ART   self   -1PG   LOC   top   mountain
　　　Intended reading: we will climb on the hill/get ourselves on the hill

However, (29) and (30), also from Wielenga (ibid) are nowadays still acceptable, although a construction without the accusative clitic is preferred.

(29)　Hi　**da-**　beli　**-ha**　la　uma
　　　CNJ　3pN-　return　-3pA　LOC　house
　　　And they went back home (lit. and they returned to house)

(30)　Hi　**na-**　laku **-ya**　na　maramba
　　　CNJ　3sN- go　-3sA　ART　king
　　　And the king went (lit.: and he went the king)

The restricted use of these constructions nowadays, as compared to their much wider use at the beginning of this century may suggest that the phenomenon of double subject marking is a relict of an earlier construction that must have been productive at some stage.[18] However, although its present-day use is restricted, it is not considered archaic, and I have often heard it being used spontaneously expressing moods like those discussed with respect to (21)-(23).

Summing up, we have now seen four ways to mark an intransitive Agent subject in the sentence, as shown in (31):

(31) *Four ways to mark an AGENT subject of an intransitive verb*

1.　Nominative, e.g. *ku-* 'I' in (13a)
　　marks subject of unmarked, declarative sentences
2.　Genitive, e.g. *-nggu* 'me, my' in (14a)
　　marks subject of clauses with dependent discourse function and
　　specific mood, modality and aspect properties
3.　Genitive+empty dative, e.g. *-nggu.nya* 'I (cont. aspect)' in (15a)
　　marks subject of clauses with continuative aspect
4.　Nominative+accusative, e.g. *na——ya* 'he' in (21)
　　marks subject of clauses with specific moods (obligation,
　　supposition, expectation, certainty)

The empirical evidence presented in this section shows that the same thematic role, the Agent, has several possible morphosyntactic markings. This means that there is no one-to-one relation between lexical arguments and their morphosyntactic expression. We have also seen that the marking of subjects is

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[18]　One could speculate that it perhaps reflects a language stage evolving from an absolutive-ergative pattern towards a more nominative-accusative pattern, where the subject of an intransitive verb is marked both like the subject of an transitive verb (nominative) and like the object of a transitive verb (absolutive). The fact that all subjects of non-verbal predicates are marked like transitive objects, as in (16) and (18) above and (39)—(42) below, would than be a remnant of an earlier absolutive-ergative pattern.

generally determined by properties like aspect, mood or modality, register or discourse function, which implies that it is impossible to predict the *morphosyntactic* properties of an Agent argument in Kambera from its thematic specification in the lexicon or from the lexical properties of individual verbs only.

4. Thematic content of argument depends on morphosyntactic marking

The mismatch between lexical and syntactic arguments also occurs in the opposite direction: the thematic *interpretation* of a single argument is variable according to the construction it appears in, as I will discuss now.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that one group of intransitive verbs is the lexical class of 'unergatives', with an external argument or Agent in their lexical entry, while another group intransitive verbs is the class of 'unaccusatives' with a lexical subcategorization for an internal argument or Patient (cf. Levin & Rappaport 1992). By this assumption we predict that intransitive verbs with *variable* behaviour (i.e. having an argument that is sometimes marked as a transitive subject, e.g. nominative) and other times as a transitive object, e.g. accusative) do not exist. Such intransitive verbs are not expected to occur regularly and in large numbers, because their argument must be either internal (Patient) or external (Agent) — it cannot be both. Yet, this phenomenon is attested in a number of languages, including the Caucasian language Batsbi, the Austronesian language Acehnese, spoken Tibetan and the Hokan language of California, Eastern Pomo (cf. Dixon 1994 for references). In these languages, the arguments of *transitive* verbs are marked basically the same whenever they are used, while *intransitive* subjects are variably marked as a transitive subject or a transitive object, depending on the semantics of each particular instance of their use. This phenomenon is referred to as 'split intransitivity' (Merlan 1985, Van Valin 1990) or 'fluid-S(ubject) marking' (Dixon 1994).

Kambera is such a fluid-S language too: the subject of an intransitive verb can be marked as a transitive object subject, or as a transitive object: with accusative case. When it appears in accusative case, the subject is presented as relatively non-active and non-volitional. That is, the accusative marking of the subject contrasts with all the other subject markings (cf. (31) above) in that it explicitly marks the subject as less volitionally involved in the action or state denoted by the verb.

