Reciprocals in Kavalan and a Typological Comparison

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In this paper we investigate the forms and functions of reciprocals in Kavalan, and along the lines of Lichtenberk (1985, 2000) and Bril (2005), we show that the affix sim-, as a primary device to construct reciprocals, is polyfunctional and polysemous as in Oceanic languages. Among the core meanings are reciprocal, chaining, collective, and distributive. These uses all share a common similarity: the same morphology is used to mark semantic features that denote a plurality relation among the context participants. This property is reflected on the syntax. That is, the sim-marked constructions all require a plural NP as their subject. Another syntactic property of the reciprocals is related to the transitivity of reciprocal construction. While several previous studies concerning reciprocals conclude that the derived reciprocal constructions are syntactically intransitive, a careful examination of Kavalan reciprocals reveals that sim- does not necessarily derive an intransitive construction. The affix sim- simply reduces the number of arguments; that is, it changes the valence of the predicates that it is attached to. Based on our comprehensive study of Kavalan reciprocals, we then assess relevant data and functions across (some) Formosan languages within a typological perspective. The issues of the connections between reciprocals and middles/reflexives, reciprocals and reduplication, and reciprocals and transitivity are addressed.

Key words: reciprocal, collective, chaining, distributive, reduced transitivity, Formosan, Kavalan, reduplication, reflexive, middle