



The Ergative Verbs of Tetun Dili

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Abstract. Tetun Dili which is called (TD) is one of the Austronesian languages typologically with SVO word order with alternation OSV. (TD) is spoken as a Lingua Franca and also has been stipulated as an official language by the government of Timor-Leste since the restoration time besides Portuguese. The aims of this research was intended to find out kinds of transitive verbs in (TD) that can behave as ergative verbs. The data sources were gained by using documentation method which supported by elicitation technique. After all the data were collected then, they were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative method. It means that all the data were analyzed descriptively by using words, phrases and clauses which become the main characteristics of qualitative method. The final results of this research showed that morphologically, the transitive verbs of (TD) has 2 prefixes namely prefix ha- and prefixes nak- which can precede the root/stem to form the transitive verbs like ‘mate’, ‘ha-mate’, ‘moris’ ‘ha-moris’. The other one is prefixes nak-. Prefix nak- is attached to the root of TD to form ergative verbs like ‘lees’ ‘nak-less’ ‘pera’, ‘nak-pera’, ‘doko’, ‘nak-doko’ and etc. If both prefixes ha- and nak- are omitted on the roots of the transitive verbs of (TD), those verbs will be intransitive verbs or an ergative verbs.

Keywords: Ergative verb · Tetun dili · typology linguistic

1 Introduction

Tetun Dili which is further called (TD) is spoken as a Lingua Franca in Timor-Leste. Besides being functions as a Lingua Franca, (TD) is also used as one of the official languages in Timor-Leste besides Portuguese language. (TD) is considered as an easier language if being compared to Tetun Terik which is also called (TT). (TT) has Case Marking system grammatically, it has Subject Verb-Agreement, and however (TD) does not have any Subject-Verb-Agreement or Case Marking System. (TD) also does not have any passive Marking like other languages such as English, Bahasa and other accusative languages in the world. Typologically, (TD) belongs to a language that does not belong to either ergative or accusative language. The Passive voice of (TD) is formed by fronting the (NPs) of the active voice as the (NPs) grammatically.

Based on the linguistics classification, languages are divided into ergative-absolute and nominative-accusative. This idea is also supported by Dixon (2010:153), “Terms ‘nominative’, ‘accusative’, ‘ergative’, and ‘absolute’ are properly used to describe the

marking of core argument” [1]. Based on the explanation of the expert above, this paper would talk about ergative verb. Ergative verb is a transitive verb that can behave as an intransitive verb by omitting the prefixes. The object of a transitive verb will be functioned as the subject in intransitive verb and it cannot be changed as a passive voice or with another word it can be said as anti-passive. Kridalaksana (2008:254) also explains that, “Antipassive verb is an active verb which cannot be changed as a passive voice” This paper is aimed to discuss the ergative verbs of (TD) because some transitive verbs of (TD) have potential that can be used as the ergative verbs. (TD) has been researched by some linguists either nationally or internationally however, the ergative verb of (TD) has not been discussed deeply yet therefore this paper was more focused on the discussion of the ergative verbs in order to get a clear direction.

This research was more focused on the transitive verbs of (TD) that can be used as the ergative verbs in intransitive clauses or ergative verbs. This research is also intended as the reference or guidance for the other linguistics lovers who are interested to do another research in developing TD because TD still has a lot of parts that can be analyzed deeply either micro or macro in the future time.

The theory of linguistics typology proposed by Comrie (1981) was applied in supporting this paper [2]. Typologically, the term of Ergative-absolute is the typical of universal language which differs whether a language X belongs to ergative-absolute or nominative-accusative. This research was mainly focused on the transitive verbs of TD that can function as the ergative verbs and not expanded whether TD belongs to ergative or accusative language because of many limitations and considerations. Etymologically, typology means classifications of domains [3]. Furthermore, Artawa (2005) states that, “the accusative language is active-passive voice meanwhile ergative language has active voice-antipassive” [3]. Comrie (1981) also states that, “There is another sense in which universals and typology hand in hand. In order to do in language typology, it is necessary to establish certain parameters along which one is going to typologies the languages of the world” [2]. Based on the Comrie’s statement above, Greenberg divides universal languages into 6 types universally based on their basic word orders such as SVO, SOV, VOS, VSO, OVS and OSV. Based on the theory explained by the experts of language typology above, Tetun Dili (TD) typologically belongs to SVO with OSV alternation.

