

# STUDIES IN PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES & CULTURES

Volume 12 No. 1 2001

Sherri Brainard, series ed.

Kristi Drake. "A brief look at Sinama basic verbs and  
clause structures" 52–68



ISSN 0116-0516

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#### Sample Citation Format

Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista. 1977. "The noun phrase in Tagalog—English code switching". *Studies in Philippine Linguistics* 1:1, 1–16. Online. URL: <http://www.sil.org/asia/philippines/> [etc.] + access date.

## A Brief Look at Sinama Basic Verbs and Clause Structures

Kristi Drake

### 1. Introduction

In this paper, a class of 'basic' verbs is proposed for Sinama, a language of the Sulu archipelago of the Southern Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Basic verbs are defined as those roots that may function as verbs without affixation. Sinama clause core structure and clause types, as they relate to verbal morphology, are examined. It is shown that basic verbs produce only two distinct clause types: transitive and intransitive. The verbal affix *-an* is explored as a means of demonstrating how basic transitive and intransitive clause types serve as the basis from which other clause types may be derived through overt verbal affixation. Finally, the clause types illustrated in the paper are ranked as to their relative degrees of transitivity.

The focus system analysis commonly used in reference to Philippine languages<sup>2</sup> has been avoided in this study; instead, processes occurring in the Sinama clause core are examined in terms of components and grammatical slots which make up the clause core.

The analysis of Sinama presented in this paper is based on the presupposition that Sinama is an ergative language. Ergativity, therefore, is an underlying theme for all proposals made here regarding the language. Transitivity is also treated as a significant factor in the language, and explored as to its ramifications for the study of the Sinama clause core.

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<sup>1</sup> Sinama is one of the Sama-Bajaw languages belonging to the Hesperonesian subgroup of Austronesian languages (Pallesen 1985:1). There are several dialects of Sinama spoken in various locations in the Southern Philippines and in Sabah, Malaysia. (Walton (1986:1) says 11 or more.) They vary significantly in their grammar. This paper represents the dialect of Sinama spoken on Bongao and Sanga-Sanga Islands in Tawi-Tawi province. In this paper, the term 'Sinama' should be understood to refer only to this dialect of Sinama.

This paper was written during a grammar workshop conducted in the Philippines by the Summer Institute of Linguistics in August and September of 1993. The analysis presented here is based on texts and elicited materials gathered during six years of research in the Sinama language, as well as a practical working knowledge of the language acquired over those years. I am indebted to JoAnn Gault for patiently guiding me step by step in the production of this paper. I also wish to thank Rudy Barlaan, Alan Healey, Howard McKaughan and Stephen Quakenbush, all of whom made helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Pallesen 1973.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Language universals

Language is a form-meaning composite (Pike 1967:63; Pike and Pike 1982:4). Grammar deals with the form a language uses to express meaning. Semantics deals with the meaning of language. The formal characteristics of a language are those which are most language specific. The meaning level of language is where many universal characteristics of language are found.

The study of a language should not be viewed as an attempt to take a language 'grid' of a universal nature and tuck all of the data from a specific language in their appropriate pigeon holes. Rather, our knowledge of language universals should act as a tool for discovering and describing the unique internal patterns to be found within a specific language. In this brief look at Sinama basic verbs, I move away from the traditional focus system analysis towards an ergative analysis, taking an eclectic approach in describing certain clause structures.

### 2.2. Transitivity

Transitivity is a universal characteristic of language. It is the property of a clause as a whole which relates to an activity being 'transferred' from an agent to a patient (Hopper and Thompson 1980:251). In looking at Sinama verbs, it will be helpful to consider the transitivity of the clauses in which they occur.

Dixon (1979) has proposed a set of semantic-syntactic primitives, S, A and O, which will be of help in examining this process of action transfer. The term S corresponds to the subject of an intransitive clause; A corresponds to the subject of a transitive clause; and O corresponds to the object of a transitive clause. Dixon claims for these semantic-syntactic primitives the status of universal core categories. He further states that "...syntactic rules in every grammar are framed in terms of them..." (1979:102).

