Voice system in Sumbawa

Asako Shiohara

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

`asako@aa.tufs.ac.jp`

1 Introduction

Sumbawa is a language spoken in the Western part of Sumbawa Island in Indonesia. It is considered to be a member of the Sundic group of the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages in the Austronesian family (see Tryon 1995: 27), but as Wouk (2002) suggests, unlike other members within the group, it does not exhibit a typical Indonesian-type voice system; Sumbawa lacks the contrast of actor/undergoer voice opposition as well as applicative construction. This paper deals with a grammatical device in Sumbawa that seems to compensate for the lack of voice distinction.

2 Voice system in Sumbawa

2.1 Basic construction and nasal construction

As is shown in Arka and Ross (2005: 7), the "Indonesia-type" system has two voices: active voice and undergoer voice. The outline of the Indonesian-type system is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Indonesian-type system

Actor voice	Undergoer voice
nasal prefix- +verb stem	person marker +verb stem, or passive marker +verb stem

Sumbawa has a reflex of each voice construction, but the function of each construction differs from that of the Indonesian type. In Sumbawa, the reflex of undergoer voice, that is, the construction with morphologically unmarked verb (hereafter referred as basic construction), is only a transitive construction, as a device of expressing transitive proposition with full information on A and P, while the reflex of actor voice, that is, the construction with nasal prefix (N-) (hereafter nasal construction), is an intransitive construction with only one argument, which normally corresponds to A.

Table 2: Indonesian-type and Sumbawa Voice Systems

	Basic construction	Nasal construction
Verb form	person marker/passive marker +verb stem	nasal prefix- +verb stem
Indonesian-type	undergoer voice	actor voice
Sumbawa	Intransitive construction with only one argument	(one and only) transitive construction

(1) is an example of the basic construction. An actor argument is marked with the preposition léng, while an undergoer argument occurs without any case marking.

(1) *ka=ku=inóm* *kawa* *nan* *léng* *aku.*
  PAST=1SG=drink coffee that by 1SG
   'I drank the coffee.'

(2) is an examples of the nasal construction. Here, the N- prefixed verb nginóm derived from the transitive verb inóm 'drink,' which appears in (1).

(2) *ka=ku=nginóm* *aku.*
  PAST=1SG =drink 1SG
   'I drink (something).'

The verb *nginóm* may not occur with undergoer NP. A sentence like (3) is grammatically incorrect.

(3) **ku=nginóm* *kawa*   (*nan*)
  1SG =drink coffee (that)
   (expected meaning) 'I will drink (the) coffee.'

The intransitive feature of the nasal construction can be seen in the form of the argument. Sumbawa exhibits an ergative pattern in case marking; both undergoer NP in the transitive construction and the single argument in the intransitive construction occur without any case marking, as in (4), and so the argument is in the nasal construction, as in (2), above.

(4) *ka=ku=molé* *aku.*
  PAST=1SG=sleep 1SG
  'I went home.'

In the following part of this section, we examine the details of the two constructions, with special attention to the behavior of the person marker within the predicate and the function of the nasal construction.

2.2 Person marker within the predicate

The behavior of the person marker differs in Sumbawa from that in the Indonesian-type voice system. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, an Indonesian-type person marker is used as an indicator of undergoer voice. In contrast, in Sumbawa, the occurrence of the person marker is not involved in voice opposition, principally. Its behavior varies depending on the person. The first- and the second-person marker occur either in the transitive construction, as in (3), or the intransitive construction, as in the nasal construction (4) above, or in (5) with a morphologically unmarked intransitive verb.

(5) *ka=ku=molé   aku.*
     PAST=1SG=sleep   1SG
     'I went home.'

The third person marker ya= occurs only in the transitive construction.

(6)   *ya=inóm   kawa=nan   léng   nya=Amén.*
         3=drink   coffee=that   by   TITLE=Amin
         Amin drinks the coffee.'

It does not occur before an intransitive verb.

(7) **ka=ya=molé   Nya=Amén.*
     PAST=3=go home   TITLE=Amin
         (expected meaning) 'Amin went to home.'

The occurrence of the first- and the second-person marker within the predicate is optional, when the actor NP is fronted for topicalization. (We will examine the fronting of the NP in Section 3.)

(8)   *Aku   ka=(ku)=inóm   kawa   nan.*
      1SG   PAST=1SG=drink   coffee   that
         'I drank the coffee.'

Also, the third person marker may not occur in this condition.

(9)　　　*nya=Amén　　　ya=inóm　kawa　　nan

　　　　　title=Amin　　　　3=drink　coffee　　that

　　　　　(expected meaning) 'Amin drinks the coffee.'