This is illustrated in (32). In (32a) the verb appears in the continuative aspect construction, in (32a) the subject is marked with an accusative clitic. The semantic contrast between the two sentences is shown in the translations: compared to (32a), the subject in (32b) is presented as having less control on his crying, i.e. as being in a state of crying that he can do little about, whereas in (32a) he can.

(32) a. Hí   -ma -a   -na-nya$_j$ -ka [i   Umbu Mada]$_{NPj}$ una
cry -EMP -MOD   -3SG-3SD -PRF ART Sir   Mada   EMP.3s
Mada was crying (though he could have chosen not to)

b. Hí   -ma   -a   -ya$_j$ -ka   [i   Umbu Mada]$_{NPj}$ una
cry -EMP -MOD -3SA   -PRF ART Sir Mada   EMP.3s
Mada just cried and cried (is in state of crying, could do nothing else)

A similar contrast between control/volition versus non-control/volition is also visible in (33a,b). Sentence (33a) marks the subject accusatively and thereby describes a state in which the subject is not able to eat, i.e. is non-volitionally not eating. Sentence (33b), on the other hand, marks the subject nominative and describes a temporary situation where the subject does not want to eat, i.e. is volitionally not eating.

(33) a. Ngangu,   nda   ngangu -ha   -pa   [da   ina   ama-na]$_{NPj}$
eat   NEG   eat   -3pA   -IMPF   ART mother father-3sG
(As for) eating, his parents don't eat anymore (e.g. because of serious illness)

b. Nda **da-**   ngangu -a
NEG 3pN-   eat   -MOD
They don't (want to) eat (e.g. because they are not hungry)

That is, intransitive subjects are marked like transitive objects when they are presented as explicitly lacking volition or control with respect to the activity or state that the verb denotes. Otherwise one of the subject markings summarised in (31) is used.

In principle, then, the single argument of an intransitive verb has maximally five different morphological markings. In (34) illustrations are given of the non-volitional/stative verb *meti* 'die/be dead' in those five constructions: (a) nominative, (b) genitive, (c) the continuative aspect construction, (d) a nominative plus an accusative clitic and (e) an accusative clitic.

(34) a. Jàka   nda   nyumu,   **da-**   meti   -ka   làti
CNJ   NEG   you   3sN-   die   -PRF   in fact
Without you, they would die/they would have died

b. Mbàda   meti -**na**   -ka?
already   die -3sG -PRF
Is he dead already/has he died already?

e.
Ba	na- habola	tuna	-ka	nú,
CNJ	3sN-give birth	thus	-PRF	DEI

meti	-ma -a	-na-nya	nyuna	yena
die	-EMP -MOD	-3sG-3sD	she	DEM.3s

When she thus gave birth, she died

d.
Jàka	nda	nyumu,	da-	meti	-ha	-ka	làti
if	NEG	you	3pN-	die	-3pA	-PRF	in fact

Without you, they would die/have died for sure

e.
Jàka	nda	nyumu,	meti-ya$_{k/*j}$	-ka	làti	* [i	Windi]$_j$
CNJ	NEG	you	die -3sA	-PRF	in fact		ART Windi

Without you, we would die/have died (lit. one$_k$ would have died vs.
Windi$_j$ would have died)

Observe that the accusative marking of the subject in (34e) presents the
subject as less personal: the clitic *-ya* cannot refer to the person *Windi*, but is
an impersonal pronoun instead ('one'). The impersonal/personal contrast is
obviously related to the contrast non-volitional situation/volitional activity in
the sense that an impersonal argument is part of a situation and less in control
than the argument that takes part in an activity.

Sentence (35a) is another instance of an accusative subject *-ya* 'it/him/her'
with an impersonal referent. That the accusative indeed has an impersonal
referent is shown by the illformedness of (35b), where the subject is
personal *-ka* 'I, me'. (Compare the impersonal accusative subject of *mài* in
(35a) to (13a) and (14b) where the nominative and genitive subject of *mài* have
personal referents.)

