Lexical Mapping in Yami: An Optimality Theoretic Approach

Deng Dunhong
Institute of Linguistics, National Chengchi University

This paper employs a revised version of the Optimality-Theoretic lexical mapping theory (OT-LMT) in Her (2004) to account for the role-function mapping in the focus construction of the Formosan languages. The focus construction selects any participant role (ag, th, loc, etc.) of the predicate verb to the subject position; in certain languages, even non-argument adjunct participants can be mapped to SUBJ. This construction thus presents problems, both in the derivation-based approach and the constraint-based Lexical-Functional Grammar framework.

This paper examines a Formosan Austronesian language (Yami) and found similar though not totally identical focus construction as the Philippine languages. In Yami there are four kinds of focus constructions: Agent Focus (AF), Patient Focus (PF), Location Focus (LF), and Instrumental or Beneficial Focus (IF or BF) (Chang 2000, p75), each promotes a particular participant to be subject. The examples are listed respectively: AF in (1), PF in (2), LF in (3), and IF in (4).

Sells (1998), in his analysis of Philippine languages, proposed that the focus construction be treated as a special kind of voice system different from other M-voice (Mapping Voice) systems. This paper followed Sells (1998) to say that the voice (focus) marker just arbitrarily picks up one of the participant to be the subject. However, in Yami the non-focus agents are mapped to oblique-genitive case while the patient is mapped to accusative case, thus something more should be specified to get the right mapping.

Therefore, it seems that constraint-based optimality theory can be best candidate to account for this phenomenon. Her (2004) has proposed an optimality-theoretic lexical mapping approach (OT-LMT). In OT-LMT, the principles of the LMT are all turned into OT-constraints, so that the mapping can be more flexible. This paper has inherited the framework of the OT-LMT, however, the constraints proposed in Her (2004) is not enough to account for the focus construction data of Yami, because the random selection (or may be discourse driven) of subjects by the voice marker should be make as a special constraint so that the subject mapping can be correct. Another agent linking constraint should also be added and therefore the constraint ranking is like the following:

SUBJ choice constraint >> patient linking constraint >>
agent linking constraint >> grammatical role hierarchy constraint

The SUBJ choice constraint selects SUBJ according to different voices; the patient linking constraint link the patient to OBJ, and the agent linking constraint prevents the agent to be link to direct objects (so that it can be link to the OBL). With those languages that don’t have voice alteration, the SUBJ choice constraint would not apply and the rest constraints can still get the right mapping. As to those languages that may have agent-theme inversion, thus have agent objects, the only thing that has to be changed is to lower the ranking of the agent-linking constraint.
Yami presents a unique and mysterious phenomenon in mapping: in (5), patient is mapped to the oblique case, not the accusative case. This is a very special lexical controlled data. However, it can only be accounted for with a new specific lexical mapping constraint be added.

We demonstrate that the OT-LMT approach, compared with rule-based analyses, better accounts for the parametric, typological variation among the languages examined.

**Data**

(NOM=nominative; ACC= accusative; GEN=genitive; LOC=locative)

1. ja  -  k- um-an  su  suli  si  jama.
   (clitic)  eat (AF)  ACC  taro  NOM  father
   Father is eating taro.

2. na  -  kan- en  u  suli  ni  jama.
   (clitic)  eat (PF)  NOM  taro  GEN  father
   The taro is eaten by father.

3. u  vahai  akakan- an  ku
   NOM  house  eat (LF)  I(GEN)
   I eat in the house.

4. ni-  pan- ba  na  no  tao  o  pazazoway na  so  kayo.
   past  IF  cut  clitic  GEN  people  NOM  knife  his  ACC  tree
   People use his knife to cut the tree.

5. jaken  u  niumbakbak  du  inu
   I  beat (AF)  LOC  dog
   I am the one who beat the dog.

* (Data (1), (2) and (5) is from the field work with Tung Ma-nyu in NCCU in March to April, 2004; (3) is taken from Chang (2000); and (4) is from Tung and Rau (2000).

**Reference**


