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 "effort-ful" 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 FS   that 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.'

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