

## The Instrumental Alternation in Kimaragang Dusun: a proto-role analysis

In this paper I discuss an alternation in Kimaragang Dusun between two Instrumental Voice (IV) forms, *i-ROOT* vs. *poN-ROOT*, which I refer to as the INSTRUMENTAL ALTERNATION. I suggest that this alternation involves a change in the identity of the “affected argument”, but no change in EVENT STRUCTURE in the sense of Rappaport Hovav and Levin (1998): the systematic part of verb meaning, as opposed to the idiosyncratic part which is specific to a particular root.

Dowty’s (1991) notion of Proto-Patient is used here to formalize the notion of “affectedness.” Dowty’s analysis of the English *spray/load* alternation assumes that two arguments, the theme and the goal, are at least partially affected by the action and thus roughly equal in their Proto-Patient properties. The one which is interpreted as being totally affected by the action “wins”, and is therefore expressed as transitive object. Ackerman & Moore (1999) propose a similar analysis for alternations involving the expression of the causee in morphological causatives. The *with/against* alternation (*I hit the fence with the stick.* vs. *I hit the stick against the fence.*) is more difficult to analyze, because the Proto-Patient properties of the instrument and patient seem to remain constant. I propose that, when a verb’s lexical entailments leave two arguments roughly equal in their Proto-Patient properties, the speaker may choose which one to express as Proto-Patient (and thus direct object) on the basis of pragmatic factors such as “topic of current interest”. Fillmore (1977) used the term PERSPECTIVE for this kind of choice on the part of the speaker.

The instrumental alternation in Kimaragang is productive and semantically transparent for two primary classes of verbs. With *cut* verbs, the normal/default IV form is *poN-ROOT*, illustrated in (1a). When the *i-ROOT* form is used as in (1b), it indicates that the speaker is primarily interested in the potential affectedness of the instrument rather than the patient. I refer to this usage as the AFFECTED INSTRUMENT construction. With source-theme-goal type verbs, the normal/default IV form is *i-ROOT*, (2a). (The resulting pattern, encoding displaced theme as subject, has sometimes been referred to as CONVEYANCE VOICE.) When the *poN-ROOT* form is used (2b), it indicates that the speaker is primarily interested in the effect on the goal rather than the theme.

The affected instrument construction in (1b) is highly productive with *cut* verbs but systematically impossible with *break* verbs and only sporadically possible (and semantically irregular) with *hit* verbs, even though the *poN-ROOT* IV form (1a) is completely productive for all three classes. I suggest that this distribution arises because an instrument is part of the systematic meaning (i.e., the event structure) of the *cut* verbs, but not of the other two classes. For the source-theme-goal verbs, it seems natural to assume that both the theme and the goal are event structure participants. The generalization that emerges is that the instrumental alternation is productive only for verb classes with two non-agentive event structure participants. This is exactly what we would expect under the following assumptions: (a) the instrumental alternation involves a change in the identity of the affected argument, but no change in the event structure; and (b) affected arguments in general must be event structure participants.

---

---

### Examples

- (1) a. Dangol tagayo ot awasi dot *pangansap*(Ø-poN-ansap) do poring.  
bushknife big NOM good REL IV-TR-scrape GEN bamboo  
'A big bushknife is what is good to scrape bamboo with.'
- b. Nokuro.tu' *n-i-ansap* nu do poring ino dangol ku?  
why PST-IV-scrape 2sg.GEN ACC bamboo that(NOM) bush.knife my  
'Why did you use my bush knife to scrape bamboo?'
- (2) a. *N-i-tunguw* ku it weeg di sada sid  
PST-IV-pour 1sg.GEN NOM water GEN fish DAT  
*poonumadan*(<DUP>poN-sumad-an) do tasu.  
HABIT-TR-feed-DV GEN dog  
'I poured the water from (cleaning) the fish into the dog's feeding dish.'
- b. I weeg sid gilán dīno ot *ponunguw* dino tinorimo.  
NOM water DAT container that.one NOM IV:TR:pour that cooked.rice  
'The water in that container there is what you should pour on/into the rice you are cooking.'