Chapter 3

The Intransitive constructions in Assamese

3. Introduction

The present chapter deals with the canonical Intransitive constructions in Assamese, their extensions, and the interaction of different verb classes with them. It also discusses non-canonical intransitive constructions in the language.

Section 3.1 of the current chapter deals with the two types of canonical Intransitive constructions in Assamese. Section 3.2 deals with the extensions of them, one being the copula construction, the other conative construction among others. Section 3.3 deals with the non-canonical intransitive constructions in the language. Section 3.4 deals with the network of the intransitive constructions in the language.

3.1. The Intransitive constructions in Assamese

The intransitive construction encodes events that involve one salient participant. Thus, its grammatical representation is a subject or a subject-like participant paired with a verb.

The canonical intransitive ASC in Assamese is realized in two forms as evident from the examples (1)-(4) below.

1. *ram* *moril*
   ram *mor-il*
   Ram die-PERF.3
   '*Ram has died.*'

2. *ram* *hule*
   ram *hu-l-e*
   Ram sleep- PERF-3
   '*Ram has slept.*'

3. *rame* *dourise*
   ram-e *dour-is-e*
   Ram-ERG run-ING.PROG-3
   '*Ram is running.*'

4. *rame* *hahise*
   ram-e *hah-is-e*
   Ram-ERG laugh- ING.PROG-3
   '*Ram is laughing.*'

The one salient participant is syntactically realized in two ways in Assamese. In one, the participant is unmarked. Here the involved participant is not actively engaged in the action, but is a participant of an action, without instigating it. Such affected participants are seen in actions like *'mor'* (die) and *'hu'* (sleep) as in (1) and (2), respectively. The second way is where the ergative '-e' marks the involved participant to denote agency, as in (3) and (4), where the actions involved are '*dour*' (run) and '*hah*' (laugh), respectively. Thus, in (1) and (2), the participants are rather 'subject-like' subjects, grammatically behaving like a (P). According to Croft (1991,2012), force-dynamically[1] the verbs in (3) and (4) are higher than the verbs in (1) and (2), which can be described as neutral.

Thus, in the case of a single participant event, the subject is marked differently based on the nature of force-dynamic potential or agency of the verb, which is technically called DSM, i.e. Differential Subject Marking. This is often also referred to as split-intransitive.

3.1.1 The interaction of verb with '*S-ø V*' and '*S-e V*'

Intransitive verbs which denote one participant events are combined with the above two constructions. Croft (2012:257) classifies such verbs into the following categories. Category-wise, these verbs vary in the argument realization.

[1] Force Dynamic model is a generalization of the notion of causation, in which processes are conceptualized as involving different kinds of forces acting in different ways upon the participants of the event. (Croft and Cruse, 2004:66)

S-e V

a. Controlled activities		‘dour’ (run), ‘nas’ (dance)
b. Inactive actions:		‘boh’ (sit), ‘hu’ (sleep)
c. Bodily actions:	uncontrolled	‘kah’ (cough)
	controlled	‘hah’ (laugh)
d. Other uncontrolled activities:		‘mor’ (die), ‘barh’ (grow)

SV

Table. 3.1. Intransitive verbs based on force-dynamics

In order to test the nature of agency in the above categories of verbs, the present work proposes two tests. The first test is using such a verb as V1 in the complex predicate construction $[V1+V2]_V$, specifically with the verb ‘*de*’ as V2. Borkotoky (2023) claims that in order to form a grammatical compound verb (CV), the semantic frames of the verbs involved must be compatible with each other, forming a ‘coherent semantic’ frame. For instance, the verb ‘*de*’ (give) evokes an ‘intentional act’ frame, according to the FrameNet project, where the act done by the agent is intentional. Hence, in order to form a ‘coherent semantic’ frame, the V1 must denote intentionality. Thus, the verbs in (5) and (6) are compatible with ‘*de*’. However, ungrammatical with the verbs in (7) and (8).

5. *rame **ekekube** pas kilomiter douri dile* (Controlled activities)
   ram-e **ekekube** pas kilomiter [dour-i di-l-e]$_v$
   ram-ERG at once five kilometer [run-CP[2] give-PERF-3]$_v$
   ‘*Ram had run five kilometers.*’

[2] The marker *–i* is an infinitive marker in Assamese, but in a CV construction it is rather a CP, i.e. conjunctive particle.

6. *xi (b^{h}agorot) [hui dile]* $_{v}$ (Inactive actions)

   xi (b^{h}agor-ot) [hu-i di-l-e]$_{v}$

   he (tired-LOC) [sleep-CP give-PERF-3]$_{v}$

   '*He has slept as he was tired.*'

7. *ʔxi [kahi dile]* $_{v}$ (Bodily actions)

   xi [kah-i di-l-e] $_{v}$

   he [caugh-CP give-PERF-3]

   '*He has coughed.*'

8. **xi [mor-i dile]* $_{v}$ (Other uncontrolled activities)

   xi [mor-i di-l-e] $_{v}$

   he [die-CP give-PERF-3]

   '*He has died.*'

The second test is causativizing the verbs. It is clear from (9) and (10) that verbs which are less agentive (e.g., *'kah'* (cough), *'d^{h}uka'* (die)) cannot be causativised.

9. *Rame johnok dourale\hohuale\huale*

   ram-e jhon-ok dour-a-l-e\hoh-ua-l-e\hu-a-l-e

   Ram-ERG Jhon-OBJ run-CAUS-PERF-3\laugh-CAUS-PERF-3\sleep-CAUS-PERF-3

   '*Ram made Jhon run\laughs\sleep.*'

10. **ram-e john-ok. kah-ua-l-e\borh-ua-l-e\d^{h}uka-ua-l-e*

    Ram- ERG. jhon- OBJ caugh-CAUS-PERF-3\grow-CAUS-PERF-3 \die-CAUS-PERF-3

As discussed in the section 2.3.3, verbs and construction together combine to denote a specific meaning. Where construction denotes a general meaning, verbs add specific information to the construction. The combination of verbs with a construction is determined by two principles (see section 2.3.3) the *Semantic Coherence* principle and the *Correspondence* Principle.