(35) a.
Mài	-ya	pa-	mandura	-bia	-pa	yohu!
come	-3sA	CTR-	wait endlessly	-MOD	-IMPF	here

Coming just to wait endlessly here! (lit.: one comes (to) wait endlessly
here)

b. *
Mai	-ka	pa-	mandura	-bia	-pa	yohu
come	-1sA	CTR-	wait endlessly	-MOD	-IMPF	here

*I come (in time) to wait endlessly

In most languages, an impersonal pronoun can be used to express a certain
distance or politeness. In Kambera, the third person accusative subject clitic -
ya is used to do just that. In (36) below the same question is asked informally
in (36a) and politely in (36b):

(36) a. Nggàra   mài   -mu?
      what   come   -2sG
      Why (do) you come; i.e. what do you want from me ? (familiar)

    b. Nggàra   mài   -ya   -i   nú?
      what   come   -3sA -again DEI
      What (does) one come (for); i.e. why do you come, is there something
      that you want from me? (polite)

In (36b) the subject -*ya* is presented as impersonal, thereby making the question less confronting by, perhaps, suggesting that the subject is not actively involved, but an 'undergoer' of the situation, i.e. not to be blamed for volitionally coming to get something. In (36b), on the other hand, the clitic has a personal referent and this question is more direct and familiar. The contrast between (36a,b) illustrates a clearly *pragmatic* use of the accusative marking of an intransitive subject, which is another indication that this marking of the subject is not lexically determined.

    The generalization we can make is that certain aspects of the meaning of the verbs change when they occur with an accusative subject: activities and events are presented more like situations or states and personal subjects may be presented as being a non-active part of these states. More generally, we could say that constructions with an accusative subject determine the aspectual meaning of a clause to be stative or 'descriptive'. Descriptive aspect 'restricts the meaning of a verb root to a continuous action or state' (Chafe 1967:147). In some respects, this notion is similar to the perfective aspect, which 'denotes a situation viewed in its entirety, without regard to its internal temporal constituency' (Comrie 1976:13). The accusative subject of the verb is part of the *situation* without explicitly controlling it. In descriptive aspect, the relation between the subject and the verb is *non-active, non-volitional, non-controlled*. In other words, the contrast in subject marking in Kambera is used to distinguish semantic differences like the ones in (37):

(37)   *Descriptive aspect vs. other aspects*
       situation vs. action/event
       non-control vs. control
       non-volitional vs. volitional
       non-agency vs. agency

    This analysis of the semantic properties of constructions with accusative subjects is supported by the fact that the same properties play a role in intransitive imperatives and non-verbal predicates. Consider the imperative clauses in (38). In (38a) the person ordered to hide, the addressee, is marked with an accusative clitic. In contrast, in (38b) it is marked with nominative.

(38) a. Kapàndi-**kau**   yohu   la   lumbu kahembi!
      Hide -2sA   here   LOC cover   bush
      Hide here under the bushes!

    b. (Ka)   **u-**   kapàndi yohu la   lumbu   kahembi!
      CNJ   2sN-   hide   here LOC cover   bush
      (That) you hide here under the bushes!

These imperatives differ in politeness.[19] (38a) has an accusative addressee and is less polite than the one in (38b) with a nominative addressee. Using accusative case for the addressee makes it sound more like an order; while using a nominative makes it sound like a request. Using the nominative expresses extra respect for the addressee, probably because when you give a command it is more polite to speak to the addressee as if he were in control of the activity (nominative). Using the accusative for the addressee suggests lack of control/volition.

With respect to the non-verbal predicates in Kambera, we know that such predicates are almost by definition 'descriptive' predicates with a non-active argument. In light of the previous discussion it is therefore not surprising that in Kambera, the subjects of non-verbal predicates are obligatorily marked accusative. In (39)—(42) below illustrations are given of the various non-verbal predicates the language has. There is no overt copular verb. The predicate is an NP in (39), a question word in (40), a deictic element in (41), and a prepositional phrase in (42) respectively. The arguments of these non-verbal predicates are all expressed with an accusative clitic.

(39)   Tau   mini -**ya**
       person male -3sA
       It/he (is) a man

(40)   Ka   nggi   -**ya**   -ka   una?
       CNJ where -3sA   -PRF   EMP.3s
       Where (is) he/she/it?