On this point, the third-person marker ya= in Sumbawa exhibits a similar function to those in Indonesian-type languages, in that they occur when the actor is the topic of the discourse.

2.3. Function of the nasal construction

The syntactic difference among Sumbawa and Indonesian-type languages observed in the nasal construction reflects the regularity of the derivational process of the nasal prefix. In Indonesian-type languages, the nasal prefix can regularly be attached with a transitive verb, with very few exceptions, while in Sumbawa, the prefix N- can be attached with only specific transitive verbs; among the 123 transitive stems in my data, only 77 (62.6%) can be attached with the nasal prefix[1].

Actor voice in the Indonesian type functions similarly to what is called anti-passive construction in other languages. The undergoer NP, which has the status of subject in the alternative transitive construction, that is, undergoer voice, is demoted to the non-subject status in actor voice. We could say that the nasal construction of Sumbawa exhibits a similar property in a more extended way: the undergoer NP totally disappears from the construction; at the same time, the actor NP is promoted to the single argument of the intransitive clause.

In discourse, the nasal construction also plays a similar function to actor voice in the Indonesian type and to anti-passive construction in other languages.

First, the nasal construction cannot be used when the undergoer is definite.

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[1] There is a competitive prefix to the nasal prefix, that is, that is, *bar-* (*r* is dropped before a consonant), which is cognate to the Indonesian ber-. The nasal prefix and the prefix *bar-* have similar function to a transitive base; some transitive verbs are intransitivized by *bar-* (56 verbs among 123 transitive verbs in my data), and others by nasal prefix (76 verbs), while some are by both (9 verbs).
For example, the transitive verb antat 'take, carry' is intransitivized only by *bar-*, thus *bar-antat* 'take someone, carry something', and the nasal prefixed form *ngantat* is not accepted, while the verb *tanam* 'plant' is intransitivized only by the nasal prefix, thus, nanam 'plant', and the *bar-* prefixed form *ba-tanam* is not accepted, and the verb *ajak* 'invite' allows both, thus both *ngajak* 'invite' and *barajak* 'invite' are accepted. The condition for the choice between the two prefixes to a particular base is uncertain in the present stage of my research. Sneddon (1996; 66-67) points out a similar situation in Indonesian between the corresponding prefixes, that is, *meN-* and *ber-*, but for adjective bases, not transitive bases.
　In a few cases, a nasal prefix may be attached to a non-verb base, such as bound morphemes and nouns. There are five examples in my data.
(i) with bound morphemes
　　nguléng' 'lie down' (the base -guléng is attested in the compound noun galang-guléng 'pillow')
　　nangés 'cry' (the base -tangés is attested in the comound noun turén-tangés 'the middle of the eyebrows')
(ii) with nouns
　　ngentén 'kneel' < *entén* 'knee'
　　ngentét 'break wind' < *entét* 'gas'
　　nyurat 'write a letter' < *surat* 'letter'

(10) (A response of a mother to her children who asked her a meal.)

(a) | *ao'*, | *anak* | *é*, | *ta* | *muntu* | *ku=nepé*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| yes | child | INTERJ | this | PROG | 1SG=winnow |

(b) | *ka* | *mo* | *suda* | *ku=tuja'* | *padé=ta*. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PAST | MM | finish | 1SG=polish rice | plant=this |

(c) | *ta* | *muntu* | *ku=tepé* (*nepé). |
|---|---|---|
| this | PROG | 1SG=winnow |

    (a) All right, I am now separating rice from husks.

    (b) I have pounded rice.

    (c) Now I am separating rice from husks.

In all the clauses of (a)-(c), the patient of the action is *padé* (rice). In both (a) and (c), the action of winnowing (separating rice from husk) is expressed. The action is expressed in (a) by the nasal construction with the nasal prefixed verb *nepé*, while it is expressed in (c) by the basic construction with the unmarked transitive verb *tepé*. According the speakers, the nasal prefixed verb *nepé* may not be used in (c). The reason may be that the patient of the action has already been expressed in the previous clause, (b), and is clearly definite.

In addition, when the patient of the action is the topic of the utterance, the action is expressed by the basic construction, not by the nasal construction. For example, when we ask who caught a given fish before us, after fishing, we use the expression like example (11), the basic construction, not the expression in (12), the nasal construction.

(11) | *sai* | *adè* | *ka=tumpan'* | *jangan=ta*. |
|---|---|---|---|
| who | NOM | PAST=get | fish=this. |

'Who caught the fish?'