The interaction of the verbs with the two instances of the Intransitive construction can be represented by Goldberg's '*form and meaning'* paring at the syntactic level and the semantic level as:

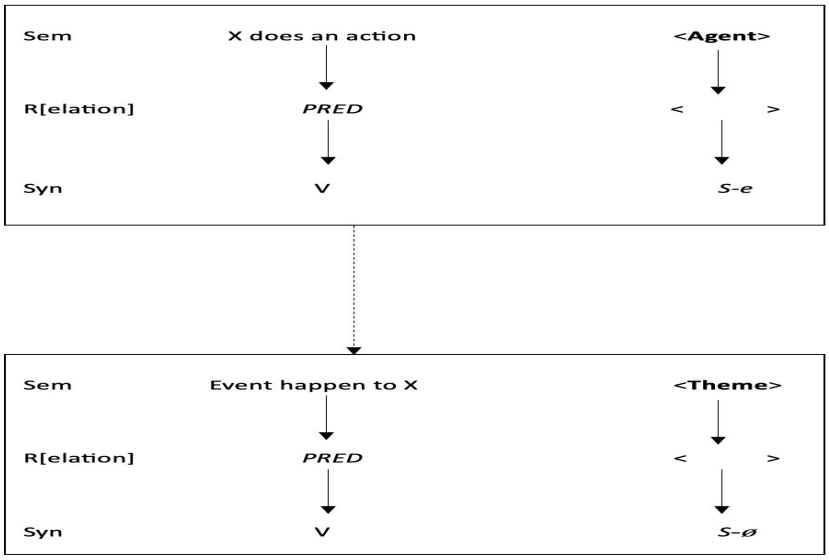
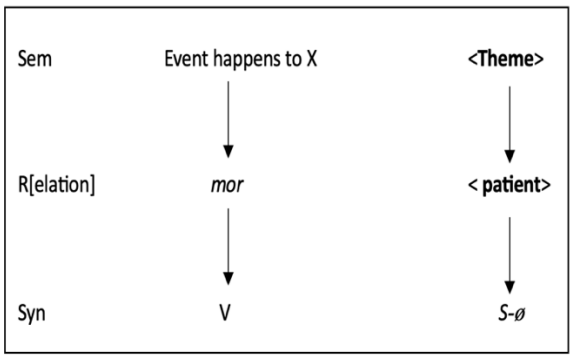


Fig. 3.1. The 'form-meaning' pair and the relation between the two Intransitive constructions

The two Intransitive constructions are related to each other by the metaphorical link (see section 3.4 and 6.1). The first row of the representation denotes the meaning of the construction, the agentive Intransitive involves an 'agent' as its argument role, which initiates an event, while the simple Intransitive denotes an event which involves a 'theme' argument role. The bold argument roles, '**Agent'** and **'Theme'** represents profiled roles. 'Every argument role linked to a direct grammatical relation (SUBJ, OBJ1 or OBJ2) is constructionally profiled' (Goldberg, 1995: 48). The last row is the syntactic realization of the semantics of both the Intransitives. The second row specifies how a particular verb is used in the construction. Each verb has a meaning, represented as 'R' or 'relation'. PRED is the variable that is filled by the verb when a particular verb is used or integrated into the construction. The representation of the examples in (1) and (3) is shown in in Figures 3.2(a) and 3.2 (b), respectively.



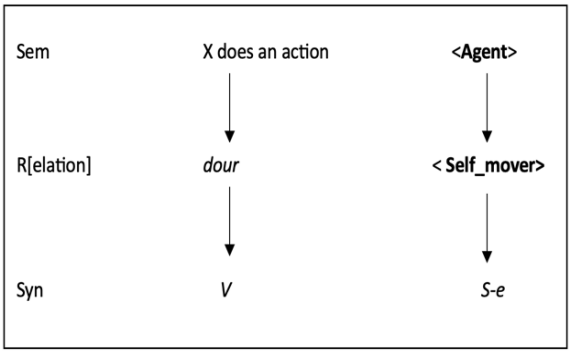


Fig. 3.2. (a) '*mor*' + simple Intransitive (b) *'dour*' + agentive Intransitive

The empty slot PRED is now occupied by the participant roles of the respective verbs '*mor*' and '*dour*'. The participant role of the verb '*mor'* is a '*patient*' and verb '*dour'* is a '*self_mover*'. The participant role of the verb '*mor'* is an instance of the argument role 'theme' and the participant role of the verb '*dour*' is an instance of the argument role 'agent'. Hence according to the *Semantic Coherence* principle both the argument role of the Intransitive constructions and the participant roles of the verbs are compatible with each other, hence can be combined.

The argument role of the construction '*S-ø V'* consists of a 'theme'. Thus, when the single salient participant of verbs includes a theme or a theme like participant, the verb is combined with 'S-ø V,' as in examples (1) and (2).

According to the semantic coherence principle, the participant role of the verb must be compatible with the argument role of the construction. Hence, a combination like (11) and (12) is ungrammatical as the participant roles and the argument roles are not compatible with each other.

11. **ram dourile*
ram dour-il-e
ram run-PERF -3
'*Ram has run.*'

12. **rame moril*

ram-e mor-il

ram-ERG die-PERF

'*Ram has died.*'

The participant role of the verb '*dour*' (run) involves an agentive participant. The argument role of the construction '*S-ø V'* with which the verb '*dour*' is combined, in (11), is not agentive in nature. It is theme-like argument role. Thus, there is a mismatch of the argument and the participant role. Hence, ungrammatical.

Similarly, the participant role of the verb '*mor*' (die) involves an affected participant. The argument role of the construction '*S-e V'* with which the verb '*mor*' is combined is agentive in nature. Hence it is marked similarly with the A of the transitive construction. Thus, the *semantic coherence principle* imposes certain constraints in the combination of verbs and constructions. The construction '*S-e V'* can accommodate intransitive verbs, whose participant role is agentive. In other words, when the one salient participant of the event is agentive, the verb is combined with the '*S-e V'* as in (3) and (4).

3.2. The Subject Oblique and Verb constructions

This section discusses events which involves one salient participant and another less salient participant. The less salient participant is not actively involved in the event, i.e., not instigating or affected by the event, but its presence is required to compete the event denoted by the construction. Hence, the less salient participant is marked differently form the S, A and P, often marked by oblique case markers. Often such constructions are regarded as extended intransitives (Dixon, 2010: 99).

