The Anticausative in Pwo Karen

Atsuhiko Kato

1. Profile of the language

Pwo Karen is a language which belongs to the Karenic branch (see Kato 2018) of the
Tibeto-Burman family of the Sino-Tibetan stock (see e.g., Matisoff 1991, 2000). As Kato (2009b)
shows, Pwo Karen has four dialect groups (Table 1). For details on the characteristics of the Pwo
2009b). The present paper analyzes the Hpa-an dialect, a dialect of Eastern Pwo Karen that is spoken
around Hpa-an, the capital of Karen State, Myanmar. The discussion of this paper is based on
section 3 of Kato (加藤) (in print).

Table 1: Dialect groups of Pwo Karen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect group</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Pwo Karen</td>
<td>Irrawaddy Delta, Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Htoklibang Pwo Karen</td>
<td>Bilin Township, Mon State, Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Pwo Karen</td>
<td>Karen State, Myanmar; Mon State, Myanmar; Tennasserim Division, Myanmar; West-Central Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Pwo Karen</td>
<td>Northwestern Thailand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Location of Hpa-an

Pwo Karen words can be classified into five groups: nouns, verbs, adverbs, particles, and
interjections (Kato (加藤) 2004, 2008). Pwo Karen is an analytic language and its basic word order
is Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) (see Kato 2003, 2017). It has no inflection, and its derivational affixes
are few in number.1 The basic structure of clauses can be schematized as in Figure 2.

(NOUN₁) (Vptc) VERB (Vptc) (NOUN₂) (NOUN₃) (ADVERBIAL ELEMENTS)

Figure 2: Basic structure of a Pwo Karen clause

In this schematization, NOUN₁ is the subject, and NOUN₂ and NOUN₃ are objects. Two objects
can appear with a ditransitive verb such as /phlān/ ‘give’. In a clause with /phlān/, NOUN₂ denotes
a recipient and NOUN₃ denotes a theme. In the position of VERB, concatenated type serial verbs
may occur (see Kato 2017). Vptc represents a verb particle. Some verb particles occur before the
verb and others after the verb, and multiple verb particles may occur in both places. I call the part
consisting of a verb and verb particle(s) a “verb complex”. In the position of ADVERBIAL
ELEMENTS, adverbs, adpositional phrases, or adverbial particles² can occur. In addition to these,

2 Particles can be classified into “adpositional particles”, “subordinate clause particles”, “general particles”, “noun modifying
some nouns and adverbs may occur clause-initially, and another verb may occur after the
ADVERBIAL ELEMENTS, i.e., separated type serial verbs (see Kato 2017), but we do not need to
cconcern ourselves with these elements for the discussion of this paper. (1) is an example of a clause:

(1) θàʔwà mò ʔàn há mì ʔàʔá lá yëin phón eI
   Thawa iri eat (opportunity) rice much LOC house inside too

   NOUN1 Vptc VERB Vptc NOUN2

   verb complex

   ADVERBIAL ELEMENTS

‘Thawa will get a chance to eat much rice inside the house, too’

In this paper, I will describe the usage of the Pwo Karen anticausative construction. I will point
out its productivity in section 2. In section 3, I will show the distribution of anticausative derivation
among Pwo Karen inchoative/causative verb pairs. Section 4 is the summary. If we observe Pwo
Karen clauses from the point of view of voice, we can set up causative, middle, and applicative (for
applicative constructions, see Peterson 2007) clauses. The anticausative construction treated in this
paper is one of the uses of the middle voice. For the valence changing syntactic procedures in Pwo
Karen, see Kato (2009a).

2. Anticausative

Pwo Karen has an anticausative construction. According to Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000: 7), an
anticausative is a “valency-reducing derivation where the S of the derived verb corresponds to the
underlying O, and there is no marker of the underlying A”. See example (2)³:

(2) ʔəwê pàʊ thán pàitoràn
    3SG open(tr.) up window
‘He opened the window.’

By using the verb particle θà, this sentence can be changed into an intransitive sentence as in (3):

(3) pàitoràn pàʊ thán θà
    window open(tr.) up ANTIC
‘The window opened.’

