

Chapter 5

Simple Clause Types

This chapter discusses both verbal and nonverbal simple clause types.⁷³ Nonverbal predicates, which include noun phrase predicates, prepositional phrase predicates, existential predicates, genitive predicates, and impersonal predicates are discussed first in 5.1. Verbal predicates, which include intransitive and transitive predicates, are discussed in 5.2.

5.1 Nonverbal predicates

Noun phrase predicates make use of one of two different copulas.⁷⁴ They are discussed in 5.1.1. Prepositional phrase predicates use a different copula from the two equational ones and are discussed in 5.1.2. Existential predicates, which use yet another copula, are discussed in 5.1.3. Genitive predicates are discussed in 5.1.4. Finally, impersonal predicates are discussed in 5.1.5.

5.1.1 Noun phrase predicates

Plang uses two copulas with noun phrase predicates: *pen*⁷⁵ and *cei*. They are interchangeable in most cases, but not always. *pen* 'be' is illustrated in (182). It equates the subject pronoun *ila* 'Ila' with the nominal predicate NP *pu ?u* 'my friend'.⁷⁶ The copula *cei* 'be' can also be used in this sentence without any meaning change, as demonstrated in (183).

(182) Data.048

<i>ila</i>	pen	<i>ɾn</i>	<i>pu</i>	<i>?u</i>
<i>Ila</i>	be	3sg	friend	1sg
Nprop	COP	CLI	N	PRO

Ila is my friend.

⁷³ By "simple" clause types it is meant clauses that contain no subordinate clauses or coordinated structures.

⁷⁴ Dryer (2007b: 225) says that a copula is "more of a function word than a predicate; its function can be thought of as combining with nonverbal predicates to form what is syntactically a verbal predicate."

⁷⁵ The copula *pen* 'be' has the same phonological form as the Dai copula *pen* (disregarding tone). Further study needs to be done to determine whether this copula is a borrowing from Dai.

⁷⁶ See 6.2 for further discussion of the clitic.

(183) Data.049

ila *cei* ʔn pu ʔu
 Ila **be** 3sg friend 1sg
 Nprop **COP** CLI N PRO

Ila is my friend.

Another example of *pen* is found in (184) where it equates the subject pronoun *ʔn* ‘3sg’ with the nominal predicate *pxi conkuo* ‘Chinese person’. The copula *cei* ‘be’ is just as acceptable in this sentence, as demonstrated in (185).

(184) VP.026

ʔn *pen* pxi conkuo
 3sg **be** person Chinese
 PRO V N N

He is Chinese.

(185) VP.055

ʔn *cei* pxi conkuo
 3sg **be** person Chinese
 PRO **COP** N N

He is Chinese.

One of the situations where the two copulas are not interchangeable involves time changes, which is not unusual across languages according to Dryer (2007a). The copula *pen* ‘be’ is used for future situations, as demonstrated in (186). The copula *pen* ‘be’ equates the subject NP *fiaoai* ‘Xiao Ai’ with the nominal predicate *kanpu* ‘village head’. The copula *cei* ‘be’ is unacceptable in this situation, as demonstrated in (187). Perhaps the copula *cei* ‘be’ cannot be used in certain irrealis situations.

(186) Data.045

fiaoai lat ʔn *pen* kanpu
 Xiao.Ai IRR 3sg **be** village.head
 Nprop AUX PRO **COP** N

Xiao Ai will be village head.

(187) Data.097

*jiaoai lat ʔɿn cei kanpu
 Xiao.Ai IRR 3sg be village.head
 Nprop AUX PRO COP N

(Intended: Xiao Ai will be village head.)

Another situation where the two copulas are not interchangeable may involve the use of different negators. In (188) the copula *cei* ‘be’ is equating the subject NP *ka* ‘3du’ with the nominal predicate *tɔŋ* ‘brothers’.⁷⁷ The negator *maŋ* ‘not’ is negating the proposition. The copula *pen* ‘be’ is not acceptable in this sentence, as demonstrated in (189). However, the sentence is acceptable without a copula, as demonstrated in (190). The subject NP *ka* ‘3du’ is juxtaposed with the predicate nominative *tɔŋ* ‘brothers’.