3.2.1. The intransitive motion construction

As the name suggests, Intransitive Motion Construction (IMC) (Goldberg, 1995) involves a salient participant which undergoes movement from one place to another along a path which is represented in Assamese as, '*S* Obl_{path} *V*'. Talmy (1985) identifies four basic elements of a motion event: Figure (F), Ground (G), Path (P_t) and Motion (M). The Figure (F) is the object undergoing the motion. The reference point from which the figure's

movement is perceived or conceptualized is the Ground (G). The figure in motion changes its location from one point, i.e., G, to another which is represented the Path (P_t). Finally, the term Motion (M) encompasses the action the figure performs. Thus, the (13), (14), and (15) mark the same motion event with different elements of the paths in focus.

13. *ram* *guwahatiloi* *gol*
    ram guwahati-loi go-l
    Ram Guwahati-ALL go-PERF.3
    '*Ram has gone to Guwahati.*'

14. *ram* *tezpurorpora* *guwahatiloi* *gol*
    ram tezpur-or-pora guwahati-loi go-l
    Ram Tezpur-GEN-ABL Guwahati- ALL go-PERF.3
    '*Ram has gone from Tezpur to Guwahati.*'

15. *ram* *tezpuror* *hoi* *guwahatiloi* *gol*
    ram tezpur hoi guwahati-loi go-l
    Ram Tezpur through/via Guwahati-ALL go-PERF.3
    '*Ram has gone to Guwahati through/via Tezpur.*'

The motion event '*go*' (go), here, is subjected to IMC, but focusing different aspects of the P_t with respect to a G. The '*loi*' marker in (13) marks the goal ground, the prototypical marker for motion events. The motion event in (14) involves a complex path, where two path phrases are involved to denote the motion of a figure. Here the source ground and the goal ground both are expressed or profiled. Example (15) also involves a complex path, where the route through which the figure undergoes the motion, along with the goal ground is expressed or profiled.

The 'Source-Path-Goal' (henceforth S-P-G) (see Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1993) exhibits itself most directly in movement: a human being runs, crawls, jumps, rides, flies, sails, or otherwise travels from point A ('initial ground') to point B ('final ground') through a trajectory C ('medial ground'). Thus, this schema provides a structured framework to understand, organize, and conceptualize the motion events.

Thus, P^t is an integral element of a motion event. Different aspects of the path are profiled depending on the construal of the motion event. The same motion verb can be combined with different path markers to profile different aspects of the figure in motion. The different types of path markers along with its semantics in Assamese can be found in Borkotoky & Borah (2024). Assamese distinguishes three canonical path markers: (a) '-pora', (b) 'hoi'/'pare pare'/'kaxe-kaxe', and (c) 'loi'/'loike'/'fale', profile different aspects of the path. While '-pora' profiles the source ground, 'hoi'/'pare pare profiles the route, and 'loi'/'loike'/'fale' profile the goal.

3.2.1.1. The source marker *'-pora'*

Before the initiation of the figure's motion, the figure is in a state of rest, i.e., the figure starts its motion from a 'source'. Thus, '-pora' marks the ground from which the figure initiates its motion away from the 'source' ground, to a 'goal' ground. In most cases, as in (13), although the 'source' ground is not syntactically expressed, it is always implied. Certain elements of an action are conceptually salient but not always syntactically overtly expressed. Hence, this is an instance of Null Instantiation (NI). The syntactically missing element, in this case the 'source', is already understood in the discourse.

Another characteristic of the 'source' marker, *'-pora'* in this case is that it cannot be marked without specifying a goal as in (16) below:

16. **ram tezpurorpora gol*

ram tezpur-or-pora go-l

Ram Tezpur-GEN-ABL go-PERF

'**Ram went from Tezpur.*'

This is because of the 'goal-over-source' schema (Verspoor, Dirven and Radden, 1999). For human actions, the intended outcome, i.e the 'goal', is of more important than the initiation, i.e., 'source'. Furthermore, the combination of 'source' and the 'goal' is of more importance than the 'trajectory' or 'route'. Ungerer and Schmidt (1996) state that the information packing of the 'goal' is of higher status than the 'source'.

On the other hand, Lakoff & Nunez (2000: 38) points out (see Fig. 3.3) that "the expression of goal metonymically stands for the whole path". "[I]f you are at a given location on a path, you have been at all previous locations on that path" (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000:38).

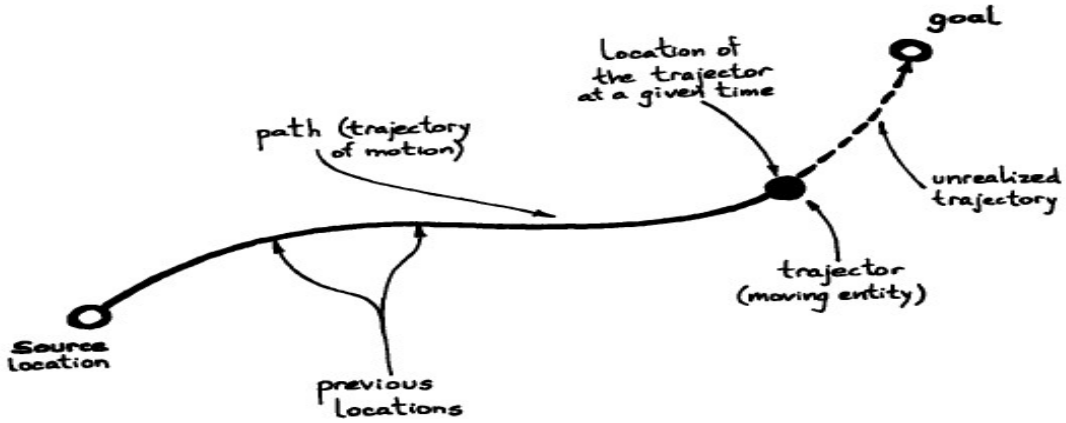


Fig. 3.3. The source-Path-Goal schema in (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000:38)

Thus, the construal of a motion event has a hierarchy, where the 'goal' takes the most prominent position, followed by the 'source', and then the 'trajectory'.