---

¹⁹   The least polite imperative form of an intransitive verb is the one that has no addressee marked, e.g. *mài yohu!* 'come here!'. The conjunction *ka* in (38b) is optional and does not introduce a subjunctive clause.

(41)   Nú   -du   -ya[20]
         DEI -EMP -3SA
         Yes, indeed (Lit. so/thus (is) it)

(42)   Lai   nú   -ya
         LOC   DEI -3SA
         He/she/it (is) there

To conclude, transitive objects, the arguments of non-verbal predicates and intransitive subjects in ergative constructions (i.e. marked accusatively[21]) share the semantic property that they are all non-volitional and non-active.

What this shows is that the agentive/patientive interpretation of an intransitive subject depends on its morphosyntactic marking. The descriptive aspect that is expressed by putting an intransitive subject in an ergative construction is not a lexical feature of the verb, because if it were, the same verb would always occur in one and the same construction, contrary to fact. Neither does the argument have one fixed, lexically specified theta-role that stays constant during the derivation. Instead, descriptive aspect is a feature of the nuclear clause *as a whole*: it expresses a certain semantic relation between argument and predicate, namely that the argument is or should be considered a non-actor. Supporting evidence for the claim that the accusative marking of intransitive subjects is not determined by the lexical properties of the verb is that there is no single semantic or lexical property that determines which intransitive verbs have an accusative subject. In other words, almost all[22] intransitive verbs can in principle have an accusative subject. Examples are

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[20] The deictic element *nú* refers to the space/time that is remote from the speaker. Here it has a discourse function, referring to something that has been said previously. Its argument is marked accusatively.

[21] Kambera 'ergative constructions' do not have the properties of ergative constructions discussed in the literature on European languages, like: selecting a special auxiliary verb (which also occurs in passive constructions) or cliticising objects but not objects (Burzio 1986). *The reason for this is that Kambera (1) does not have auxiliary verbs (2) does not have a* passive construction and (3) cliticises both subjects and objects. See also the discussion in section 5 below.

[22] There are two groups of Kambera intransitive verbs that do *not* behave like the majority of intransitives: (1) a handfull of directional verbs that are derived from deictic elements may *only* have a dative subject (for example, *ni.ngu* 'be here' and *nàmu.ng* 'come this way' (cf. Klamer 1994: 133-134) and (2) unintentional, agentless intransitive achievement verbs, derived with prefix *ta*. (e.g. *bunggah* 'open X' —> *ta.bunggah* '(be) open (intr)') never have an accusatively marked subject, but do have the other subject markings (cf. Klamer 1994: 258-263).

given in (43)[23]

(43)

activity:		stative:	
pa.bànjar	*talk/chatter*	jangga	*be high*
ngangu	*eat*	hàmu	*be good*
laku	*go*	kudu	*be small*
directional:		tembang	*be stupid*
mài	*come*	ka.hingir	*be clean/clear (water)*
luhu	*leave*	ma.yila	*be poor*
event:		ha.ledak	*be clear (weather)*
tàka	*arrive*	ha.rui	*be in trouble*
hí	*cry*	ha.nduka	*have problems*
meti	*die/be dead*	ha.ngunja	*sit idly*
kalit	*grow dark*	ha.ngàtar	*be amazed*

Crosslinguistically, it appears that non-agentive, telic and directional verbs are more liable to occur in ergative constructions than other verbs. However, the verbs in (43) are agentive or non-agentive, telic or atelic, directional or non-directional. That such different types of verbs may be used in an ergative construction (with a subject marked as a transitive object) suggests that it is not the lexical nature of the verb that determines the morpho-syntactic marking of the argument.

Evidence for the other claim, that it is neither the thematic role of the argument that determines whether or not it occurs in an ergative construction, is the fact that non-volitional patientive arguments are not *obligatorily* marked with an accusative: they can also be marked with a nominative, genitive, continuative aspect construction or a double subject marking. This was shown for the event/stative verb *meti* 'die/be dead' in (34), additional illustrations are given with *njoru* 'fall over' and *toma* 'be enough'[24] in (44)—(47):

(44) *Non-volitional subjects marked with nominative:*

    a.   Nda **na-** toma   -a
           NEG 3sN-be enough -MOD
           It is/was not enough/it will not be enough

    b.   **Ku-** njoru,   nda **ku-** hí
           1sN- fall over   NEG 1sN- cry
           I fell (but) I did not cry

---

[23]   *Ka., ma.* and *ha.* are prefixes.