(188) VP.047

ka ti maŋ ka cei tɔŋ
 3du main.part not 3du be brother
 PRO MKR NEG PRO COP N

They are not brothers.

(189) VP.046

*ka ti maŋ ka pen tɔŋ
 3du main.part not 3du be brother
 PRO MKR NEG PRO COP N

(Intended: They are not brothers.)

(190) VP.034

ka ti maŋ ka tɔŋ
 3du main.part not 3du brother
 PRO MKR NEG PRO N

They [are] not brothers.

5.1.2 Prepositional phrase predicates

It is common for languages to use a different copula that includes the idea of location for prepositional phrase predicates (Dryer 2007a: 239). Plang uses the copula *mok* ‘exist’ for prepositional phrase predicates. In (191) the copula *mok* ‘exist’ introduces the location predicate *juŋ kavaŋ la* ‘at a tea field’. There is no

⁷⁷ The NP *ka* ‘3du’ marked by *ti* ‘main participant marker’ is possibly an example of topicalization.

explicit subject, although from the context it is clear that the speaker is referring to herself and her companions.

(191) Trip.044

hak a mok juŋ kavəŋ la la ka lɛ ke iŋ iŋ juŋ ɲa
 however RF exist at field tea IRR *** rain *** come go.back at home
 CONJ PRT V PREP N N PRT PRT V PRT V V PREP N
 tah ɛ ti
 rest 1pl main.part
 V CLI MKR

However [we] were in a tea field and it was going to rain, [so] we returned home and rested. In (192) the copula *mok* ‘exist’ introduces the prepositional phrase predicate *juŋ mannoi* ‘at Man Noi’. The subject is *ɲa ʔu ɔn* ‘that house of mine’.

(192) NP.001

ɲa ʔu ɔn a mok ka juŋ mannoi
 home 1sg that RF exist top.cont at Man.Noï
 N PRO DEM PRT V MKR PREP Nprop

That house of mine is in Man Noi.

5.1.3 Existential predicates

In many languages prepositional phrase predicates and existential predicates are coded in the same way, but in Plang they are different (Dryer 2007a: 240).

Existential predicates in Plang are coded with the verb *kui* ‘have’, which functions as a type of copula.⁷⁸ When *kui* ‘have’ functions as a copula its semantic load is reduced because the nominal predicate bears the important semantic information. Example (193) illustrates the verb *kui* ‘have’ and the nominal predicate *juŋ kuti* ‘one village’. Example (194) also illustrates an existential predicate. The nominal predicate *ɔŋ lai* ‘two brothers’ takes the copula *kui* ‘have’. The subject seems to be a combination of the so-called “dummy subject” *ka* and the numeral *kuti* ‘one’, which commonly functions as an empty subject in presentational sentences.

⁷⁸ It may be that these “existential” predicates are better categorized as verbal predicates. The predicate NPs are not coded by a preposition, which means that they pattern more like normal verbal predicates. However, since the syntactic verb *kui* ‘have’ does not have its full verbal meaning, this researcher has chosen to place them here under non-verbal predicates.

(193) Data.051

kui	ka	juŋ	kuti	muh	mannoi
have	dummy.sub	village	one	name	Man.Noï
V	MKR	N	NUM	V	Nprop

Once there was a village called Man Noi.

(194) Brothers.001

luŋma	kui	ka	kuti	ɔŋ	lai
before	have	dummy.sub	one	brother	two
ADV	V	MKR	NUM	N	NUM

Once before there were two brothers.

5.1.4 Genitive predicates

Another subcategory of nonverbal predicates consists of a genitive construction (Dryer 2007a: 248). In (195) the subject is *kamui ɔn* ‘that money’ and the predicate is the genitive construction *la ?u* ‘of me’. The predicate in (196) is also *la ?u* ‘of me’. The subject is the topicalized NP *pa hɔn ɔn na* ‘that big house’.

(195) Data.053

kamui	ɔn	la	?u
money	that	POSS	1sg
N	DEM	PRT	PRO

That money is mine.

(196) NP.008

pa	hɔn	ɔn	na	la	?u
home	big	that	topiclzf	POSS	1sg
N	Vst	DEM	PRT	PRT	PRO

That big house is mine.