Consider, however, the examples below:

17. *koltu* *gosorpora* *xoril*
    kol-tu gos-or-pora xor-il
    banana-CLF tree-GEN-ABL fall-PERF.3
    '*The banana has fallen from the tree.*'

18. *ram guwahatirpora polal*
    ram Guwahati-r-pora pola-l
    Ram Guwahati-GEN-ABL run away-PERF.3
    '*Ram has run away from Guwahati.*'

Examples (17) and (18) are grammatical even without a goal ground, with only the marked source ground. Stefanowitsch and Rohde (2004) point out that certain verbs are inherently source oriented like 'fall' and 'escape'. From a frame semantics point of view, such source-oriented verbs only profile the source ground, where the core frame elements (see section 2.3.2) are the 'theme' and 'source'. Thus, in (17), the goal ground of the figure is already understood i.e., the earth due to gravity. This is a case of an instance of Definite Null Instantiation (DNI). In (18), the focus is on the action, rather than the goal.

3.2.1.2. The goal marker '*-loi*'

The dynamic postposition '*loi*' (as opposed to '-t/-ot', a static postposition) marks the goal of a motion event, also the recipient-like argument of a transfer event (see section 4.2.3). As expected, the marker is combined with verbs which are dynamic in nature. In (13) above, reproduced as (19) below. *'-loi'* marks the goal of a figure in motion, denoted by the motion verb '*go*' (go).

19. *ram* *guwahatiloi* *gol*
ram guwahati-loi go-l
Ram Guwahati-ALL go-PERF.3
'*Ram has gone to Guwahati.*'

Note, however, that the semantics of the figure may also play a role when '*loi/*$^{\beta}$*oloi*' is used to denote the goal of a motion as in (20) below:

20. (?) *bag*^{h}*-tu* *habi-loi* *ga-is-e*
tiger-CLF forest-ALL go-ING.PROG-3

Example (20) is inappropriate as the figure in the motion is [-human]. This is because '*loi*' has a property of orientation and in our ordinary perception only humans have the cognitive ability to change its position in an oriented path, not animals. However, consider (21) below:

21. *xilltu* *tololoi* *[bagori* *poril]*$_{v}$
xill-tu tol-oloi [bagor-i por-il]$_{v}$
stone-CLF down-ALL roll-CP fall-PERF.3
'*The stone rolled down.*'

Example (21), like (20), involves a [-human] figure, yet the example is grammatical. This is because the figure in motion in (21) is not self-propelled, but orientated due to the gravitational force.

[3] '*oloi*' is used with the consonant ending root.

3.2.1.3. The goal-oriented marker '*-loike*'

Another goal-oriented marker in Assamese is '*-loike*'. The difference between '*-loi*' and '*-loike*' is that '*loike*' has a property of delimitation, i.e., it limits the figure's motion. Thus, (22) is unacceptable, while (13) above is acceptable.

22. **xi* *kolikataoloike goi guwahatiloi gol*

xi	kolikata-loike	go-i	*guwahati*-loi	go-l
he	Kolkata-till	go-NF	Guwahati-ALL	go-PERF

The multi-clausal (23) is acceptable, where '*-loi'* furthers the scope of the figure's motion after reaching its intended goal.

23. *xi* *guwahatioloi goi kolikataloi gol*

xi	guwahati-loi	go-i	kolikata-loi	go-l
he	Guwahati-ALL	go-NF	Kolkata-ALL	go-PERF

'*He went to Guwhati and then to Kolkata.*'

In (24) and (25) below, we have two further examples showing the difference between '*-loi'* and '*-loike'*.

24. *moi xeik^{h}iniloike jam*

moi	xei-k^{h}ini-loike	ja-m
I	that-point-till	go-FUT

'*I'll go up to the point.*' (= 'I won't go beyond that point')

25. *moi xeik^{h}iniloi jam*

moi	xei-k^{h}ini-loi	ja-m
I	thatpoint-CLF-ALL	go-ALL

'*I'll go to that point.*'

3.2.1.4. Goal marker '*-fale*'

The last goal-oriented marker in the language is '*-fale*'. '*-fale*' is different from '*loi*' and '*loike*' in terms of orientation. Contrast (26) with (20) above, reproduced as (27) below:

26. *bag^{h}tu habirfale goise*

bag^{h}-tu	*habi-r-fale*	*go-is-e*
tiger-CLF	forest-GEN-towards	go-ING.PROG-3

'*The tiger went towards the forest.*

27. (?) *bag^{h}-tu habi-loi ga-is-e*

tiger-CLF forest-ALL go-ING.PROG-3

Example (27) is unacceptable because the figure involved is [-human] (see the explanation for (20) in 3.2.1.2). But (26) is acceptable, which means that '*-fale*' lacks the property of orientation.

In (28) below, we have a further example where both '*-fale'* and '*-loi'* occur.

28. *xi pot^{h}ar-or fale-he goise, patharoloi nahai*

xi	pot^{h}ar-or	fale-he	go-is-e	pathar-oloi	na-hai
he	field-GEN	towards-EMPH	go-ING.PROG-3	field-ALL	NEG-be

'*He is going towards the field, not* to *the field.*'

3.2.1.5. Route marker 'hoi'

The figure in motion changes its location form one ground, i.e., the 'source' ground, to another ground, i.e. the 'goal' ground, through an intermediate path situated between them. While the figure undergoes the change of location, it goes through a trajectory or route, which is marked by '*hoi*', as in (29) below.

