Animate pronoun attraction in Vera'a three-participant constructions

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Vera'a (Austronesian, Oceanic) has two types of construction expressing three-participant events that involve an AGENT, THEME/PATIENT and GOAL/RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY: in the indirective construction (cf. Malchukov et al. 2010), two different prepositions are employed to encode either inanimate GOALs (locative preposition *lē*, cf. (1)) or animate RECIPIENTs/BENEFICIARIES (dative preposition *mē*, cf. (2)) respectively. While all other PPs occur only in the clause periphery, dative PPs with a topical bare pronoun as complement may intervene between verb complex and object NP (cf. (3)). Where the complement is a focal pronominal NP, the dative PP nevertheless follows the object NP (4).

In the adnominal construction (cf. Malchukov et al. 2010; Margetts & Austin 2007), a possessive classifier is used to express an animate RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY. A RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY interpretation of the possessor is implied where a possessive NP functions as the object of verbs of transfer, obtaining or creation and a common possessor follows the possessed noun (cf. Margetts 2004, 2002) (cf. (5)). Where the possessor is pronominal, the possessive classifier expressing the RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY may form a NP on its own preceding the possessed NP, hence occupying a positon analogous to that of dative PPs (cf. (6)). In this case, the possessor is invariably interpreted as a RECIPIENT/BENEFICIARY rather than a possessor and hence we deal with a specific three-participant construction here.

A bare possessive classifier with a pronominal possessor also occurs within the verb complex, as in (7). Its predicate-internal position is evidenced by the lack of the article and by the position of the directional particle *ma* 'hither' that constitutes the right boundary of the verb complex if present (cf. (8)). Predicate-internal pronominal possessors parallel object pronouns expressing a THEME/PATIENT that also occur inside the verb complex (cf. (9) & (10)). Note that inanimate discourse participants are left implicit rather than being realised by a pronoun in such contexts.

To summarise, the constructional variation found in three-participant constructions in Vera'a is to attributed to animacy (huamn – animal - inanimate) and referentiality / form of referential expression (Pro – proper name – common NP) (cf. Croft 2003; Comrie 1981): the marking of G arguments in indirective constructions (preposition choice) is determined by the animacy of its referent. Furthermore, the adnominal construction is only possible with animate G arguments. Pronominal animate G arguments are attracted by the verbal predicate and are thus realised in position that are typically occupied by animate P/T arguments. However, where pronominal G arguments are focal and hence take a demonstrative to form a pronominal NP they nevertheless follow the T argument. Hence, pragmatic roles also determine the position and the form of G arguments.

Examples:

(1)   *mom*   *sur*   *suwēn [ēn*   *wōnir] [lē=**n**   **ma'a- wovinqa]***
       put   downwards   down ART leaf   LOC=ART   eye-coconut.shell

       '… put a leaf down onto the opening of the shell.'
     JJKP.008

(2)   *di*   *ne*   *le*   *[=n*   *sis]*   *[mē* **=n** **tētē** *anē]*
       3SG TAM give ART breast DAT =ART infant DEM

       'She gave the breast to the baby [i.e. breastfed the baby].'
     ASB.055

(3)   *no*   *=k*   *le*   *[mē* **di]** *[=n* *buluk]*
       1SG TAM give DAT 3SG =ART cattle

       'I will give him a piece of cattle.'
     1.NO.035

(4)   *di*   *ne*   *le*   *[=n* *qe'e]* *[mē* **di** *anē]*
       3SG TAM give =ART taro DAT 3SG DEM

       'Then she gave a taro to him here (not him over there).'
     ASMS.106

(5)   *di*   *ne*   *dada*   *[=n* *gie* **mo**   **'uvusm̄ēl]***
       3SG TAM RED:make =ART kava CLF.POSS chief

       '(Now) he is preparing kava for the chief.'
     JJKT.001

(6)   *n=lumgav*   *anē* *ne* *da* *[=n* **mo-gi]***
       ART=young.man   DEM TAM make =ART CLF.POSS-3SG

       [=n *gie]*
       =ART kava

       'This young man will prepare kava for him.'
     JJKT.049

(7)   *n=reñe*   *anē* *[ne* *m̄ōn* **go-ru]**   *=n* *dom*
       ART=woman DEM TAM roast CLF.POSS-3DL   =ART yam

       'Then this woman roasted yams for (the two of) them.'
     ANV.050

(8)   *nik* *[e* *le* **go-k**   *lik* *ma]* *=n* *'ilise*
       2SG TAM give CLF.POSS-1SG more hither =ART almonds

       'Give me (some) more almonds!'
     ISGG.032

(9) *duru [=m 'ō kal (eh) **gēdē** ma] lē =n*
     3DL =TAM carry upwards 1PL.INCL hither LOC =ART

vunu

village

'They brought us up here into the village.'
  GMV.021

(10) *n=lumgav anē di [me van 'ō ma] **=n***
     ART=young.man DEM 3SG TAM go carry hither =ART

sava
what

'This young man, what will he bring?'
  JJKT.020

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