5.1.5 Impersonal predicates

Some predicates do not take any arguments. These zero-argument clauses are called impersonal clauses, zero-intransitive clauses or ambient clauses (Dryer 2007a: 267). They often include meteorological clauses (Kroeger 2005: 186). In (197) the verb *le* ‘rain’ does not take any semantic arguments, although the syntactic subject is the dummy subject *ka*. Another example of an impersonal predicate is illustrated in (198) with the verb *hɔn* ‘hot’.

(197) Data.059

le ka
rain dummy.sub
V MKR

[It is] raining.

(198) Trip.075

la ʔn nɔ hɔn
say 3sg that hot
V CLI DEM Vst

He said it was hot.⁷⁹

Time clauses can also be impersonal clauses. In (199) the verb ‘be late’ does not take any semantic arguments.⁸⁰

(199) Data.058

ɲam en na lak ka
time this topiclzr be.late dummy.sub
N DEM PRT V MKR

Right now it is a little bit late.

5.2 Verbal predicates

Verbal predicates in Plang can be divided according to the number of arguments that they require. Intransitive predicates are one-argument predicates. They are discussed in 5.2.1. Transitive predicates include two-argument and three-argument predicates. They are discussed in 5.2.2.

5.2.1 Intransitive predicates

There are two semantic subcategories of intransitive predicates. Stative predicates are addressed in 5.2.1.1. Next, nonstative predicates are discussed in 5.2.1.2.

5.2.1.1 Stative predicates

Stative predicates in Plang include prototypical states (e.g., “sleep”) and what are often called descriptive or attributive predicates. Attributive predicates are

⁷⁹ *hɔn* ‘hot’ is a loan word from Dai.

⁸⁰ The phrase *ɲam en* ‘this time’ is functioning adverbially in the sentence and thus is not an argument of *lak* ‘be late’. The particle *ka* may be an empty referent subject.

common “in languages in which there is no distinct adjective word class, but in which there is a subclass of verbs” that function as adjectives do in other languages (Dryer 2007a: 259). Example (200) illustrates the prototypical stative verb *tah* ‘rest’. It takes *ʔε* ‘1pl’ as its subject argument. The locative adjunct *ja ʔε* ‘[at] our home’ is modifying the proposition. The locative adjunct is not required by the verb, as demonstrated in (201) where the verb *tah* ‘rest’ does not have a locative adjunct. The only reference to the subject is the clitic *ε* ‘1pl’.⁸¹

(200) Trip.079

ʔε cu lei tah ti ja ʔε
 1pl also then rest main.part home 1pl
 PRO ADV CONJ V MKR N PRO

Then we also rested at my home.

(201) Trip.078

a mo a mo lei tapuh tapuh a mo tah ε
 RF then RF then then night night RF then rest 1pl
 PRT CONJ PRT CONJ CONJ N N PRT CONJ V CLI

And then, at night, we rested.

Attributive predicates are a subclass of stative predicates. In (202) the attributive verb *kaɲɲ* ‘muddy’ is a complete predicate. It takes the empty referent *ka* as a sort of dummy subject argument; that is, syntactically it is functioning as the subject which, according to Givon (2001a: 118), “refers to no entity in particular...it thus merely but fills a formal syntactic role.” The attributive verb *luŋ* ‘tall’ in (203) takes the pronoun *ʔɲn* ‘3sg’ as its subject argument.

(202) Trip.096

kaɲɲ ka
 muddy dummy.sub
 Vst MKR

It was muddy.

(203) VP.028

ʔɲn luŋ
 3sg tall
 PRO Vst

He [is] tall.

⁸¹ For a discussion of the clitic *ε* ‘1pl’ in this sentence, see 6.2.

5.2.1.2 Nonstative predicates

Nonstative predicates have semantic names including eventive, process, and activity verbs (Dryer 2007a: 259). In (204) the verb *kuh* ‘get up’ illustrates a nonstative predicate. The subject is understood from the context.

(204) Brothers.103

kasa	kuh	ceao
next.day	get.up	early
ADV	V	ADV

The next day [they] got up early.

The eventive verbs *ij* ‘go back’ and *kacuh* ‘talk’ are illustrated in (205) where they take the subject argument *?ε* ‘1pl’.