### 2.3. Ergativity

The semantic-syntactic primitives are also useful in understanding the system of morphological case marking used in a language. In nominative-accusative languages, S and A are treated alike and marked as nominative case (NOM); O is treated differently and marked as accusative case (ACC). In ergative languages, S and O are treated alike and marked as absolutive case (ABS); A is treated differently and marked as ergative case (ERG).

Sentences (1)–(3) illustrate nominative-accusative case marking in English.

- (1) S V  
I laugh.
- (2) A V O  
I see him.
- (3) A V O  
He sees me.

Notice that S in (1) is a nominative pronoun (1s), and A in both (2) and (3) is a nominative pronoun (1s and 3s respectively), while O in (2) and (3) is an accusative pronoun (3s and 1s respectively). Thus S and A are marked alike (nominative), but O is marked differently (accusative).

Sentences (4)–(6) illustrate ergative-absolutive case marking in Sinama.

- (4) V        S  
 Sittowa aku.  
 laugh 1s.ABS  
 'I laugh.'
- (5) V        A        O  
 Sampak -nu     aku.  
 slap    -2s.ERG 1s.ABS  
 'You slap me.'
- (6) V        A        O  
 Sampak -ku     kow.  
 slap    -1s.ERG 2s.ABS  
 'I slap you.'

In (4) S is an absolutive pronoun (1s), and in (5) and (6) O is also an absolutive pronoun (1s and 2s respectively); however, A in (5) and (6) is an ergative pronoun (2s and 1s respectively). So S and O are marked alike (absolutive), but A is marked differently (ergative).

The term 'subject' is often associated with a grouping of S and A on the grammatical level; however, for ergative languages which group S and O on the grammatical level, the term subject is problematic. For the purposes of this paper, the term subject will be avoided; instead, I will use Dixon's term 'pivot' (1979:59–60) to refer to the surface category grouping S and O.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Basic verbs and clause structures in Sinama

Sinama verbs can be divided into two broad classes. The first and largest class consists of verbs which can occur without affixation.<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that these verbs never occur with overt affixation, but only that they function as verbs even when they are unaffixed. Since these verbs are less complicated morphologically, they are labeled 'basic' verbs. It is this verb class which is the focus of this paper. The smaller second class consists of the verbs which must have overt affixes (e.g. *ni-*, *N-*, *pa-* or *-an*) in order to function as verbs. This second class, the non-basic verbs, will not be dealt with in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> See also Foley and Van Valin (1984:110 and 1985) for more detailed discussions of the term 'pivot'. They define pivot as follows: "A pivot is any NP type to which a particular grammatical process is sensitive, either as controller or as target" (Foley and Van Valin 1985:305).

<sup>4</sup> In general, when I talk about verbs having no affixation, I am not disallowing the inflectional affixes, *ta-* and *paq-* which mark abilitative and aspect, respectively.

Basic verbs can be divided into two subclasses based on the clause structure which results when the unaffixed form of these verbs is used. Sentences (4) and (5) above illustrate these two verb subclasses and their respective clause structures. Both sentences use the unaffixed form of the verb. The verb of (4), *sittowa* 'laugh', occurs in a VS clause, a 'basic intransitive' clause. The verb of (5), *sampak* 'slap', occurs in a VAO clause, a 'basic transitive' clause.

What has been described above as 'clause structure' would be more accurately termed 'clause core structure'. For the purposes of this paper, a Sinama clause core is defined as the part of a clause which contains the verb and all its NP arguments which are not marked by a preposition. Since we are dealing here only with clause cores, the term 'clause structure' should be understood to refer only to the structure of the clause core.

The point to note here is that unaffixed basic verbs always produce one of the two basic clause structures, VS or VAO.<sup>5</sup> To produce any other type of clause, basic verbs must take overt affixation. For this reason, the unaffixed form of a basic verb will be referred to as its most basic form.

The nature of basic verbs, which are thus limited in their transitivity, may indicate that transitivity is particularly significant in Sinama. Therefore, transitive and intransitive verbs are considered separately in the discussion which follows.

