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The Inner Aspect Approach to Amis¹ Structure: The First Attempt

To date, researchers have found that in Amis voice marker reflects which NP receives nominative case and that voice-marked verbs can be further classified into different verb classes. For instance, Wu (2005) indicates that case assignment will be Nominative-Dative if *ma*²-verb contains BECOME meaning, but if not, case assignment will change to Genitive-Nominative. Nevertheless, she doesn't explain why the logical structure can be connected with case assignment. Therefore, I turn to another approach, namely the Inner Aspect model (Travis, 2006), and show that this model can explain the correlation between Amis voice marker and case assignment.

Travis (2006) argues that within vP there is an additional functional projection (Figure 1 in Appendix) in which Aktionsart or aspectual verb class is realized and that the case variation is "derived by the changes in inner aspect" (p. 18). According to this approach, the [\pm process] and [\pm causative] features are accommodated in v, whereas the [\pm telic] or [\pm definite] feature is in Inner Aspect (Asp). V is the verb root, and it picks up all features on its way moving up to v. The different values of the features determine the lexical aspect and the transitivity of the verb. Furthermore, the case assignment is determined by these different values.

Given the facts that the voice marker of undergoer, *ma-*, is encoded with telic (Wu, 2005) and the [\pm complete] feature also differentiates the actor voice from undergoer voice (Tsukida, 1993), it is reasonable to assume that voice markers are encoded with lexical aspects. Additionally, the derivation of *mi-patay* 'cause to die' from *ma-patay* 'become dead' implies that there is a null v with a [\pm causative] feature (Travis, 2006). Take *mi-patay* and *ma-patay* for illustration, if Asp is [-telic] and v is [+causative], v will introduce an agent in its Spec and the verb *mi-patay* will assign the accusative case to the theme NP. Moreover, the agent NP will get a nominative case from T. Conversely, if Asp is [+telic] and v is [-causative], leading the spellout of verb to *ma-patay*, no agent NP will be introduced and the theme NP will remain in situ, receiving a nominative case from T. As shown above, the Inner Aspect model can give a theoretical explanation to the correspondence between the case assignment and the verb class.

¹ Amis is one of the indigenous languages in Taiwan. It belongs to Formosan, Austronesian.

² According to Wu (2000), *ma-* is one of the unergoer voice markers but it can be actor voice in some cases, and *mi-* is an actor voice marker.

References:

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Wu, J. (2005). *Ma*-verbs in Amis: A role and reference grammar analysis. Retrieved from <http://linguistics.buffalo.edu/research/rrg/Wu-RRG05.pdf> 1/24/07.
Tsukida, Naomi. (1993). The use of *-en* form in Fataan-Amis. *Asian and African Linguistics* 22:123-40.

Appendix 1.

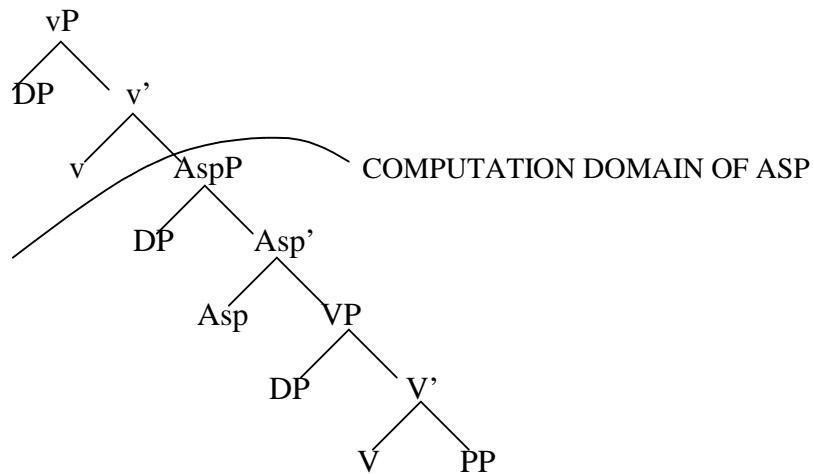


Figure 1. Inner Aspect (Travis, 2006)