(12) | *sai* | *adè* | *ka=numpan'*? |
|---|---|---|
| who | NOM | PAST=get |

'(in fishing) Who already had a catch?'

Generally speaking, the nasal prefixed verb is used when we do not have to mention the patient, for example, when we only intend to specify the action or when the patient is clear from so-called 'encyclopedic knowledge' or a context. Sentence (12) may be used when we would like to know who already had a catch in fishing.

Some transitive verbs imply the patient of the action to some extent, as a part of its meaning. The nasal prefixed forms of such transitive verbs are most frequently used in actual utterances,

as in the examples below. The implied patient is shown in parenthesis for each verb.

> *meli* (<*beli*) 'buy (goods)'
> *misó'* (<*bisó'*) 'wash (things)'
> *mongka* (<*bongka*) 'cook (rice)'
> *ngiléng* (<*giléng*) 'grind (grains)'
> *nginóm* (<*inóm*) 'drink (water, beverages)'
> *ngejét* (<*jét*), 'saw (clothes)'
> *ngali* (<*kali*) 'dig (a hole)'
> *ngajak* (<*ajak*) 'invite (people)'

The second feature that the nasal construction shares with anti-passive constructions in other languages is an imperfect aspect (Dixon 1994: 149, Coorman 1994: 57-58). The nasal construction normally expresses an imperfective situation; when we ask the meaning of the nasal prefixed verb to the speaker, the most probable answer is that "they expresses the action that we are doing now." The typical examples they give us are present progressive, as in (10). However, it must be noted that the aspectual feature mentioned is just the implication, not the meaning of the verb itself, and therefore, can be canceled by the past tense marker *ka*, as in (12).

Most of the nasal verbs cannot be used in an imperative sentence. One possible explanation for that is that the aspectual feature of the nasal verbs (imperfective) and imperative do not tend to be semantically compatible with each other; in requiring a transitive activity, people normally expect the completion of the activity, affecting the referent of the P to the expected extent.

3. Devices uniquely developed in Sumbawa

3.1 Function of the voice distinction in Indonesian-type voice systems

Arka and Ross (2005: 7-11) outline how the opposition of actor/undergoer voice functions in Indonesian-type languages. In the main clause, it functions as a device for indicating (i) the pragmatic status of the undergoer and/or (ii) the topicality of the actor or undergoer; actor voice tends to be used when the undergoer is indefinite, and the speaker chooses the referent of higher topicality as the subject; that is, when the actor is the topic, actor voice tends to be used, while when the undergoer is the topic, undergoer voice tends to be used, although precise conditions vary among individual languages.

As shown in the previous section, Sumbawa lacks the voice opposition of the Indonesian type and has developed other devices independently. In the following part of this section, we examine two such devices, incorporation of the undergoer NP and fronting.

3.2 Incorporation of the undergoer NP

When the undergoer is indefinite, the undergoer NP is obligatorily incorporated into the

predicate, as in (13). Compare (13) to (14)(=(1)), the corresponding transitive construction.

(13) *ka=ku=inóm=kawa   aku.*
    PAST=1SG=drink=coffee 1SG
    'I drank coffee.'

(14) *ka=ku=inóm   kawa   nan   léng   aku.*
    PAST=1SG=drink   coffee   that   by   1SG
      'I drank the coffee.'

The incorporation is accompanied with both phonological and syntactic changes. In Sumbawa, generally speaking, a word stress normally occurs on the last syllable of each word, and in an ordinary transitive clause, the verb and the undergoer NP each has its own stress. In contrast, when incorporation occurs, a stress falls on the final syllable of the incorporated noun. In this construction, the constituent expresses the actor in morphologically unmarked form, that is, as S in an intransitive clause[2].

3.3 Fronting

In Sumbawa, a topic NP may be expressed by the fronted NP in Sumbawa, as noted in Section 2. (15) and (16) are examples of a transitive clause with fronted NP, which corresponds to (14)(=(1)); in (15), the undergoer NP is fronted, while in (16), the actor NP is fronted.

(15) ***kawa***   ***nan***   *ku=inóm*   *léng*   *aku.*
    coffee   that   1SG =drink   by   1SG
      'I drink the coffee.'

(16) ***aku***   (*ku=*)*inóm*   *kawa*   *nan.*
    1SG   1SG=drink   coffee   that
    'I drink the coffee.'

The actor NP, which occurs with the preposition *léng* in the basic transitive construction, as in (14), appears without any preposition when fronted. PP with the preposition *léng* may not occur in this position.