The noun pàitoràn ‘window’, which was in the object position in (2), has occured in the subject
position in (3). Moreover, in (3), the subject ʔəwê ‘3SG’, present in (2), cannot appear. In this paper,
a clause with the verb particle θà where the underlying O of a transitive verb occurs as the S, as in
(3), is defined to be the Pwo Karen anticausative construction, and the verb particle θà is regarded as
a marker that forms anticausative clauses. A verb complex where θà accompanies the verb is called

³ The verb pàʊ almost always occurs with the verb particle thás which denotes an upward movement. It is often pronounced wás in
rapid speech.
an “anticausative form". In Kato (2009a), I called a sentence like the one in (3) “middle”. However, I presently consider that there are three usages in the Pwo Karen middle voice (i.e., anticausative, reflexive, and reciprocal); that is, the anticausative construction must be regarded as one of the usages of the middle voice. For general discussions on the middle voice, see Kemmer (1993) and Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000), and for studies of Tibeto-Burman middle constructions, see LaPolla (1996, 2000, 2005).

The morpheme θà originates from the noun that used to mean ‘heart’ at the Proto-Karen stage, and the usage of θà as a noun meaning ‘heart’ still remains in Pwo Karen. The Proto-Karen form was probably *sak, and this can be considered to be related to Matisoff’s (2003) Proto-Tibeto-Burman form *sak ‘breath(e)’ (Matisoff 2003: 642).

One of the important roles of the anticausative marker θà is to make an intransitive predicate from a transitive verb when a verb that denotes an intransitive situation is lacking. Pwo Karen has few transitive verbs that denote an action causing a change to an undergoer. In this paper, verbs denoting such actions are called causative verbs. Since there are few causative verbs in Pwo Karen, many actions that cause a change to an undergoer are expressed by using causative constructions. Typically, the causative construction using the causative particle mà is employed. Examples include mà ðî (mà + ‘die’) ‘to kill’, mà yàyòw (mà + ‘break (intr.)’) ‘to break’, mà khā (mà + ‘be bent’) ‘to bend’, mà làxtè (mà + ‘to drop (intr.)’) ‘to drop (tr.)’, mà thè (mà + ‘be cut’) ‘to cut’, mà gàkhrī (mà + ‘fall down’) ‘to knock down (a tree)’, and mà wà (mà + ‘to shake (intr.)’) ‘to shake (tr.)’. Conversely, Pwo Karen occasionally has only a causative verb, lacking the intransitive counterpart. In such a case, the antipassive marker θà is employed in order to express an intransitive situation (see Kato 2009a). So far the antipassive forms shown in (4) have been found:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causative verbs</th>
<th>Anticausative forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pàʊθà thà ‘open (as a window)’</td>
<td>pàʊθà ‘open (intr.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θàò ‘move (tr.)’</td>
<td>θàò θà ‘move (intr.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wà ‘twist’</td>
<td>wà θà ‘be twisted’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔò ‘open (as a betel nut)’</td>
<td>ʔò θà ‘be opened’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔáxlè ‘change (tr.)’</td>
<td>ʔáxlè θà ‘change (intr.)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khàdà ‘attach’</td>
<td>khàdà θà ‘be attached’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klò ‘peel’</td>
<td>klò θà ‘be peeled’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔáxkhwè ‘fish’</td>
<td>ʔáxkhwè θà ‘be fished’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bèìn ‘close (eyes)’</td>
<td>bèìn θà ‘be closed (as eyes)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khlèìn ‘roll (tr.)’</td>
<td>khlèìn θà ‘role (intr.)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anticausative forms in (4) (i.e., combinations of a causative verb and θà), are probably fixed as idiomatic expressions, because an anticausative form cannot be freely derived from every causative verb. The transitive verbs ʔánxkà ‘bake’ in (5) and thù ‘roll (as a mat)’ in (6), for example, are causative verbs; that is, they contain a result in the logical structure, but we cannot make anticausative forms from these verbs.

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4 For details on the causative constructions in Eastern Pwo Karen, see Kato (1999). Different dialects of Pwo Karen show various linguistic differences in causative constructions. For the causative constructions in Northern Pwo Karen, for example, see Phillips (2017: 57-58, 89-91).
Therefore, I call the usage of anticausative forms as listed in (4) the “idiomatic usage” of θà.

Nevertheless, anticausative forms of causative verbs such as ʔàská ‘bake’ in (5) and thuú ‘roll’ in (6) become grammatical when they are accompanied by the resultative verb particle wè ‘be already Ved; to V in advance’, as is shown in (7) and (8). The word order of wè and θà has to be wè θà, not θà wè.

(7) já ʔàská wè θà  
mì ʔàská wè θà  
fish bake RES  
‘The fish has already been baked.’ or ‘The fish has been baked in advance.’