[24]   *Toma* can also be used transitively, meaning 'meet X'.

(45) *Non-volitional subjects marked with genitive:*
   a. Lundu   toma   **-na**
       untill   be enough   -3sG
       Untill it is/was enough

   b. Bidi   njoru   **-na** na   ài   ba   mareni hí-**nggu**
       newly   fall over -3sG ART wood CNJ near   cry-1sG
       The tree fell exactly when I was about to cry

(46) *Non-volitional subjects in continuative aspect construction:*
   a. Toma   **-na -nya**   -ka
       be enough -3sG -3sD   -PRF
       It is enough/sufficient (lit. it is being enough)

   b. Njoru   **-na -nya**   -ka!
       fall over -3sG -3sD   -PRF
       It is falling over!

(47) *Non-volitional subject doubly marked with nominative + accusative:*
   a. E!   **Na-**   toma   **-ya**   -ka nú!
       EXCL 3sN-   be enough -3sA   -PRF DEI
       Hey! That's enough!/That will surely be enough!

   b. Jàka nda   nyumu, **na-**   njoru **-ya**   -ka   làti
       if   NEG   you   3sN-   die   -3sA   -PRF   in fact
       If you wouldn't have been there it would have fallen over

A lexical account of this would amount to giving each intransitive verb multiple lexically entries. This is the move Levin and Rappaport (1992) make to account for the variable behaviour of some intransitive verbs as both unergative and unaccusative. For Kambera, this would imply that almost all intransitive verbs have five different lexical entries — which would obviously miss a generalization.

    To sum up this section, the thematic interpretation of a single verbal argument in Kambera varies according to the construction it appears. We have seen that its patientive interpretation when it is marked as an accusative clitic (i.e. occurs in descriptive aspect) does not depend on the semantic properties of the verb alone, nor does the argument have one fixed, lexically specified theta-role that stays constant during the derivation. Instead, descriptive aspect is a feature of the construction *as a whole*: it expresses a semantic relation between the predicate and its argument.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The discussion in the previous sections leads to the following conclusions. If an intransitive predicate has an argument that is agentive it may be marked in four different ways. A patientive, non-volitional or non-agentive argument can have the same four markings too, and in addition to these, it may also be marked with the accusative clitic, to make its non-volitional interpretation explicit. Thus, there is by no means a one-to-one correspondence between a lexical arguments and its expression in syntax, unlike what the theta-criterion tries to capture.

We have also seen that Kambera crossreference is 'syntactically arbitrary' (Anderson 1991) when *two* pronominal clitics mark a *single* argument: clusters of genitive plus dative (continuative aspect construction) and nominative plus accusative mark a single subject. Synchronically, therefore, not all pronominal clitics have a referential function. In the constructions mentioned, the dative and the accusative clitic seem to be completely superfluous morphemes with respect to the referential function that pronominals usually have. This shows that the second prediction of the theta-criterion is wrong, because in constructions like these multiple pronominals have a single theta-role.

On the basis of observations like these, we may conclude that the lexical entries of Kambera intransitive verbs have a single, thematically and structurally underspecified argument. The thematic interpretation of this unspecified argument (as e.g. Agentive or Patientive) depends on the construction it appears in and its aspectual, modal or modality properties. It does not depend on the lexical specification of the verb.

In this approach there is no longer a place for hierarchically ordered notions of thematic representations like the notions of external and internal argument. This conclusion has important consequences for our understanding of the relationship between lexical entries of verbs on the one hand, and the syntactic properties and semantic interpretation of the distinct constructions on the other hand. If the predictions made by the theta-criterion are too rigid, and if the hierarchical representation of arguments — which is probably the minimal requirement for the correct assignment of grammatical functions like subject or object — is not based on the properties of lexical entries, we must account for the organisation of arguments in a sentence in another way.

We have seen that the structure of Kambera intransitive clauses seems to depend on the properties of entire predicates in which intransitive verbs are embedded, rather than on the projection possibilities determined by a single lexical entry. Kambera intransitive verbs show an extremely variable behaviour in being able to occur in five different predicate constructions and meaning properties (aspect, mood and modality) of a predicate play a significant role in its representation, i.e. in the morphosyntac marking of the argument, i.e. the structure the verb appears in. This is represented in (48).