29. *ram tezpur hoi guwahatiloi jabo*

ram	tezpur	hoi	guwahati-loi	ja-b-o
Ram	Tezpur	via	Guwahati-ALL	go-FUT-3

'*Ram went to Guwahati via Tezpur.*'

The route marker '*hoi*' cannot stand without the goal marker as is clear from (30) and (31) below:

30. **ram tezpur hoi jabo*

ram	tezpur	hoi	ja-b-o
Ram	Tezpur	via	go-FUT-3

31. **ram guwahatipora tezpur hoi jabo*

Ram	guwahati-pora	tezpur	hoi	ja-b-o
Ram	Guwahati-ABL	tezpur	via	go-FUT-3

3.2.1.6. Route marker 'pare pare/kaxe- kaxe'

'*pare pare/kaxe-kaxe*' is used when focus is only on the nature of the figure's motion, without focusing on the source or goal of the motion as in (32) and (33) below:

32. *ram harir kaxe-kaxe dourise*

ram	hari-or	kaxe-kaxe	dour-e
Ram	Hari-GEN	near-near	run-3

'*Ram is running side by side Hari'*

33. *xi nodir pare pare dourise*

xi	*nodi-r*	*pare pare*	*dour-is-e*
he	river-GEN	along along	run-ING.PROG-3

'*He is running along the river.*'

3.2.2. The interaction of verbs with the '*S Obl*$_{(path)}$ *V*'

As discussed in the previous sections, the 'S Obl$_{(path)}$ V' construction encodes the meaning of intransitive motion, where the figure changes its location from one ground to another along a route. The argument roles of the construction include a non-agentive subject, 'Theme', similar to the 'S-ø V' construction. While the less salient argument is marked by the oblique cases, which denotes the 'path'. The semantics of the construction involves a moving figure (theme) into a ground, marked by the oblique phrases, based on different construal of the motion event. The argument roles of the construction includes a 'Theme' and a 'Path' which are obligatory/profiled semantically, hence bolded. The 'Theme' subject is unmarked for the ergative case, similar to the simple Intransitive construction, and the path of a motion event is marked by the oblique phrase attached to a ground, hence unprofiled, denoted by the dotted line.

The form-meaning pair of the IMC is represented below:

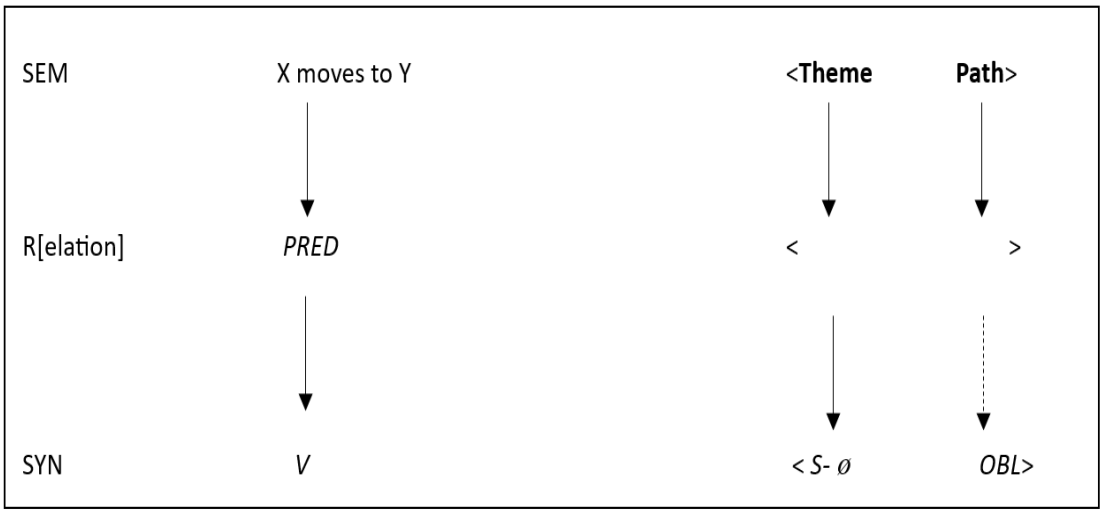


Fig. 3.4. The form-meaning pairing of the IMC

The class of verbs compatible with this construction, with the element of path, typically includes manner-of-motion verbs like 'za' (go), 'dour' (run), 'ur' (fly), and 'bagor' (slide). The path element plays a significant role in determining the nature of motion. Thus, source-oriented verbs are primarily compatible with the ablative '*pora*,' while typical motion verbs, i.e. goal-oriented verbs, prefer the allative '*loi*'.

Other goal markers like '*loike*' and '*fale*' can profile the motion event differently, with '*loike*' emphasizing the figure's termination of motion and '*fale*' highlighting the figure's non-oriented motion near the goal. Route path phrases profile only the trajectory of the figure's motion without specifying the goal or source.

In short, from a constructionist perspective, the verbs occurring in 'S $Obl_{(path)}$V' are typically motion verbs, and their frame semantics, along with the different path profiling, are syntactically represented in the oblique phrase.

The interaction of motion verbs with the intransitive motion construction for the example (13) can be represented as:

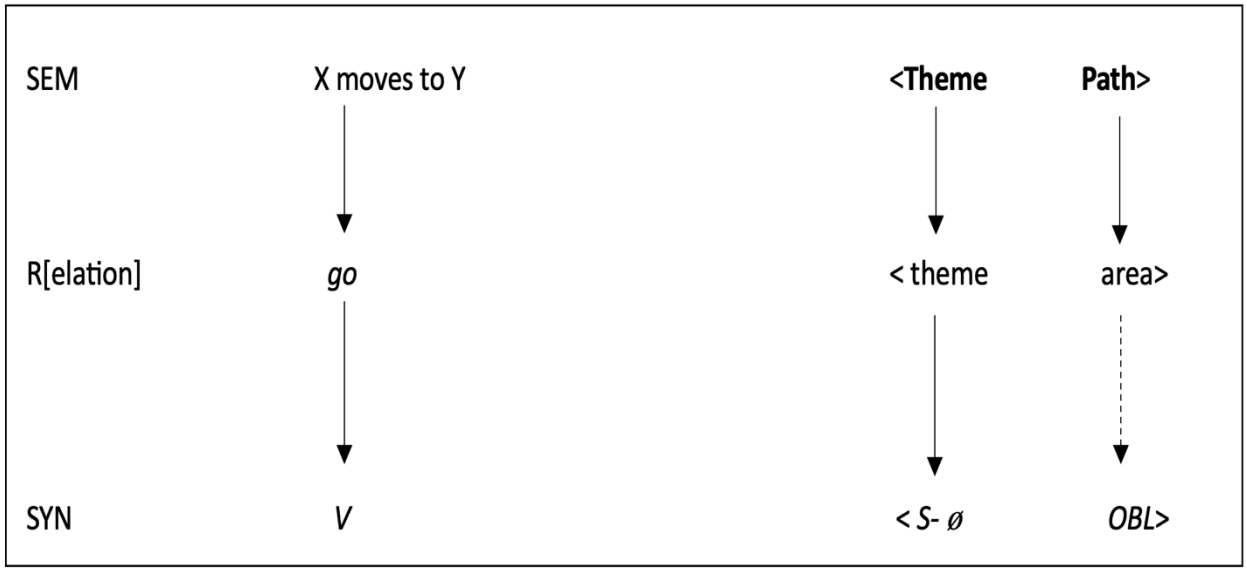


Fig. 3.5. '*go*' (go) + IMC

The participant role of the verb '*go*' involves a 'theme' (F) and an 'area'(G), into which the figure moves from or to. The participant role 'theme' is an instance of the 'Theme' argument role of the construction, hence compatible with each other. The participant role 'area' is an instance of the argument role 'Path', marked by the oblique phrase, hence less salient. This is because the focus of the sentence is often on the entity undergoing the motion, rather than the details of its path. The path may be manifested in the syntax as a complex path, where more than one element of the path is syntactically expressed, based on the construal of the motion event.

Thus, concerning the different construal of the motion event and the hierarchy of paths phrases a generalization can be drawn within the same construction:

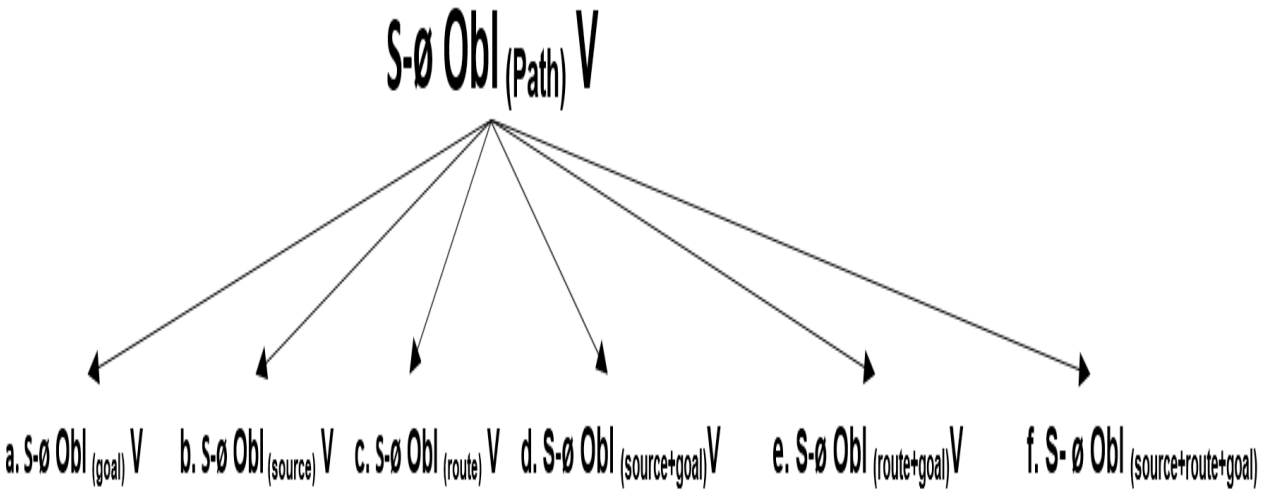


Fig. 3.6. The hierarchy of path elements in the oblique phrase

The constructions in Figure 3.6 represent different profiling of various path elements, such as source, route, and goal, attached to a ground relative to which the figure's motion is identified. A motion verb can be combined with these constructions, and depending on the verb's semantic frame, different path elements are syntactically surfaced or profiled, as illustrated in the examples already cited above. Typical motion verbs are often combined with construction (a), which is the preferred option for such verbs, as exemplified in (13). The verb 'xar' (fall), on the other hand, typically includes only the source of motion, as in (17). Different construals of motion can profile various types of goals, as demonstrated in examples (24) and (26). The former profiles a figure's termination of motion after reaching the goal, while the latter profiles the figure's motion somewhere near the goal. When the focus of the motion event is on the route along which the figure has undergone the change of location, construction (c) is used, as in (32).

Constructions (d) to (f) represent instances of complex paths, which profile more than one path element, as in (14) and (15). Construction (d) is used when the source and goal are profiled in the construal of the motion event, as in (14). Construction (e) is used when the source is unprofiled but the route and goal are profiled, as in (15). Finally, construction (f) is used when the entire path, including the source, route, and goal, is profiled, as in (34).

34. *ram tezpurorpora guwhatihoi kolikotaloi jabo*

ram	tezpur-or-pora	Guwahati	hoi	kolikota-loi	ja-b-o
Ram	Tezpur-GEN-ABL	Guwahati	via	Kolkata-ALL	go-FUT-3

'*Ram will go to Kolkata from Tezpur via Guwahati.*'

The nature of the subject in the motion events, is similar to the intransitive construction '*S-ø V*' in terms of markedness, i.e., the subject is unmarked. Hence the Intransitive motion construction is an extension of the simple intransitive construction. Dixon (2010) terms this as 'extended intransitive'.

3.2.3. The intransitive locative construction

Similar to the path phrases attached to a ground in 'S Obl $_{(path)}$ V', the intransitive locative construction, 'S Obl $_{(location)}$ V' marks the location of a figure to a ground as in (35) and (36) below:

35. *ram guwahatit ase*
ram guwahati-t as-e
Ram Guwahati-LOC exist-3
'*Ram is in Guwahati.*'

36. *ram guwahatit t^{h}ake*
ram guwahati-t t^{h}ak-e
Ram Guwahati-LOC live-3
'*Ram lives in Guwahati.*'

37. *ram g^{h}orot humal*
ram ghor-ot huma-l
Ram house-LOC enter-PERF
'*Ram entered the house.*'

38. *lotadaal wallot bogaise*
lota-daal wall-ot boga-is-e
creepers-CLF wall-LOC crawl-ING.PROG-3
'*The creepers are climbing the wall.*'

In (35) and (36) above, the figure 'Ram' is located to the ground 'Guwahati' where the locative meaning is denoted by the locative marker '-t'. The verbs, 'as' and 'thak' used in the construction functions as the copula construction in the language (see Nath (2009), Saikia (2019) and Chowdhary (2022)). The verbs in (37) and (38) are motion verbs. As discussed in the preceding section, motion verbs are used specifically with the intransitive motion construction, yet the motion verbs 'xuma' (enter) and 'boga' (crawl) are used with the intransitive locative construction. Such rare cases are due to the semantic frames of such verbs: the verb 'huma' profiles the termination of a motion concerning a ground, i.e. the static ground, 'g^{h}or' (house). In this case, the ground marks the final location of the figure, similar to the examples (35) and (36). Example (38) involves a manner of motion, where the figure, 'lota' (creeper) changes its location. But the nature of the ground in (38) is limited to a certain area, i.e. 'wall' (wall). Hence the whole area is perceived as a location of the motion of the figure.

