

The Anticausative in Pwo Karen

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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 Karen dialects, see Kato (1995, 2009b), Phillips (2000, 2017), and Dawkins and Phillips (2009a, 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

| Dialect group | Location |
|----------------------|---|
| Western Pwo Karen | Irrawaddy Delta, Myanmar |
| Htoklibang Pwo Karen | Bilin Township, Mon State, Myanmar |
| Eastern Pwo Karen | Karen State, Myanmar; Mon State, Myanmar; Tennasserim Division, Myanmar; West-Central Thailand |
| Northern Pwo Karen | Northwestern Thailand |



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 /phílân/ ‘give’. In a clause with /phílân/, 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,

¹ Kato (加藤) (2004) lists ten derivational affixes.

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 concern ourselves with these elements for the discussion of this paper. (1) is an example of a clause:

- (1) $\theta\grave{a}ʔw\grave{a}$ $m\grave{a}$ $ʔ\acute{a}n$ $b\acute{a}$ $m\grave{i}$ $ʔ\acute{a}ʔ\acute{a}$ $l\acute{a}$ $y\acute{e}iN$ $ph\grave{a}n$ $\epsilon\bar{i}$
 Thawa IRR eat (opportunity) rice much LOC house inside too
 NOUN₁ Vptc VERB Vptc NOUN₂ adverb adpositional phrase adverbial particle
 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) $ʔ\acute{a}w\acute{e}$ $p\grave{a}u$ $th\acute{a}n$ $p\grave{a}i\acute{t}\acute{e}r\acute{a}n$
 3SG open(tr.) up window
 ‘He opened the window.’

By using the verb particle $\theta\grave{a}$, this sentence can be changed into an intransitive sentence as in (3):

- (3) $p\grave{a}i\acute{t}\acute{e}r\acute{a}n$ $p\grave{a}u$ $th\acute{a}n$ $\theta\grave{a}$
 window open(tr.) up ANTIC
 ‘The window opened.’

The noun $p\grave{a}i\acute{t}\acute{e}r\acute{a}n$ ‘window’, which was in the object position in (2), has occurred in the subject position in (3). Moreover, in (3), the subject $ʔ\acute{a}w\acute{e}$ ‘3SG’, present in (2), cannot appear. In this paper, a clause with the verb particle $\theta\grave{a}$ 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 $\theta\grave{a}$ is regarded as a marker that forms anticausative clauses. A verb complex where $\theta\grave{a}$ accompanies the verb is called

particles”, “verb particles”, “adverbial particles”, and “sentence particles” (see Kato [加藤] 2004).

³ The verb $p\grave{a}u$ almost always occurs with the verb particle $th\acute{a}n$ which denotes an upward movement. It is often pronounced $ʔ\acute{a}n$ 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.⁴ Typically, the causative construction using the causative particle *mà* is employed. Examples include *mà θi* (*mà* + ‘die’) ‘to kill’, *mà yàyòN* (*mà* + ‘break (intr.)’) ‘to break’, *mà khā* (*mà* + ‘be bent’) ‘to bend’, *mà lànthé* (*mà* + ‘to drop (intr.)’) ‘to drop (tr.)’, *mà thé* (*mà* + ‘be cut’) ‘to cut’, *mà gàkhī* (*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:

| (4) | Causative verbs | | Anticausative forms |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| | pàu thán ‘open (as a window)’ | → | pàu thán θà ‘open (intr.)’ |
| | θào ‘move (tr.)’ | → | θào θà ‘move (intr.)’ |
| | wái ‘twist’ | → | wái θà ‘be twisted’ |
| | ʔò ‘open (as a betel nut)’ | → | ʔò θà ‘be opened’ |
| | ʔánlè ‘change (tr.)’ | → | ʔánlè θà ‘change (intr.)’ |
| | khə̀dà ‘attach’ | → | khə̀dà θà ‘be attached’ |
| | klò ‘peel’ | → | klò θà ‘be peeled’ |
| | ʔánkhwê ‘fish’ | → | ʔánkhwê θà ‘be fished’ |
| | bēin ‘close (eyes)’ | → | bēin θà ‘be closed (as eyes)’ |
| | khlēin ‘roll (tr.)’ | → | khlēin θà ‘role (intr.)’ |

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 *ʔánká* ‘bake’ in (5) and *thû* ‘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.

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).

- (5) *já ʔánká θà
 fish bake ANTIC
 Intended meaning: ‘The fish is baked.’

- (6) *khló thû θà
 mat roll ANTIC
 Intended meaning: ‘The mat is rolled.’

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 *ʔánká* ‘bake’ in (5) and *thû* ‘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 ʔánká wè θà
 fish bake RES ANTIC
 ‘The fish has already been baked.’ or ‘The fish has been baked in advance.’

- (8) khló thû wè θà
 mat roll RES ANTIC
 ‘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 ʔánphôn wè θà (*ʔánphôn θà)
 rice cook RES ANTIC
 ‘Rice has already been cooked.’

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

- (11) châin ʔánchújwà wè θà (*ʔánchújwà θà)
 shirt wash RES ANTIC
 ‘The shirt has already been washed.’

(12) nó thè wè θà (*thè θà)

grass pull.out RES ANTIC

‘The grass has already been pulled out.’

(13) chəphən khóuN wè θà (*khóuN θà)

hole dig RES ANTIC

‘A hole has already been dug.’

