Cebuano Passives Revisited

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Examining written narratives in Cebuano, Payne (1994, also cited in Croft 2001) claims that Cebuano Patient-Focus (PF) gi- verb constructions that have an O-A word order have been reinterpreted as Passive constructions, since the Os are found to be highly topical and the As are downplayed by omission. In this paper we reexamine the gi-constructions, based on an analysis of natural discourse data consisting of conversations (totaling 2 hours 26 minutes 53 seconds of data) and narratives (approximately 30 minutes), within the framework of quantitative discourse analysis. The results of our analyses show that, as in Tsou (Huang 2002) and Saisiyat (Huang et al 2004), the As in gi- PF O-A clauses are more topical than Os. In addition, Agent NPs are present in 59 percent (in conversation) and 91 percent (in narratives) of these clauses, showing that As are greatly integrated into the syntax (Shibatani 1985) of gi- verb clauses. Moreover, we are able to show that the clauses that Payne claims to be "passive" actually fall into one of the following categories:

a) "adversative" verbs that are intransitive and behave syntactically like AF verbs in being capable of taking only one argument NP (see examples 1a and 1b);

b) verbs having Agents that are unexpressed inasmuch as they are topical and/or accessible from the prior discourse (see example 2); and

c) fixed expressions (following Shibatani’s (1988) terminology; see example 3).

Furthermore, our data show that the gi- adversative verbs mentioned above and certain na- verbs that do not take an Agent NP appear to form a single category and that the regular na- verbs (see example 4) that can take an Agent NP (in genitive form) in fact function like passives
more than *gi*- verbs do. The semantics of the *na*- prefix (non-purposeful/accidental) would direct the audience’s attention to the effect of an action on the Patient (or Patient-like argument) in a non-AF *na*- construction as opposed to a *gi*- construction where an “effortful” action of the Agent is required (Nolasco 2005). In example 4, if the Agent were to exert any effort at all, it would have been necessary to deploy a *gi*- construction, which is undoubtedly not passive (even in cases where the Agent remains unexpressed [*A=highly topical*]).

These findings and arguments clearly show that the *gi*- constructions in Cebuano are, at least based on natural data, largely used as active transitives and cannot be passives as understood in the standard/usual sense (Shibatani 1985, 1988; Siewierska 1985). They have As that are highly-integrated, their “effortful” participation being required, and are either highly topical than the Patient arguments and/or accessible when they are unexpressed.

**DATA**

(1a) **Gi-duka** =ka =ba karon-g adlawa  
PF.PFV-doze.off 2SG.NOM Q now-LK day  
’Did you doze off today?’

(1b) **Gi-laay** =na =ko diri oy  
PF.PFV-be.bored PFV 1SG.NOM here VOC  
’Hey, I’m already tired of this place.’

(2) a conversation about an experience at customs  
suko =kaay =siya suko =gyud =kaay =siya ba  
angry very 3SG.NOM angry EMPH very 3SG.NOM PART  
**gi-hold** =man =mi-ng duha unya human- ay ewan ko  
PAST.PF-detain PART 1PL-LK two DM afterward INTERJ  
’He was so angry because (the customs people) detained the both of us, and then, I don’t know...’
(3) a conversation between female friends about their boyfriends

o syempre sad lala- mao lagi gi-'ingon lalaki
yes of course also EMPH past PF-say men

‘Right. That’s why (they are) so-called men.’

(4) a conversation about a rape case

na-dakp-an diritso lagi ang employer
NA-catch-LF directly EMPH ANG employer

‘The employer got caught immediately.’

REFERENCES