### 3.1. Basic transitive clauses

Basic transitive clauses have a VAO structure, as shown in (7)–(9).

- (7) V        A        O  
 Hinang -ku        hangbáng.  
 make -1s.ERG cookies  
 'I will make the cookies.'
- (8) V        A        O  
 Bowa -ku        intallo (ni lumah).  
 bring -1s.ERG eggs (to house)  
 'I will bring the eggs (to the house).'
- (9) V        A        O  
 Adjal -na        dayng.  
 cook -3s.ERG fish  
 'He will cook the fish.'

Each sentence in (7)–(9) has an A and an O argument. The A argument is a clitic pronoun. The O argument undergoes the action of the verb; that is, it is directly affected by the action.

<sup>5</sup> In the case of basic transitive verbs, abilitative affixation (*ta-*) makes the A argument optional, whereas it is obligatorily present as a clitic pronoun in the unaffixed verb form.

### 3.2. Basic intransitive clauses

Basic intransitive clauses have a VS structure, as illustrated by (10) and (11).

- (10) V            S  
 Sittowa    aku.  
 laugh      1s.ABS  
 'I laugh.'

- (11) V            S  
 Bahak      aku.  
 lie.down   1s.ABS  
 'I lie down.'

The S argument, as the single NP of an intransitive, has an 'actor'-like quality, but in ergative languages S and O are marked alike as absolutives. So S is treated grammatically the same as O. In a sense, S could be said to function as both A and O in that it both performs and undergoes the action of the verb.

### 3.3. Clause slots

The clause core can be analyzed structurally as a frame containing a limited number of empty grammatical slots. A basic transitive clause contains three components which potentially fill three separate grammatical slots. These three components are VAO. In labeling these three slots, traditional grammatical terms might be misleading, so we will follow Dixon here. The verb slot is filled by a basic transitive verb. The slot filled by A is labeled 'ergative', since only ergative NPs can occur in this slot. The slot filled by O is labeled 'pivot'. So then, the three slots of a basic transitive clause core are: verb, ergative, and pivot. This structure is illustrated in (12)–(14).

- |      | VERB           | ERG            | PIVOT                |                            |
|------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| (12) | Hinang<br>make | -ku<br>-1s.ERG | bangbáng.<br>cookies | 'I will make the cookies.' |
| (13) | Bowa<br>bring  | -ku<br>-1s.ERG | intallo.<br>eggs     | 'I will bring the eggs.'   |
| (14) | Adjal<br>cook  | -na<br>-3s.ERG | dayng.<br>fish       | 'He will cook the fish.'   |

A basic intransitive clause has only two components, VS, which potentially fill two grammatical slots, verb and pivot. The verb slot is filled by a basic intransitive verb and the pivot slot is filled by S. This structure is shown in (15) and (16). Notice that the ergative slot remains empty.

	VERB	ERG	PIVOT	
(15)	Sittowa laugh		aku. 1s.ABS	'I laugh.'
(16)	Bahak lie.down		aku. 1s.ABS	'I lie down.'

#### 4. The affix *-an*

The structure of a clause can be affected by adding the affix *-an* to a basic verb. The affix *-an* is sometimes problematic. Consider (17) and (18).

- (17) Isi -ku      gih boheh ni diyalom galun.  
fill -1s.ERG yet water to inside container

'I will put the water in the container.'

- (18) Isi-an -ku      gih galun boheh.  
fill-AFF -1s.ERG yet container water

'I will fill the container with water.'

To a native English speaker, the two sentences seem to have somewhat different meanings: to put something (into a container)(17), and to fill a container (with something)(18). In English, we must use two different verbs to express these actions; however, in Sinama, a single verb expresses both actions. How can we account for this kind of flexibility in the verb?

One answer would be to view it through a traditional focus system analysis. Briefly, the focus system may be described as a system in which morphological marking on the verb cross-references one of the arguments of the verb. The verb occurs with an affix which signals a certain semantic role as being of particular relevance to its action. A specific NP is overtly marked to indicate that it is the argument being cross-referenced by the verb (and which therefore carries the semantic role indicated by the verb affix).