2 Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive. The data in this paper were collected by using documentation method and assisted with elicitation technique. Elicitation means that the researcher prepares some questions in a language X, then translate them into the target language to find the answers base on the need. The sample used is non-probability. It means that only special informants who have ability in speaking (TD) would be chosen as the key informants. After all the data were collected, then they were analyzed by using descriptive analytics method which were assisted by omission, deletion and change techniques.

3 Discussion and Findings

3.1 The Transitive Verbs of Tetun Dili

Transitive verbs are the verbs that need (NPo) grammatically or a patient semantically. Normally, a position of an object in TD is needed as an obligatory by a transitive verb if the sentence will be changed into a passive voice, however if the transitive verbs are just in an active voice the OBJ will be an optional. In this research, the objects of the transitive verbs are needed as an obligatory because the OBJ of the transitive verbs will take position of the SUB intransitively which will show us the typical of ergative verbs. For more information related to the transitive verbs of TD, please take a look for the following examples.

1. Katuas ne'e hamosu problema barak.
Old man D create problem many
'This old man creates many problems'
2. Nia hasai ita.
'S/he dismisses us'
'S/he dismisses us'
3. Imi hasa'e sasan.
You (PL) bring up things
'You bring up the things'
4. Ha'u hatuun sasaan.
I take down things
'I take down the things'
5. Polisia ida hapara kareta ne'e
Polisia ART stop car D
'A policeman stops this car'
6. Ita hakotu tali ne'e.
We sever rope D
'We sever this rope'
7. Sira hakanek ha'u.
They hurt me
'They hurt me'
8. O hamate ahi ne'e.
You switch off lamp D
'You switch off the lamp'
9. Nia hamoris makina ne'e.
S/he start engine D
'S/he starts this engine'

The verbs of TD on the clauses (1–9) hamosu 'create', hasai 'dismiss', hasa'e 'bring up', hatuun 'take down', hapara 'stop', hakotu 'sever', hakanek 'hurt', hamate 'switch off' and hamoris 'start' are transitive verbs morphologically because they are preceded by prefix ha-. If prefix ha- is omitted, those verbs will become intransitive verbs.

10. Salsa lees libru ida.
Salsa tear book D
'Salsa tears a book'
11. Ferik ne'e doko rai.
The old woman shake earth
'The old woman shakes the earth'
12. Ha'u hakiduk kareta ida.
I reverse car D
'I reverse a car'
13. Ajitu halai taksi
Ajitu drive taxi
'Ajitu drives a taxi'
14. Ema ida hakilar ha'u.
Person ART shout me
'A person shouts at me'

The clauses on the data (10) and (11) showed that the verb lees 'tore', doko 'shook' can stand alone lexically that can function either transitive or intransitive verbs. In TD lees and doko could not be preceded by prefix ha- morphologically. Instead of ha- prefix nak- will be added to lees 'naklees' and doko 'nakadoko'. By adding the prefix nak- to lees and doko syntactically, they will be ergative verbs. On the other hand, the verbs on (12) hakiduk 'reverse' lexically can stand alone without any morphological change in TD because hakiduk is a full verb without any morphological change. If the prefix ha- is omitted *'kiduk' will be ungrammatical syntactically. The verb on the clause (13) halai taksi 'drove a taxi' is an intransitive verb but because halai is combined with taksi which is morphologically considered as a compound word therefore halai taksi can become a transitive verb in TD. The verb hakilar 'shout' on the clause (14) also showed that ha- which preceded *kilar is not a prefix because hakilar is a full verb lexically which can function either an intransitive verb or a transitive verb.