(205) Church.055

on	mo	?ε	ko	ij	hum	teu	k ^h a	kacuh	ti	ij
then	then	1pl	then	go.back	together	walk	road	talk	main.part	go.back
CONJ	CONJ	PRO	CONJ	V	ADV	V	N	V	MKR	V

Then we then went back together and walked [down] the road and talked as we went back.

5.2.2 Transitive predicates

Transitive predicates take two or more arguments (Dryer 2007a: 250). Two-argument predicates are discussed in 5.2.2.1. Three-argument predicates are discussed in 5.2.2.2.

5.2.2.1 Two-argument predicates

A basic transitive sentence has two arguments. In (206) the verb *kok* ‘shoulder’ takes the subject argument *?u* ‘1sg’ and the object argument *hwi* ‘[my] bag’. Another example of a transitive predicate is illustrated in (207). The verb *pok* ‘ride’ takes *?u* ‘1sg’ as the subject argument and *tanc^hə* ‘bicycle’ as the object argument.

(206) Church.051

?u	ti	kok	?u	hwi	ti
1sg	main.part	shoulder	1sg	bag	main.part
PRO	MKR	V	PRO	N	MKR

I shouldered my bag.

(207) Church.070

ʔu	ko	lei	pək	tanc ^{hə}	hxi	juŋ	ciaot ^h aŋ
1sg	then	again	ride	bicycle	go	at	church
PRO	CONJ	ADV	V	N	V	PREP	N

Then I rode [my] bicycle to go to church.⁸²

5.2.2.2 Three-argument predicates

Three-argument predicates are also called ditransitive predicates. Plang has two ways to form ditransitive predicates. More data needs to be collected in order to determine which structure is more basic. The rationale for their order here is that the preposition *ta* ‘to’ in (208) has more semantic specificity than the preposition *la* in (209), which simply marks the oblique argument. In (208) the subject argument *ʔu* ‘1sg’ precedes the verb *ka* ‘give’. The object argument *pap en* ‘this book’ follows the verb. The oblique argument is marked by the preposition *ta* ‘to’.

(208) Grammar.005

ʔu	ti	ka	u	pap	en	ta	ʔɿn	ti
1sg	main.part	give	1sg	book	this	to	3sg	main.part
PRO	MKR	V	CLI	N	DEM	PREP	PRO	MKR

I gave the book to her.

The second way that Plang deals with ditransitive predicates is illustrated in (209). The verb *ka* ‘give’ takes *ʔu* ‘1sg’ as the subject argument. The argument *ʔɿn* ‘3sg’ is not marked by a preposition; it is the object. The oblique argument *pap en* ‘this book’, which is marked by the preposition *la* ‘oblique argument marker’, follows the object.

(209) Grammar.004

ʔu	ti	ka	u	ʔɿn	la	pap	en
1sg	main.part	give	1sg	3sg	obl.arg.mkr	book	this
PRO	MKR	V	CLI	PRO	PREP	N	DEM

I gave her the book.

Locative oblique arguments are a subcategory of three-argument predicates (Givon 2001a: 142). The verb *sɿ* ‘put’ in (210) takes *ʔu* ‘1sg’ as the subject argument. *tu* ‘vegetables’ is the object and *juŋ matəŋ k^ha ne* ‘at the pot’s inside’ is

⁸² *tanc^{hə}* ‘bicycle’ is a loan word from Chinese.

the locative oblique. In (211) the verb *pɪn* ‘put’ takes *ʔɪn* ‘3sg’ as the subject argument. The object is *pap* ‘book’ and the locative oblique is *k^ha tuk paŋ* ‘on top of the table’.

(210) Grammar.001

ʔu	ti	sɾ	tu	juŋ	matəŋ	k ^h a	ne
1sg	main.part	put	vegetable	at	pot	in	inside
PRO	MKR	V	N	PREP	N	PREP	LZN

I put the vegetables in the pot.

(211) Grammar.003

ti	pɪn	ɪn	pap	k ^h a	tuk	paŋ
main.part	put	3sg	book	in	top	table
MKR	V	CLI	N	PREP	LZN	N

He put the book on the table.

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