3.2.3.1. The interaction of verbs with the 'S $Obl_{(loc)}$ V'

As said, the verbs used in this construction are typically stative verbs like 'as' and 't^hak' as in (35) and (36). The participant roles of such verbs include a 'theme' and a 'location'. A limited number of motion verbs can also be used in this construction, but in these cases, the verbs profile the termination of the figure's motion. The participant roles of such verbs include a 'theme' and a 'goal'. The 'theme' participant role of the verbs mentioned above is compatible with the 'Theme' argument role of the construction, i.e., 'S-ø,', and the 'location' participant role of the first verb class is compatible with the locative argument role expressed by '$Obl_{(loc)}$'. The argument role '$Obl_{(loc)}$' relates a figure to a ground in a static configuration. For the first verb class, 'as' and 't^hak', the static location of the theme is not problematic. However, for the second class of verbs, i.e. motion verbs like 'xuma' and 'boga', the 'goal' participant role might seem incompatible with the locative argument role. In these cases, the frame semantics of the verbs play a crucial role. The figure involved in such motion, either the goal ground or the trajectory of the motion, is visible or perceivable. Unlike motion verbs like in (19), where the overall motion of the figure is seen as a whole, these verbs focus on the figure's location after the termination of the motion. Therefore, the goal is treated as a location, similar to the static location of the figure. Also, the goal involved in this case is usually a *restricted* area, a confined space, compared to a prototypical motion verb like 'za' (go).

The representation of the form-meaning pairing of intransitive locative construction is shown in Fig. 3.7 below:

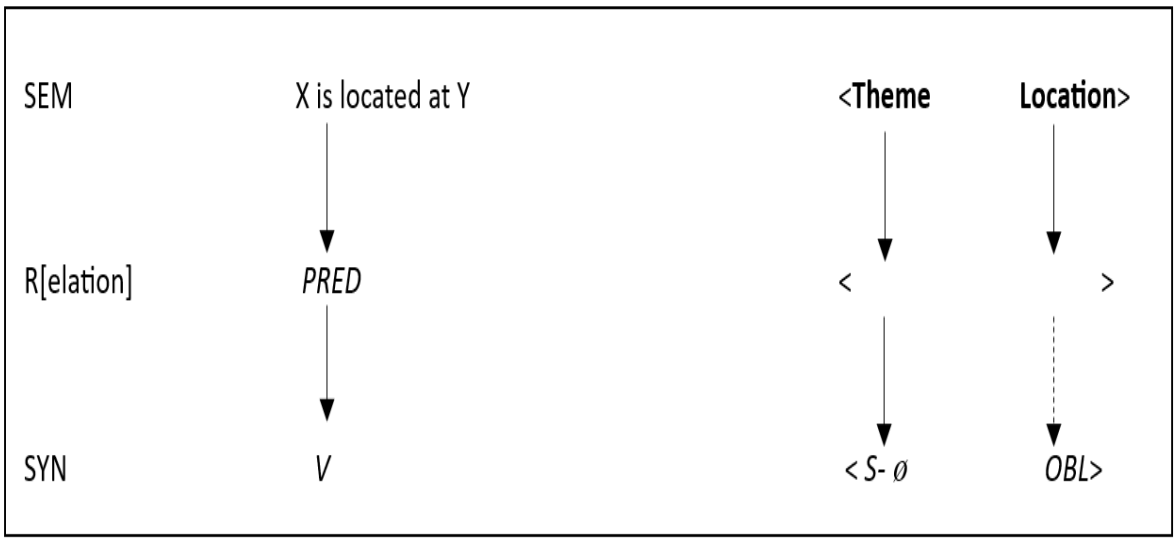


Fig. 3.7. The form-meaning pair of the ILC

The semantics of the construction is to locate a figure to a ground. The argument roles of the construction include a 'Theme' subject, unmarked for the ergative case, and a 'Location'. Syntactically, this meaning is manifested as the unmarked subject and an oblique locative phrase. When a verb like 'as' is used in the construction, as in (35), the representation will be the following, as presented in Fig. 3.8 below:

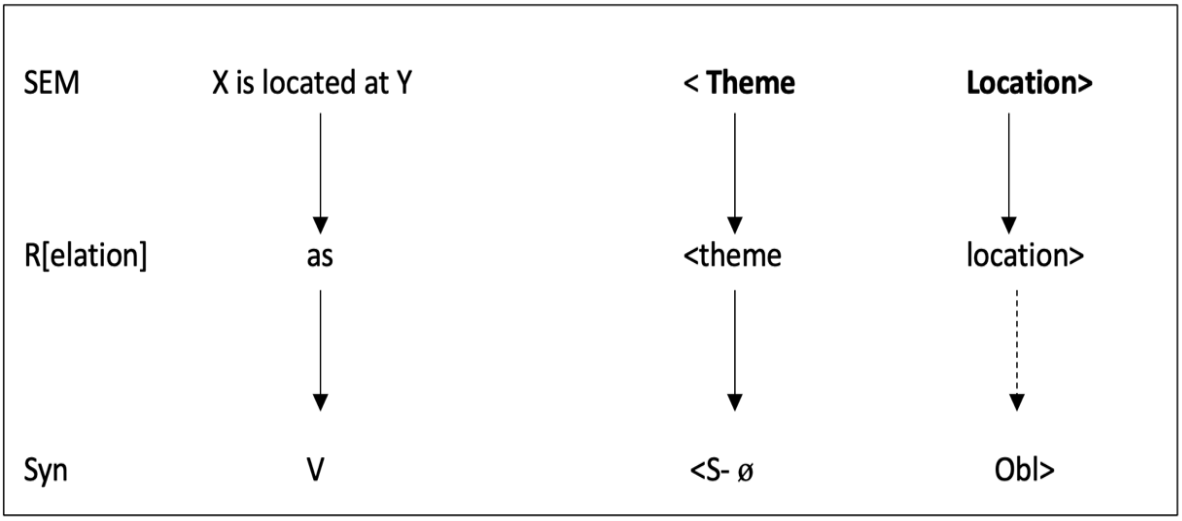


Fig. 3.8. '*as*' (exist) + ILC

The participant roles of the verb 'as' involve a 'theme' and a 'location', which directly correspond to the 'Theme' and 'Location' argument roles of the construction, i.e., they are compatible. In the case of motion verbs like 'xuma', the goal is perceived as the final location of the figure, hence compatible with the construction. As the location is denoted by the oblique phrase, it is unprofiled, denoted by the dotted lines.