3.2 The Ergative Verbs of Tetun Dili

According to Brown and Miller (1980), "intransitive verbs cannot be followed by an (NPo) (...). Based on the opinion of the experts above, it means that ergative verbs are the verbs that do not need any NP grammatically or patients semantically [4]. Ergative verbs are not used in the passive voice because of having no (NPo) or the presence of the NP is (\emptyset zero). Verhaar (2010) also explains that, voice system in typology ergative usually reaches ergative and antipassive voice; in this case, the ergative voice of canonic [5]. The objects of transitive clause of TD will be the subject of intransitive clause by omitting the prefix ha- which precedes the root or the stem in the transitive verbs. If we see the previous transitive verbs of TD, they could be seen that ha- is not always functions as a prefix but ha- appears as a word lexically and not a morphological change. For detail information, please see the verbs on the following clauses below.

15. Problema barak mosu.
problems many appear
'Many problems appear'
16. Ita sai.
We resign
'We resign'
17. Sasaan sa'e.
Things up
'The things bring up'
18. Sasaan tuun.
Things down
'The things take down'
19. Kareta ne'e para.
Car D stop
'The car stops'
20. Tali ne'e kotu.
Rope D sever
'This rope severs'
21. Ha'u kanek.
I hurt
'I get hurt'
22. Ahi ne'e mate.
Lamp D die
'The lamp dies'
23. Makina ne'e moris.
Engine start D start
'This engine starts'
24. Libru ida lees/naklees.
Book D tore
'A book tears'
25. Rai doko/nakdoko.
Earth shakes
'The earth shook'
26. Kareta ida hakiduk.
Car D reverse
'A car reverses'
27. Taksi halai.
Taxi run
'A taxi runs'
28. Ha'u hakilar.
I shout
'I shout'

The ergative verbs of TD used on the clauses (15–28) like *mosu* 'appear', *sai* 'out', *sa'e* 'rise', *tuun* 'bring down', *para* 'stop', *kotu* 'sever', *kanek* 'hurt', *mate* 'die', *moris*, 'start', *lees* 'tear, *doko* and 'shake' are the ergative verbs after omitting the prefix *ha-* which preceded the transitive verbs of TD. Those verbs are different from the ergative verbs on the clause (26–28) which showed that *ha-* which attached to *hakiduk* 'reverse',

halai ‘run’ and hakilar ‘shout’ are not prefix because ‘hakiduk’, ‘halai’ and ‘hakilar’ are lexically as one word. If the prefix ha- is omitted *‘kiduk’, *‘lai’ and *‘kilar’ will be ungrammatical.

4 Conclusion

After all the data were analyzed, here could come to the final conclusion that typologically, TD belongs to one of the Austronesian languages with SVO word order and OSV alternation. TD is very important role in Timor-Leste because it is used as both official language and Lingua Franca to unite some local languages in Timor-Leste as well.

The result of the analysis showed that TD does not have a case marking system language like TT or other languages. TD does not have any Subject-Verb-Agreement either because it is an isolative language morphologically. The data on the (TD) also found that it also has a glottal system.

The final conclusion proved that there are 2 prefixes namely prefix ha- and prefix nak- which can be attached to the root/stem of intransitive verbs to be transitive verbs. The prefix ha- in TD does not always function as a prefix but ha- can be attached to some categories of TD as a full word either can be intransitive verbs, transitive verbs or adjectives. The prefix ha- which attached on the following data does not function as a prefix but they behave as single words. Look at the following examples: Haksolok ‘happy’ (Adj), hakmatek, ‘quiet’ (Adj), hatudu ‘show’ (v) haksoit ‘jump’ (v) and etc. If ha- is omitted like *‘ksolok’, *‘matek’, *‘tudu’ and *ksoit, they will be ungrammatical.

At last but not the least, this research has not covered all the parts of TD because of the limitation of the time and space. On this good opportunity, I would also like to recommend TD and some local languages to the linguistic lovers nationally or internationally to do more research deeply on them. By doing that, I believe we can maintain, preserve and bring TD particularly and all the languages in Timor-Leste generally to a better future need.

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