(48)

meaning verb

intransitive predicate   ———>   morphosyntactic

other material   structure

(aspect, mood, modality)

The question is then: does the morphosyntactic encoding of a predicate determine the interpretation, or vice versa? In other words, is the morphosyntactic representation of the predicate determined by the compositional meaning of the predicate, as in (49a), or is it the morphosyntactic encoding of the various predicates that forces a distinct interpretation, as in (49b):

(49)
  a. predicate meaning in conceptual structure —> morphosyntactic encoding
    (Van Valin 1990)
  b. morphosyntactic encoding —> interpretation (e.g. Logical Form, Borer
    1993)

In order to choose for the (b) option, where the semantic distinctions are syntactically represented, we should have empirical arguments that Kambera has *purely* syntactic processes that are sensible to e.g. the distinction between an internal/patientive and an external/agentive argument of a variable behaviour intransitive verb. (Recall that we concluded that this distinction is no longer part of the lexical entry). If there are such processes, the distinction must be encoded into syntax, for example, by giving each of the arguments a distinct syntactic projection. We could then suppose that the hierarchical representation of unordered arguments is achieved through the movement of such arguments to the specifiers of these particular projections. In line with proposals of Tenny (1987) and Borer (1993) we could assume that these projections have functional heads, in the case of Kambera perhaps aspectual, mood, and modality heads. The properties of these projections would then determine the various morphosyntactic markings of the intransitive argument, and this syntactic encoding would result in a distinct aspectual interpretation of the various structures (in LF?).

    Kambera word order is a syntactic property of the language that could in principle reveal sensibility to the distinction patientive/agentive argument (in contrast to the phenomena mentioned in fn. 21 above, which the language lacks). However, when we look at word order facts, we observe that the word order of definite NPs is free (SVO, OVS, VSO, OSV): there is no position reserved for either the agent/subject or the patient/object definite NP. Indefinite NPs always occur postverbal, whether they are agent/subject or patient/object.

    To conclude, there is no independent evidence to assume that the semantic

distinction between the various intransitive constructions must be encoded in syntactic structure, i.e. assuming the approach of (49b). Furthermore, there is also no reason to assume that intransitive verbs in Kambera are devided into distinct lexical classes like 'unergative' or 'unaccusative' or anything else. Nor are they lexically specified as projecting an internal or an external argument. Rather, they are all simply 'intransitive' verbs with one underspecified argument. Such a reduction of the information in the lexical entry of a verb is not a problem, because the idea that syntactic information must be represented in the lexicon is only relevant if lexical structure is seen as the base of a syntactic derivation. However, it has been argued by Jackendoff (1987, 1990, 1993) and others, that this is a too simplistic view on the relation between syntactic and semantic or conceptual structure anyway — lexical conceptual structure should be seen as a separate (not necessarily linguistic) module, linked to syntactic structure by particular (linguistic) correspondence rules. Postponing a technical analysis for the moment, we could say that the Kambera facts discussed in this paper provide evidence for (49a): that predicate meaning in conceptual structure determines morphosyntactic encoding. In accordance with the lexical conceptual structure of the verb plus the other material that is part of the predicate, a predicate is assigned specific aspectual, mood or modality properties, and its morphosyntactic properties follow that.

The Theta-criterion and the Projection Principle have been extremely influential in trying to model the relation between lexicon and syntax, but they make false predictions because they are based on a view of lexical semantics that denies the richness of lexical conceptual structure and over-emphasises the role of syntax in the interpretation of language.

Abbreviations

A   Accusative
ART   Article (*na* = singular, *da* = plural)
CNJ   Conjunction
D   Dative
DEI   Deictic element (space/time)
DEM   Demonstrative
EMP   Emphasis marker, EMP.3s: 3rd person sg. emphatic pronoun
EXC   Exclamation
EXIST   Existential marker (*jia*)
G   Genitive
IMPF   Imperfective marker (*-pa*)
LOC   Locative preposition
MOD   Mood marker
N   Nominative
NEG   Negation
PRF   Perfective (*-ka*)

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