Some linguists have noted that Philippine languages may be viewed as varying in the degree of intensity of their focus marking systems.<sup>6</sup> For example, languages which have obligatory morphological marking on all NPs could be considered 'strong' focus marking languages. On the other hand, languages which do not mark all NPs or which mark NPs optionally might be considered 'weak' focus marking languages.

Sinama tends towards the 'weak' end of the focus marking scale. Arguments in the clause core, with the exception of ergative NPs, usually receive no morphological marking. For this reason, I will examine the verbal flexibility noted above from a viewpoint other than that of a focus system.

<sup>6</sup> R. Barlaan, personal communication.

#### 4.1. The affix *-an* and transitive verbs

The affixation of *-an*<sup>7</sup> to basic transitive verbs marks the action of a verb as being directed toward a particular target. The target either receives a transferred item, or is in a directional relationship to the action of the verb. For this discussion, the target is labeled 'goal'. A clause having a basic transitive verb that has been affixed with *-an* is labeled a 'directed transitive' clause. Examples are given in (19)–(21).

	VERB	ERG	?	?	
(19)	Hinang-an make-DIR	-ku -1s.ERG	kow 2s.ABS	bangbáng. cookies	'I will make you the/some cookies.'
(20)	Bowa-an bring-DIR	-ku -1s.ERG	anakanak child	intallo. eggs	'I will bring the child the/some eggs.'
(21)	Adjal-an cook-DIR	-na -3s.ERG	aku 1s.ABS	dayng. fish	'He will cook me the/some fish.'

In addition to the verb, the directed transitive clauses in (19)–(21) each have an A component (a participant who is performing the action), followed by a goal (a participant who receives the transferred item). The last component in the clause is the counterpart of O in basic transitive clauses. Basic transitive counterparts for the above sentences are given in (22)–(24) below for comparison.

	VERB	ERG	PIVOT	
(22)	Hinang make	-ku 1s.ERG	bangbáng. cookies	'I will make the cookies.'
(23)	Bowa bring	-ku -1s.ERG	intallo. eggs	'I will bring the eggs.'
(24)	Adjal cook	-na -3s.ERG	dayng. fish	'He will cook the fish.'

With affixation of *-an* to the verb, the number of potential components in a transitive clause increases from three to four. The component which immediately follows A in a basic transitive clause moves to the right to make room for the new component, the goal, and the transitive clause now has four grammatical slots, as seen in (19)–(21). The question is, which of the final two clause slots is the pivot? Also, what kind of slot is the added slot? There are two logical possibilities regarding the unlabeled slots: 1) there is a double occurrence of one of the three original clause slots, and 2) there is a new, as yet unidentified, clause slot. We will demonstrate the latter to be the case.

Sinama marks all ergative NPs using either an ergative pronoun or the preposed particle *heh*.<sup>8</sup> Clause core NPs that are not ergative arguments are usually unmarked

<sup>7</sup> The data in this paper have been regularized. The affix *-an* has a phonologically conditioned variant: *-an* → *-han/V\_\_*.

<sup>8</sup> There are many dialectal variants of *heh* (e.g. *leh*, *eh*).



the same role as previously, i.e. it is still the participant cooking the fish. In other words, the original three-component clause is still intact within the new four-component clause.

On the other hand, the semantics of the affixed verb ( $V_2$ ) carries the added notion of directed action. For transitive verbs, this usually means a transfer of some sort. The affixation of *-an* to the verb requires the presence of a goal to which the transferred item is being directed. That is why the goal is labeled as  $O_2$ .

Note that if we look only at the components labeled with a subscript 2, they have a clause structure identical to that of the basic clause in (25). This structural similarity between the basic transitive clause and the directed transitive clause indicates that the goal is the pivot of the directed transitive clause. This is further corroborated by the fact that the pronoun that fills the pivot slot is absolutive. This means that the directional nature of the verb's action has now become the dominant idea of the predication. Therefore, even though the NP in the pivot slot is semantically a goal, it has been made the O component of the clause. This is further verified by the fact that *dayng* 'fish' ( $O_1$ ) may be omitted from the directed transitive clause (27), but the goal ( $O_2$ ) may not (28).