(8) khló thuú wè θà  
khló thuú wè θà  
mat roll RES  
‘The mat has already been rolled.’ or ‘The mat has been rolled in advance.’

Another role of the anticausative marker θà, other than the idiomatic usage, is to make intransitive clauses denoting results with the assistance of the resultative verb particle wè, as in (7) and (8). In examples (9) through (16) below, the verbs cannot be changed into grammatical anticausative forms without wè, as is seen from the forms shown in parentheses. However, if they are followed by wè, grammatical anticausative clauses are obtained.

(9) mì ʔàspónh wè θà  (*ʔàspónh θà)  
rice cook RES  
‘Rice has already been cooked.’

(10) phlì cântháun wè θà  (*cântháun θà)  
rope tie RES  
‘The rope has already been tied.’

(11) câín ʔâchúwij wè θà  (*ʔâchúwij θà)  
shirt wash RES  
‘The shirt has already been washed.’
(12) nò thè wè θà (*thè θà)
grass pull.out RES ANTIC
‘The grass has already been pulled out.’

(13) chàphòn khàùn wè θà (*khàùn θà)
hole dig RES ANTIC
‘A hole has already been dug.’

(14) láiʔàu kòkítú wè θà (*kòkítú θà)
book conceal RES ANTIC
‘The book has already been concealed.’

(15) chàín càn wè θà (*càn θà)
shirt tear RES ANTIC
‘The shirt has already been torn.’

(16) phli kwè làn wè θà (*kwè làn θà)
rope untie down RES ANTIC
‘The rope has already been untied.’

Co-occurring with the verb particle wè helps to make a grammatical anticausative clause only in the case of causative verbs. Non-causative verbs such as dò ‘strike, hit’ in (17) can never be an anticausative form, even when they occur with the particle wè.

(17) *cëpwè dò wè θà
desk hit RES ANTIC
Intended meaning: ‘The desk has already been hit.’

As has been discussed above, even when an idiomatic anticausative form of a verb is ungrammatical, using the verb with wè makes it possible to form a grammatical anticausative clause as long as the verb is a causative verb. This syntactic procedure is highly productive.

In an anticausative clause with the verb particle wè, the presence of an action that caused the result is entailed. This semantic feature is made clear when the clause is compared to a clause with a corresponding intransitive verb. Examples (18) and (19) are sentences with intransitive verbs corresponding to the transitive verbs used in (15) and (16).5

(18) chàín já wè
shirt torn RES
‘The shirt is already torn.’

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5 The particle wè with a nonvolitional intransitive verb, as in (18) and (19), may be followed by θà. Thus, (18) can be changed to chàis já wè θà. This is strange because θà intrinsically does not co-occur with an intransitive verb. I suppose that this is a usage of θà which has been developed through the analogy of anticausative wè θà.
The difference between examples (15) and (18) is that in (15), where the anticausative construction is used, the presence of an action that caused the situation of “being torn” is entailed, which is not the case in (18), with its intransitive verb. Similarly, the difference between examples (16) and (19) is that in (16), the presence of an action that caused the situation of “being untied” is entailed, while it is not in (19). In this way, in the anticausative clauses with \( \text{w} \ \theta \& \), the presence of an action is entailed. Meanwhile, in the anticausative clauses of the idiomatic usage, as is shown in (4), no causing action is entailed. Thus, example (20), below, expresses the situation where the window opened by itself.

(20) \( \text{pàitɔrən} \ \text{påo} \ \text{thàn} \ \text{θà} \) (=3)
\( \text{window} \ \text{open(tr.)} \ \text{up} \ \text{ANTIC} \)
‘The window opened.’

If we add \( \text{w} \ \theta \& \) to (20), however, the presence or absence of an action is ambiguous in the obtained sentence; see (21). The sentence in (21) can be used both when the window was opened by some action or when the window opened by itself.

(21) \( \text{pàitɔrən} \ \text{påo} \ \text{thàn} \ \text{w} \ \text{θà} \)
\( \text{window} \ \text{open(tr.)} \ \text{up} \ \text{RES} \ \text{ANTIC} \)
‘The window has already been opened.’

If the anticausative forms are only used in the idiomatic usage, the significance of the anticausative construction in this language is not very high, because the idiomatic usage lacks productivity. However, the productivity of the anticausative forms with the particle \( \text{w} \ \theta \& \) is decisively high. When I published Kato (2009a), I did not notice its high productivity.

One of the possible motivations for using the anticausative construction with \( \text{w} \ \theta \& \) is to make the patient prominent by placing the patient noun in the subject position. The meaning expressed by example (9) can be approximately fulfilled by using (22), below\(^6\), but there is a difference between them.

