

The Interpretation of *tu* and Kavalan Ergativity

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Kavalan, an Austronesian language spoken in Taiwan, has been variously analyzed as accusative, ergative, and split ergative. These different conclusions stem from the fact that certain two-argument clause patterns are ambiguous regarding transitivity. To settle the matter, it is necessary to distinguish canonical transitive clauses from dyadic intransitive clauses. In this paper, we evaluate three proposals that have been made concerning Kavalan transitivity and actancy structure in terms of their morphosyntactic and semantic properties. We pay special attention to the form *tu* and determine that it is best analyzed as an oblique marker rather than as an accusative marker. We also conclude that there is only one canonical transitive construction, that found in two-argument *-an* clauses. The two-argument *m-* clauses, commonly analyzed as canonical transitives in most previous analyses, are treated as extended intransitives or pseudo-transitives—a type of intransitive clause. This leads to the conclusion that Kavalan is best analyzed as a purely ergative language.