(27) *Adjal-an-na aku.*

'He will cook me [something].'

(28) *Adjal-an-na dayng.*

'He will cook the fish [something]; i.e., he will cook [something for] the fish.'

\*'He will cook [someone] fish.'

Both clause structure and the obligatory presence of the goal make it clear that the goal fills the pivot slot in the clause. This fact, in turn, tells us something about the still unlabeled final slot of the directed transitive clause. Since the pivot slot in the clause is filled by the goal, the final clause slot (which the  $O_1$  component fills) can only be a non-pivot slot, and therefore a slot of grammatically lower prominence than the pivot slot.

Even though the  $O_1$  component has been grammatically lowered in prominence in the directed transitive clause, it is still semantically relevant to the predication. Therefore, we will label the slot filled by  $O_1$  the 'verbal complement' (VC) slot. The four clause slots with their appropriate labels are given in (29).

(29)	VERB	ERG	PIVOT	VC
	<i>Adjal-an</i>	<i>-na</i>	<i>aku</i>	<i>dayng.</i>
	cook-DIR	-3s.ERG	1s.ABS	fish

'He will cook me some fish.'

#### 4.1.2. Comparison to English

In English, it is the semantics which allows or disallows directionality of action to be expressed within the clause core. The verb takes the same morphological form whether directionality is indicated or not. This point is illustrated by the two English verbs 'tell' (30)–(33) and 'mention' (34)–(37).

- (30) I told her.  
 (31) I told a story.  
 (32) I told a story to her.  
 (33) I told her a story.  
 (34) I mentioned her.  
 (35) I mentioned the incident.  
 (36) I mentioned the incident to her.  
 (37) \*I mentioned her the incident.

Some English verbs, like 'tell', allow an indirect object to occur in the clause core without any prepositional marking. When the verb 'tell' occurs with a single non-actor NP which is animate (30), that NP is interpreted as an indirect object. When both the indirect object and the direct object are present in the clause, the indirect object may be marked with a preposition (32), or it may occur without a preposition (33).

Other verbs, like 'mention', require the indirect object to be marked by a preposition to show a directional relationship (36). When the verb 'mention' occurs with a single non-actor NP which is animate, that NP cannot be interpreted as an indirect object (34). The single non-actor NP can only be interpreted as a direct object (34)(35). A sentence, such as (37), which has an indirect object unmarked by a preposition is not allowed.

Sinama has grammaticized this process of indicating directionality of action within a clause core. In Sinama, an unaffixed transitive verb may only be interpreted as having a direct effect on its O component (like the English verb 'mention') (38). This basic verb only allows a goal to be indicated by means of a prepositional phrase in the clause periphery. In this case, the goal is completely optional (39).

- (38) Adjal -na dayng.  
 cook -3s.ERG fish  
 'He will cook the fish.'  
 (39) Adjal -na dayng ma aku.  
 cook -3s.ERG fish for 1s.OBL  
 'He will cook the fish for me.'

For a clause core to incorporate the idea of directionality into the action of its verb, the verb must be affixed with *-an*. Once affixation takes place, the verb may no longer be interpreted as having a direct effect on the O component, (unlike 'tell' which can be interpreted as having either a direct or an indirect effect depending on the context, and the animateness of the O component). When the verb is affixed with *-an* and there is only one non-ergative NP, the NP must be interpreted as a goal, as illustrated in (40).

- (40) Adjal-an -na dayng.  
 cook-DIR -3s.ERG fish  
 'He will cook the fish [something]; i.e., he will cook [something for] the fish.'  
 \*\*He will cook [someone] the fish.'