(22) \( \text{j} \ \text{ʔáŋphôn} \ \text{thà} \ \text{w} \ \text{mî} \)
\( \text{1SG} \ \text{cook} \ \text{PREP} \ \text{RES} \ \text{rice} \)
‘I have already cooked rice ready.’

The difference between examples (9) and (22) is the location of the viewpoint. In (9), the viewpoint is placed on the patient, “rice”, while in (22), the viewpoint is placed on the actor, “I”; therefore, the patient is more prominent in (9) than in (22). The reason that the anticausative construction becomes

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\( ^6 \) When the resultative verb particle \( \text{w} \ \theta \& \) occurs with a volitional verb, the verb particle denoting a preparatory aspect \( \text{thá} \) often appears. This particle might be a borrowing of the Burmese versatile verb \( \text{thá} \) ‘put; V so that there is some lasting result (Okell & Allott 2001: 99)’. 
productive when it is used with the resultative verb particle ｗё seems to be related to this fact. Because a result of an action remains in the patient, when one expresses a resultative situation, there occurs a demand for placing the viewpoint on the patient. Due to this need to place the viewpoint on the patient, it is possible that productivity of the anticausative construction becomes high.

Interestingly, derivative transitive predicates that are made from intransitive verbs by using causative particles or verb serialization are sometimes intransitivized again by using the anticausative derivation, as shown in examples (23) through (25). In (23), for example, the intransitive verb .toList is once transitivized by the causative particle ｍà, and the transitivized predicate is again intransitivized by the anticausative ｔà.

(23) ｃｈाङ ｍà .toList ｗё ｔà
  hen  CAUS  die  RES  ANTIC
  ‘The hen has already been killed.’

(24) ｔòn  khà  bái  wё  tà
  side.dish  overlay  covered  RES  ANTIC
  ‘The side dish has already been covered.’

(25) ｌé  bò  khà  wё  tà
  stick  apply.force  bent  RES  ANTIC
  ‘The stick has already been bent.’

The purpose of changing a derived transitive predicate again into an intransitive predicate would be to show the presence of an actor with the anticausative derivation with ｗё and, at the same time, use it to place the viewpoint on the patient. The predicate ｍà .toList ｗё ｔà in (23), for example, can show that there is an actor that killed the hen, which is different from simply saying .toList ｗё ‘(the hen) is already dead’, and, at the same time, it can place the viewpoint on the hen, which is different from using the corresponding transitive clause.

3. Distribution of the anticausative in inchoative/causative verb pairs

Here, we will see how Haspelmath’s (1993) list of inchoative/causative verb pairs are expressed in Pwo Karen, similar to the way the four papers on Tibeto-Burman languages (Kiryu [桐生] 2015 on Meche; Matsuse [松瀬] 2015 on Newari; Onishi [大西] 2015 on Rawang; Shirai [白井] 2015 on rGyalrong) contained in Pardeshi, Kiryu and Narrog [パルデシ・桐生・ナロック] (2015) do. Haspelmath researched 31 pairs of inchoative/causative verb pairs⁷ in 21 languages and presents a list of verb pairs arranged in order from strong preference for causative derivations to strong preference for anticausative derivation (Haspelmath 1993: 104). Table 2 shows the Pwo Karen forms that correspond to the verb pairs of Haspelmath’s list. Haspelmath uses the term “verb” pairs, but he states that his labelling does not take into account the status of the deriving elements as inflectional.

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⁷ Haspelmath (1993: 90) defines an inchoative/causative verb pair as follows: “An inchoative/causative verb pair is defined semantically: it is a pair of verbs which express the same basic situation (generally a change of state, more rarely a going-on) and differ only in that the causative verb meaning includes an agent participant who causes the situation, whereas the inchoative verb meaning excludes a causing agent and presents the situation as occurring spontaneously.”
derivational, or syntactic (Haspelmath 1993: 92). Thus, although the causative derivation and anticausative derivation in Pwo Karen are both syntactic and not morphological, it is no problem to apply the theory of Haspelmath to the Pwo Karen pairs.