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2 This incorporation can be analyzed as an advanced stage of what Ross calls "bounding between verb and P," mentioned in section 2. A very similar phonological and syntactic phenomenon is observed in actor voice in Gayo (Eades (2005: 122-124)), one of the Indonesian-type languages in northern Sumatra. (Here, it occurs between the nasalized verb and the P). A similar type of bounding' concerning word order is also observed in Kambera (Klamer: 85), a non-Indonesian-type language, although in both languages, the status of A is not changed by the bounding.

(17) *léng   aku   ku=inóm   kawa   nan.
      by   1SG   1SG=wait   coffee   that

      (expected meaning) 'I drink the coffee.'

In addition to the undergoer NP and the actor NP, an NP expressing recipient may be fronted. (18) and (19) are examples of the verb *beang* 'give.' In this case, too, the topic NP occurs without case marking. In (18), the recipient NP *tódé=ta* 'this child,' which occurs in PP with *lakó* 'to' in post predicate position, occurs without a case marking when fronted in (19).

(18) ka=bèang   lamóng nan   lakó   tódé   ta   léng   ina'
      PAST=give   clothes that   to   child   this   by   mother

      'The mother gave this child the clothes.'

(19) tódé   ta   ka= bèang   lamóng   nan   léng   ina'
      child   this   PAST=give   clothes   that   by   mother

      'As for this child, the mother gave him the clothes.'

Now, let us consider the function of the fronted NP. As is expected, a fronted NP expresses a topic, but only if it expresses a "new" topic. A continuous or old topic is expressed by a post-predicate NP or left unexpressed. To demonstrate this fact, consider example (20), based on the first two pictures from the comic strip shown in Figure 1.
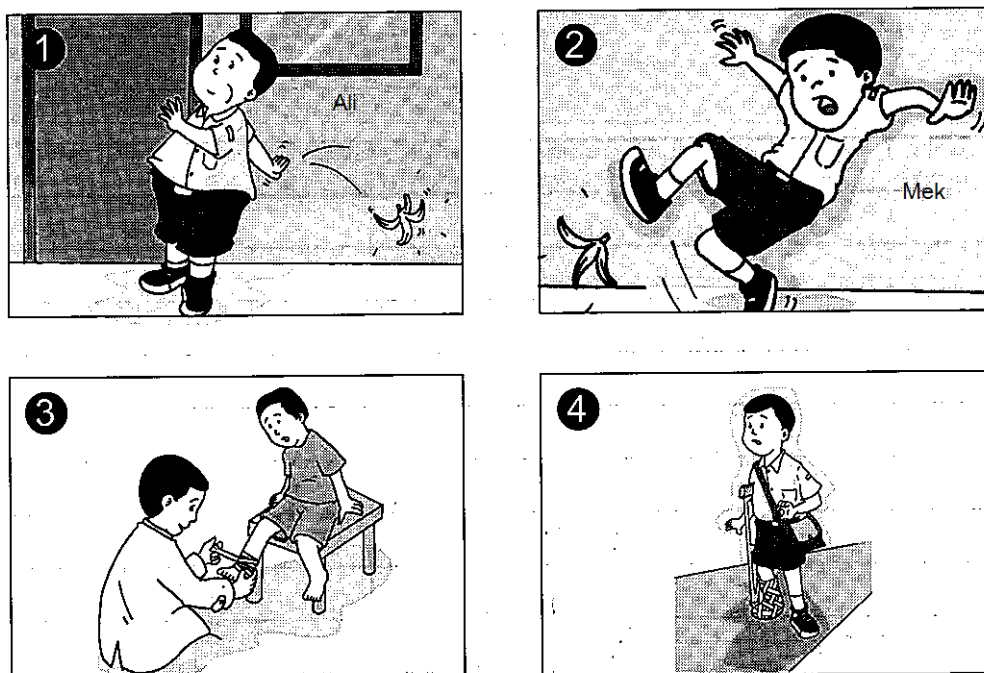

Figure1 Story of a Banana Skin

(20)

(a)

Pang	*sekola*	*nya=Ali*	*bolang*	*lukét*	*punti*
at	school	TITLE=Ali	throw.away	skin	banana

pang	*bao*	*lante*	*teras.*
at	above	floor	terrace

'In school, Ali threw away a banana skin onto the floor of the terrace.'

(b)

nopoka	*lè*	*ya=bolang*	*lukét*	*punti*	*léng*	*Ali,*
not yet	long	3=throw	skin	banana	by	Ali

balangan	*mo*	***nya=Mèk.***
walk	MM	TITLE=Mek

'Soon after Ali threw away banana skin, Mek came walking.'