## 4.2. The affix *-an* and intransitive verbs

With the affixation of *-an* to the verb of a basic intransitive clause, the action of the verb is marked grammatically as being directed in relation to a goal. This means that a new component functioning as goal enters the clause. A basic intransitive clause whose verb has been affixed with *-an* is labeled a 'directed intransitive' clause. It is important to note that with the addition of a new component to the clause core, the resulting clause is no longer intransitive at all, as the label might cause one to think. The label is merely meant to indicate that the clause is derived from a basic intransitive verb. The label also serves to differentiate between this type of clause and a basic transitive clause, a contrast which we will explore further in section 5. Sentences (41) and (42) both have an A component (a participant who is performing the action) and an O component (a goal towards which the action is being directed).

- (41) V            A            O  
 Sittowa-an   -ku            kuting.  
 laugh-DIR   -1s.ERG     cat  
 'I laugh at the cat.'

- (42) V            A            O  
 Bahak-an     -ku            tilam.  
 lie.down-DIR -1s.ERG     mattress  
 'I lie down on the mattress.'

Compare (41) and (42) with their basic intransitive counterparts in (43) and (44). Recall that basic intransitive clauses have two components which fill the two slots verb and pivot. (The ergative and verbal complement slots remain empty, since there are no components to fill them.)

- |      | VERB              | ERG | PIVOT          | VC            |
|------|-------------------|-----|----------------|---------------|
| (43) | Sittowa<br>laugh  |     | aku.<br>1s.ABS | 'I laugh.'    |
| (44) | Bahak<br>lie.down |     | aku.<br>1s.ABS | 'I lie down.' |

Directed intransitive clauses (41) and (42) differ from their basic intransitive counterparts (43) and (44) in number of clause components and grammatical slots. The affixation of *-an* to the verb requires a goal component in the clause, just as it does in a directed transitive clause. As in a directed transitive clause, the goal fills the pivot slot, forcing the former S component (which, as noted in 3.2, is somewhat actor-like) into the ergative slot as an A component, as shown in (45) and (46).

- |      | VERB                    | ERG           | PIVOT          | VC                    |
|------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| (45) | Sittowa-an<br>laugh-DIR | -ku<br>1s.ERG | kuting.<br>cat | 'I laugh at the cat.' |

- (46) Bahak-an        -ku        tilam.                    'I lie down on the mattress.'  
 lie.down-DIR    1s.ERG    mattress

In (45) the action of laughing is being performed by A, but is directed at the cat. In (46) the action of lying down is being performed by A, but is directed towards the mattress. So we see that a goal filling the pivot slot has the same general relationship to a directed intransitive verb as to a directed transitive verb. Specifically, the goal does not directly undergo the action of the verb. It is indirectly affected, being the reference point in relation to which the directionality of the action is shown.

In a directed transitive clause, the goal usually receives some transferred item. We traced the semantic change occurring in the directed transitive clause in (25) and (26). There is a related but different change that occurs when a basic intransitive verb takes an *-an* affix. In a basic intransitive clause, there are only two components to begin with: VS. When affixation takes place, an additional component enters the clause. The semantic change which occurs takes the form of a loss of affectedness. This loss is illustrated by (47) and (48). Sentence (47) is a basic intransitive clause. Notice that the non-verbal component of the clause which should be S has been labeled instead as both A and O, since it carries functions similar to both.

- (47) V<sub>1</sub>            A<sub>1</sub> / O<sub>1</sub>  
 Sittowa    aku.  
 laugh      1s.ABS  
 'I laugh.'

In (48), the basic intransitive verb is affixed with *-an*. We can now trace the change which takes place in the clause by labeling the new components with a subscript 2, while the original components keep a subscript 1.

- (48) V<sub>2</sub>            A<sub>2</sub>        O<sub>2</sub>  
 V<sub>1</sub>            A<sub>1</sub> (O<sub>1</sub>)  
 Sittowa-an   -ku        kuting.  
 laugh-DIR   -1s.ERG   cat  
 'I laugh at the cat.'

The S component of the basic intransitive clause has a dual function of A and O. When the verb takes the affix *-an*, the O function splits off from the former S component (which is why O<sub>1</sub> is put in parenthesis above) and given to the newly-introduced goal component O<sub>2</sub>.

