Semantic modification despite syntactic complementation in Kavalan

(Abstract)
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A linguistically entrenched notion is that elements modifying predicates and propositions usually occur as adverbs and at the peripheral position in a sentence. However, along with Starosta (1988), Li (2003), among others, we shall demonstrate in this talk that modifiers surprisingly occur as matrix verbs in Kavalan, taking the modified as their complements. The complementation conforms to Givon’s binding hierarchy on complements (Givon 1980, 2001) and can respect the AF restriction, a restriction widely observed in verbal complements across Formosan languages (Huang 1995, Yeh 1997, Tang 1999, Chang and Tsai 2001, Liu 2003). Modifiers that are conceptually proximate to the primary predication (e.g. manner modifiers) take reduced clauses as their complements and respect the AF restriction, while those which are conceptually distant from the primary predication (e.g. epistemic modifiers) select full clauses and evade the AF restriction. In between lie frequency modifiers, which are amphibious with respect to conceptual distance and can either take full or reduced clauses as their complements. They observe the AF restriction when taking reduced clauses but by-pass it when taking full clauses. Among other things, our study reveals that (i) adverbial modification in Kavalan is not syntactically represented in terms of the neo-Davidsonian style, that is, it does not involve syntactic conjunction (cf. Tsai and Y. Chang (to appear). (ii) The adverbial modification involves selection rather than adjunction; Adverbial modifiers in Kavalan semantically and syntactically select the modified, not the other way around (cf. Travis 1988, Cinque 1997, Alexiadou 1997); (iii) Adverbial modification is actually second-order predication as far as its conceptual structure is concerned (cf. Croft 1990, 2001). (iv) the syntax of adverbial modification is largely rooted in its semantics.