(14) láíʔəu kòkíθú wè θà (*kòkíθú θà)

book conceal RES ANTIC

‘The book has already been concealed.’

(15) chāiN ɛāN wè θà (*ɛāN θà)

shirt tear RES ANTIC

‘The shirt has already been torn.’

(16) phlì kwé làn wè θà (*kwé 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 *dó* ‘strike, hit’ in (17) can never be an anticausative form, even when they occur with the particle *wè*.

(17) *cəpwē dó 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) chāiN já wè

shirt torn RES

‘The shirt is already torn.’

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 *chāiN 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*.

- (19) phlì lánk wé wè
 rope untied RES
 ‘The rope is already untied.’

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 *wè* *thà*, 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) pàitərân pàu thán thà (=3)
 window open(tr.) up ANTIC
 ‘The window opened.’

If we add *wè* 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) pàitərân pàu thán wè thà
 window open(tr.) up RES 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 *wè* 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 *wè* 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), below⁶, but there is a difference between them.

- (22) jə ʔánphôn thá wè mī
 1SG cook PREP RES 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

⁶ When the resultative verb particle *wè* occurs with a volitional verb, the verb particle denoting a preparatory aspect *thá* often appears. This particle might be a borrowing of the Burmese versatile verb *thá* ‘put; V so that there is some lasting result (Okell & Allott 2001: 99)’.

productive when it is used with the resultative verb particle *wè* 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 *θi* is once transitivized by the causative particle *mà*, and the transitivized predicate is again intransitivized by the anticausative *θà*.

- (23) *chân* *mà* *θi* *wè* *θà*
 hen CAUS die RES ANTIC
 ‘The hen has already been killed.’
- (24) *θôn* *khà* *bài* *wè* *θà*
 side.dish overlay covered RES ANTIC
 ‘The side dish has already been covered.’
- (25) *lé* *bò* *khā* *wè* *θà*
 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 *wè* and, at the same time, use it to place the viewpoint on the patient. The predicate *mà θi wè θà* in (23), for example, can show that there is an actor that killed the hen, which is different from simply saying *θi wè* ‘(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,

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 | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| 1. boil | khō thán | dōn | S |
| 2. freeze | khólón | mà khólón | C |
| 3. dry | xáin | mà xáin | C |
| 4. wake up | nō thán | mà nō thán | C |
| 5. go out/put out | cáin thán (出る) lànphái (消える) | thào thán (出す) mà lànphái (消す) | S C |
| 6. sink | lànben | bèn | S |
| 7. learn/teach | màlò | màlò | L |
| 8. melt | phlī | mà phlī | C |
| 9. stop | pàtháo | mà pàtháo | C |
| 10. turn | ʔùtərài | mà ʔùtərài | C |
| 11. dissolve | phlī | mà phlī | C |
| 12. burn | khōyó | mà khōyó | C |
| 13. destroy | yàyòn | mà yàyòn | C |
| 14. fill | xwè | mà xwè | C |
| 15. finish | yòn | mà yòn | C |
| 16. begin | tài thán | tài thán | L |
| 17. spread | lē thán | mà lē thán | C |
| 18. roll | khlēin òa | khlēin | A |
| 19. develop | dó thán | mà dó thán | C |
| 20. get lost/lose | làn mā | mà làn mā | C |
| 21. rise/raise | thán | bò thán | C |
| 22. improve | yì thán | mà yì thán | C |
| 23. rock | wàthó | mà wàthó | C |
| 24. connect | bào | thò bào | C |
| 25. change | ʔánlè òa | ʔánlè | A |
| 26. gather | kòun | pəkòun | S |

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|---|
| 27. open | pào thán ðà | pào thán | A |
| 28. break | yà yòN | mà yà yòN | C |
| 29. close | bài | khà bài | C |
| 30. split | théphà | mà théphà | C |
| 31. die/kill | θī | mà θī | C |

C = causative alternation; A = anticausative alternation; E = equipollent alternation; S = suppletive alternation; L = labile alternation

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 *wè*. 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.

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Abbreviations

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|------|---------------|
| ANTIC | anticausative | RES | resultative |
| CAUS | causative particle | SG | singular |
| COM | comitative | Vptc | verb particle |
| IRR | irrealis | 1 | first person |
| PREP | preparatory aspect | 2 | second person |
| REFL | reflexive | 3 | third person |

Transcription

The transcription used in this paper is phonemic. Consonant phonemes are /p, θ [θ~t̪], t, c [t̪], k, ʔ, ph, th, ch, kh, b, d, ɕ, x, h, ɣ, ʁ, m, n, (ŋ), ñ, w, j, l, (r)/. The bracketed consonants occur in loan words. Rhymes are /i [ǎi], i, u, ɪ [ɪ], ʊ, e, ə, o, ɛ, a, ɔ, ai, au, əN, aN [ǎN], ɔN, eɪN [eɪN~ei], əuN [əuN~əu], ɔuN [ɔuN~ou], aɪN/. There four tones: /á/ [55], /ā/ [33~334], /à/ [11], /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 /ɪ/ [ɪ] as /ʌ/. However, the symbol /ʌ/ is difficult to distinguish from /i/ when they are written with a tonal sign. Compare, for example, /i/ and /í/. Moreover, /i/ and /í/ are hard to be distinguished from each other with some IPA fonts especially when they are in italics. Therefore, I use /i/ instead of /ʌ/ in this paper.

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