## 5. Degree of clause transitivity

Hopper and Thompson (1980:266) view transitivity as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy between transitive and intransitive. This means that there are varying degrees of transitivity. They propose a list of components which help determine the degree of transitivity of a clause (Hopper and Thompson 1980:252); that is, the degree to which a transference of action takes place. A clause is ranked either high or low in regard to each of these components. The more high rankings a clause has, the more transitive it is.

The transitivity components which are particularly relevant to our present discussion are listed in (49).

- (49)
1. **NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.** Theoretically, no transfer of action can occur unless there are at least two participants involved.
  2. **ACTION VS. STATE.** An action can be transferred from an agent to a patient, but a state cannot.
  3. **AFFECTEDNESS OF O.** The degree to which O is affected by the action (i.e., completely affected or only partially affected).
  4. **INDIVIDUATION OF O.** The distinctness of O, both in relation to A and to its own background. (For example, an animate, definite NP is more highly individuated than an inanimate, indefinite NP; also a reflexive is low in individuation because O is synonymous with A.)

Basic verbs in Sinama occur in two clause types: basic intransitive and basic transitive. When a basic intransitive verb is affixed with *-an*, it produces a directed intransitive clause. Similarly, when a basic transitive verb is affixed with *-an*, it produces a directed transitive clause. So we have four different types of clause, but only three different clause structures, as illustrated in Table 1. (Note that the directed intransitive clause has the same grammatical slots as the basic transitive clause.)

Table 1. Clause types and their slots in Sinama

Clause type	Clause slots			
Basic intransitive	V		PIVOT	
Directed intransitive	V	ERG	PIVOT	
Basic transitive	V	ERG	PIVOT	
Directed transitive	V	ERG	PIVOT	VC

The question arises as to whether the structures in Table 1 represent three or four distinct clause types. By comparing the level of transitivity of each of these four types of clause, we can establish that the structures represent four distinct clause types. The four clause types will then be compared by pairs to determine their relative degrees of transitivity. By pairing the clauses, they can be more easily ranked in relation to each other. For example, a basic transitive clause would rank high in number of participants because it has two or more participants. On the other hand, if we compare a basic transitive clause to a directed transitive clause, the basic transitive clause would rank lower because it has fewer participants than the directed transitive clause. In Tables 2–4, the numbers represent transitivity components and correspond to the numbers given to the components in (49); e.g., number 1 stands for the component ‘number of participants’. A high ranking is represented by + and a low ranking by –.

Table 2 shows the comparative transitivity rankings of basic intransitive and directed intransitive clauses. As the results indicate, a directed intransitive clause is higher in transitivity than a basic intransitive clause because the directed intransitive clause has three boxes marked + while the basic intransitive clause has only two.

Table 2. Ranking of transitivity in basic intransitive and directed intransitive clauses in Sinama

Clause type	Component ranking			
	1	2	3	4
Basic intransitive	-	-	+	+
Directed intransitive	+	+	-	+

A basic intransitive clause has only one participant, so it ranks low for component 1, number of participants. It also ranks low for component 2, action vs. stative, since there is no distinction in Sinama between intransitive active verbs and intransitive stative verbs in their structure, as (50) and (51) illustrate.

(50) V     S  
 Sittowa aku.  
 laugh 1s.ABS  
 'I laugh.'

(51) V     S  
 Sakki aku.  
 sick 1s.ABS  
 'I am sick.'

On the other hand, the single participant of a basic intransitive clause is directly affected by the action of the verb and so ranks high for component 3, affectedness. The single participant must also be definite and so ranks high for component 4, individuation, as well.<sup>9</sup>

A directed intransitive clause has two participants. In comparison to a basic intransitive clause, it ranks high for component 1, number of participants. It also ranks high for component 2, action vs. state, as do all clause types other than the basic intransitive clause. The O component of a directed intransitive clause is a goal and is only indirectly affected by the action of the verb, so it ranks low for component 3, affectedness. On the other hand, O is definite and often animate, so it ranks high for component 4, individuation.