(c)

nya= Mèk ta	*nongka*	*ya=gita*	*lukét*	*punti*	*nan.*
title=Mek this	neg	IRR=see	skin	banana	that

'Mek did not see the banana skin.'

(d)

terés	*kakena*	*rék*	***léng***	***nya***	***Mèk,***
then	affected	step	by	title	mek

'And (Mek) stepped on it'

(e)

kaléng	*teri*	*kasosar*	*nya,*	*dunóng*	*otak.*
Then	fall down	slip	3	before	head

'Then, he fell down with the head foremost.'

In (20), two people, Ali and Mèk, appear. Ali is the first topic and the Mèk is the second topic, and the NP referring to Ali (*nya=Ali*) is fronted in (a) and that referring to Mèk (*nya=Mek* (*=ta*)) is fronted in (c). Let us examine how *nya=Mek* appears in a series of clauses. It is introduced by a single NP in an intransitive clause in (b) and is appointed as a new topic in (c), expressed by a fronted NP. We could say that it remains a topic in (d), but there it is expressed by a post-predicate NP.

Lambrecht (1999: 184-188), after suggesting the difference between a new topic (reference-oriented topic, in his terminology) and a continuous topic (role-oriented topic, in his terminology), pointed out that between the two types of topics, the new topic is more marked than the continuous topic and often expressed in non-canonical construction, such as a left-detached construction, without any case marking. These features do apply to the fronted NP in Sumbawa.

Wouk (2002) considers a clause in which P is fronted, as (15) passive. However, from what we have seen so far, it would be better that all the examples with a fronted NP, (15), (16) and (19), be commonly treated as NP-fronted clauses by topicalization, which is opposed to the corresponding unmarked predicate initial clause in (14) and (18)[3].

4 Historical background of the Sumbawa system

Wouk (2002:307) and Ross (2002) consider the lack of voice distinction in Sumbawa to be a result of a collapse of the Indonesian system that existed in proto-language. The assumption would be plausible, as the majority of Sundic languages have actor/undergoer voice opposition characteristic of the Indonesian system. In that case, we can consider that the Sumbawa system has developed in the following way. (i) Syntactic and semantic demotion of the P in an actor voice has advanced so extremely that the construction can no longer code an entire transitive proposition. (ii) As a result of (i), Sumbawa has developed another way to indicate differences related to information structure of a transitive clause, as described in section 4.

With regard to the proto-system, however, an alternative possibility can be imagined; it is almost certain that the undergoer voice is the original transitive construction of the two voices (see Kikusawa (2000)), but it is not clear how and when the construction of nasal prefixed verbs was established as the actor voice, forming the voice opposition of the Indonesian type; the nasal prefix in proto-languages may not have been used as an established voice marker as it is in the present Indonesian-type system. In most of the languages of the Indonesian type, the correspondence between the nasal prefix and the actor-oriented transitive construction is not one-to-one. The nasal prefix not only functions as an indicator of the active voice, but also forms intransitive verbs denoting activity, that is, dynamic and atelic situations (e.g., *nambung* 'to fly,' *ngelangi* 'to swim,' *ngorta* 'chat,' and *ngeling* 'cry' in Balinese). (See Artawa (1998: 58-60) and Arka (2008: 31-39) for the details of the Balinese nasal prefix.) We could consider this function indicating activity to be an original function of this prefix, from which both the Sumbawa system and the Indonesian-type have diverged.

Gil (2002) deals with Malay dialects in which the nasal prefix is not involved in voice distinction, and casts doubt as to the existence of the voice distinction of actor voice and undergoer voice in the proto-system of Indonesian-type languages. As he suggests, in order to create a clearer picture of the original voice system, we need to have more synchronic descriptions by research on languages of either the Indonesian type or the non-Indonesian type.

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[3] A similar phenomenon, that is, the indication of a topic NP by fronting, is seen in a wider area in Austronesian languages, including Philippine and Formosan languages (Tagalog, Iloco), as well as some Indonesian-type languages, such as Gayo (Eades: 2005: 127-128).

 In all the languages mentioned above, the original case form of the fronted NP remains, while in some languages, such as Tukang Besi, spoken in South Eastern Sulawesi (Donohue: 88-90), which do not belong to the Indonesian type, exhibit similar feature to Sumbawa; that is, the opposition of case marking for A and P disappears in a fronted NP.

In the present stage of the research, we do not have enough data to reconstruct the original system. Much research remains to be done on this issue.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	the first person, the second person, the third person
MM	mood marker
INTERJ	interjection
IRR	irrealis
NEG	negator
NOM	nominalizer
PAST	past
PROG	progressive
SG	singular
TITLE	particle occurring immediately before a personal name

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