The symbols C, A, E, S, and L stand for types of alternations; that is, causative, anticausative, equipollent, suppletive, and labile alternations. If I simply use the terms “intransitive” and “transitive” verbs for Haspelmath’s inchoative and causative verbs, (i) in the causative alternation, the intransitive verb is basic and the transitive verb is derived; (ii) in the anticausative alternation, the transitive verb is basic and the intransitive verb is derived; (iii) in the equipollent alternation, both intransitive and transitive verbs are derived from the same stem; (iv) in the suppletive alternation, different verb roots are used; and (v) in the labile alternation, the intransitive and transitive verbs are of the same form. In Pwo Karen, the equipollent alternation is rare.

We can see from Table 2 that in many cases, Pwo Karen uses the causative construction with the causative particle mà in order to express a transitive situation; that is, the causative alternation is the most frequently employed in Pwo Karen. Preference for the causative alternation is also common to Meche, Newari, Rawang, and rGyalrong. Meanwhile, it must be noted that the anticausative alternation is employed in three of the 31 pairs. As I pointed out in Kato (2009a), Pwo Karen has an anticausative alternation; however, in Burmese, a neighboring Tibeto-Burman language with which Pwo Karen now has the closest contact, there is no anticausative alternation.

| Table 2: Pwo Karen forms corresponding to Haspelmath’s (1993) 31 pairs of inchoative/causative verbs |
|-----------------------------------------|--|---|
| **INCHOATIVE** | **CAUSATIVE** | **Type** |
| 1. boil | khṑ thā̀ n | S |
| 2. freeze | khṑlṑn | C |
| 3. dry | xān | C |
| 4. wake up | nṑ thā̀n | C |
| 5. go out/put out | cāx thā̀n, láxphā̀ (消える) | S |
| 6. sink | láxhā̀n | S |
| 7. learn/teach | mālṓ | L |
| 8. melt | pī́ | C |
| 9. stop | pāxhāo | C |
| 10. turn | ūtārā̀i | C |
| 11. dissolve | pī́ | C |
| 12. burn | khṑyṑ | C |
| 13. destroy | yāyṑn | C |
| 14. fill | xwḕ | C |
| 15. finish | yṑn | C |
| 16. begin | tā̀i thā̀n | L |
| 17. spread | lḕ thā̀n | C |
| 18. roll | khḕs thā̀ | A |
| 19. develop | dṑ thā̀n | C |
| 20. get lost/lose | láxmā̀ | C |
| 21. rise/raise | thā̀n | C |
| 22. improve | yī̀ thā̀n | C |
| 23. rock | wā̀thṓ | C |
| 24. connect | bā̀ | C |
| 25. change | ū́sli thā̀ | A |
| 26. gather | kṑon | S |
4. Summary

In this paper, I first showed the usage of idiomatic anticausative forms in Pwo Karen and also discussed that the productivity of the anticausative construction in Pwo Karen becomes high when it is accompanied by the resultative verb particle -muted. Secondly, I discussed that Pwo Karen prefers the causative alternation, on the basis of the list of Haspelmath's verb pairs, and also that it is noteworthy that Pwo Karen also employs the anticausative alternation. From these facts, I would emphasize that the presence of the anticausative construction in Pwo Karen is significant.

Acknowledgments

I thank Mr. Saw Hla Chit, who has been helping me as a native speaker of Pwo Karen for more than twenty years. He gave me many samples of the anticausative construction and helped me by judging the acceptability of the anticausative forms in this paper.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTIC</td>
<td>anticausative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>comitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>irrealis</td>
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<td>PREP</td>
<td>preparatory aspect</td>
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<td>reflexive</td>
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<td>resultative</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vptc</td>
<td>verb particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcription

The transcription used in this paper is phonemic. Consonant phonemes are /p, t, c [tc], k, ?, ph, th, ch, kh, b, d, e, x, h, γ, m, n (ŋ), (n), s, w, j, l, r/. The bracketed consonants occur in loan words. Rhymes are /i, u, i, o, e, a, a, ai, au, an, an [aŋn], an, eĩ [ei̯-ei̯], ən [ən-ən], ən [ən-ən], ain/. There four tones: /á/ [55], /ā/ [33–334], /à/ [111], /â/ [51]. Pwo Karen has atonic syllables, which can occur in all positions other than utterance final. The rhyme that can occur in atonic syllables is /ə/ only, and atonic syllables are transcribed by no tone marking.

I have so far transcribed the vowel phoneme /i/ as /i/. However, the symbol /i/ is difficult to distinguish from /i/ when they are written with a tonal sign. Compare, for example, /i/ and /i/. Moreover, /i/ and /i/ hard to be distinguished from each other with some IPA fonts especially when they are in italics. Therefore, I use /i̯/ instead of /i/ in this paper.