Table 3 gives the transitivity rankings of directed intransitive clauses and basic transitive clauses. For this pair, the rankings show that a basic transitive clause is higher in transitivity than a directed intransitive clause.

<sup>9</sup> For basic intransitive clauses, the ranking of components 3 and 4 as + or - depends on the assumption that the single argument should be treated as O. If this assumption is rejected, this ranking would not hold. Furthermore, basic intransitive clauses having a verb such as 'laugh' could be considered reflexive and would therefore be ranked - for component 4.

Table 3. Ranking of transitivity in directed intransitive and basic transitive clauses in Sinama

Clause type	Component ranking			
	1	2	3	4
Directed intransitive	+	+	-	+
Basic transitive	+	+	+	+

A directed intransitive clause and a basic transitive clause both have two participants, and so both rank high for component 1, number of participants. Both are active, and so rank high for component 2, action vs. state. The presence of the *-an* affix requires a directed intransitive clause to have a semantic goal as its O component. Since a goal is less directly affected by the action of the verb than the semantic patient that is the O component of a basic transitive clause, O of a directed intransitive clause ranks lower than O of a basic transitive clause for component 3, affectedness. Both clauses have a definite O component and so both rank high for component 4, individuation.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4 shows the transitivity rankings of basic transitive and directed transitive clauses. For these clauses, the directed transitive clause is higher in transitivity than the basic transitive clause.

Table 4. Ranking of transitivity in basic intransitive and directed transitive clauses in Sinama

Clause type	Component ranking			
	1	2	3	4
Basic transitive	-	+	+	-
Directed intransitive	+	+	-	+

The directed transitive clause has three participants, compared to the two participants of the basic transitive clause; therefore, the directed transitive clause ranks high for component 1, number of participants, and the basic transitive clause ranks low. Both clauses are active and so rank high for component 2, action vs. state. The O component of the directed transitive clause is not directly affected by the action and so ranks low for component 3, affectedness; however, the basic transitive clause ranks high for component 3 since its O component is directly affected. While both types of clause have a definite O component, O of the directed transitive clause tends to be more animate than that of a basic transitive clause, and so ranks higher for component 4, individuation.

On the basis of these comparisons, we can place the clause types on a cline according to their degree of relative transitivity. In Table 5, the least transitive clauses are placed at the top of the cline and the most transitive clauses at the bottom.

<sup>10</sup> Note, too, that these clauses are distinguished as separate types by the fact that: 1) the directed intransitive clause requires a verb suffixed with *-an*, while the basic transitive clause does not, and 2) directed intransitive and basic transitive verbs belong to two different verb classes, intransitive and transitive.

**Table 5. Transitivity cline**


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Basic intransitive
Directed intransitive
Basic transitive
Directed transitive

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With respect to relative transitivity, we would be justified in labeling the clauses as four distinct types: two basic clause types and two directed clause types. Being even more general in our description, we could say that we have two basic clauses from which other clause types can be derived through affixation of their verbs.

## 6. Conclusion

Sinama has a broad class of basic verbs which can function as verbs without affixation. This class can be divided into two subclasses on the basis of transitivity. The two verb subclasses produce two clause types: basic intransitive verbs produce basic intransitive clauses and basic transitive verbs produce basic transitive clauses. Other clause types, such as directed intransitive clauses and directed transitive clauses, can be obtained only by affixing these basic verbs.

The Sinama clause core has been described in terms of a frame having four grammatical slots: verb, ergative, pivot, and verbal complement. The pivot slot is the most grammatically prominent of the non-verbal slots. This frame of clause slots, within an ergative analysis, may provide an alternative to the focus system analysis for understanding the grammar of Sinama clauses.

## Abbreviations

A	transitive subject	NOM	nominative
ABS	absolutive	O	object
ACC	accusative	OBL	oblique
AFF	affix	S	intransitive subject
DIR	directional	V	verb
ERG	ergative	VC	verbal complement

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