3.2.4. The conative construction

The Assamese 'S-e $Obl_{(loc)}$ V', is used with impact verbs. Such a construction is called a conative construction (see Goldberg,1995). Compared to the earlier construction, the subject here is marked with the agentive/ergative '-e', as in (39) and (40) below:

39. *rame tablek^{h}onot k^{h}undiale*

ram-e	table-k^{h}on-ot	k^{h}undia-l-e
Ram-ERG	table-CLF-LOC	bump-PERF-3

'*Ram bumped into the table.*'

40. *rame dorzak^{h}onot guriale*

ram-e dorza-k^{h}on-ot guria-l-e

Ram-ERG door-CLF-LOC kick-PERF-3

'*Ram kicked at the door.*'

In (39) and (40) above, the 'S-e Obl$_{(loc)}$ V' construction is used with impact verbs like 'k^{h}undia' (bump) and 'guria' (kick), and the location of the impact (the ground) is marked by the locative marker '-t'. When used in the transitive construction, their prototypical use (see section 4.1.4), impact verbs typically denote an affected object. However, in these examples, the object is not exactly affected. The agent merely directs its force into a theme *without causing any significant change to it.* Therefore, when used in a multi-clausal construction denoting a result state, the verb is combined with the transitive construction as in (41) below:

41. rame dorzakhon/*dorzakhonot guriai bhangile

ram-e dorza-khon/*dorza-khon-ot guria-i bhang-il-e

ram-ERG door-CLF/*door-CLF-LOC kick-NF break-PERF-3

'*Ram kicked the door broken.*'

In (41), a multi-clausal sentence, the finite verb form 'bhang-il-e' (has broken) denotes a result state. The object (dorza) behaves as P of the transitive construction, not as the oblique object of the 'S-e Obl$_{(loc)}$ V' construction, which denotes an unchanged theme, unlike the transitive P.

3.2.4.1. The interaction of verbs with the 'S-e Obl$_{(loc)}$ V'

The argument roles of the construction include an agentive subject and a locative oblique object. Grammatically, the oblique object is marked similarly to the previous construction. However, semantically, unlike the earlier construction, the oblique object does not locate the figure to a ground but rather locates the target at which the figure directs its action. For instance, in (39), and (40), the oblique object with the locative marker indicates the location where the agent directs its action. The construction imposes the constraint that the 'Agent' argument role must be a volitional human, and the 'Target' must be an inanimate

entity. The typical verbs used in this construction are those impact verbs that are also used in the Transitive construction.

The representation of the form-meaning pairing of conative construction is shown in Fig 3.9. below:

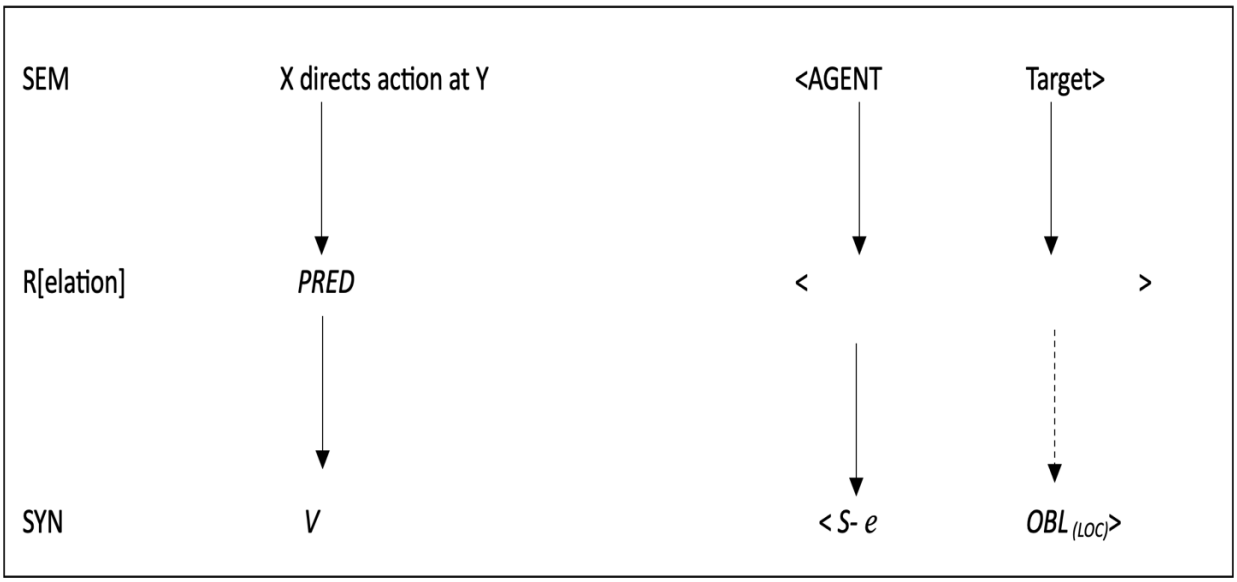


Fig. 3.9. Form-meaning pairing of Conative construction

As observed, the participant roles of impact verbs include an 'agent' and a 'patient'. However, when the same verb is used in the conative construction, the construction adds a 'target', which is denoted by the bold dotted line in Figure 3.9. The target is typically an inanimate entity.

The interaction of the verb 'guria' (kick) in (47) with the construction can be illustrated as follows:

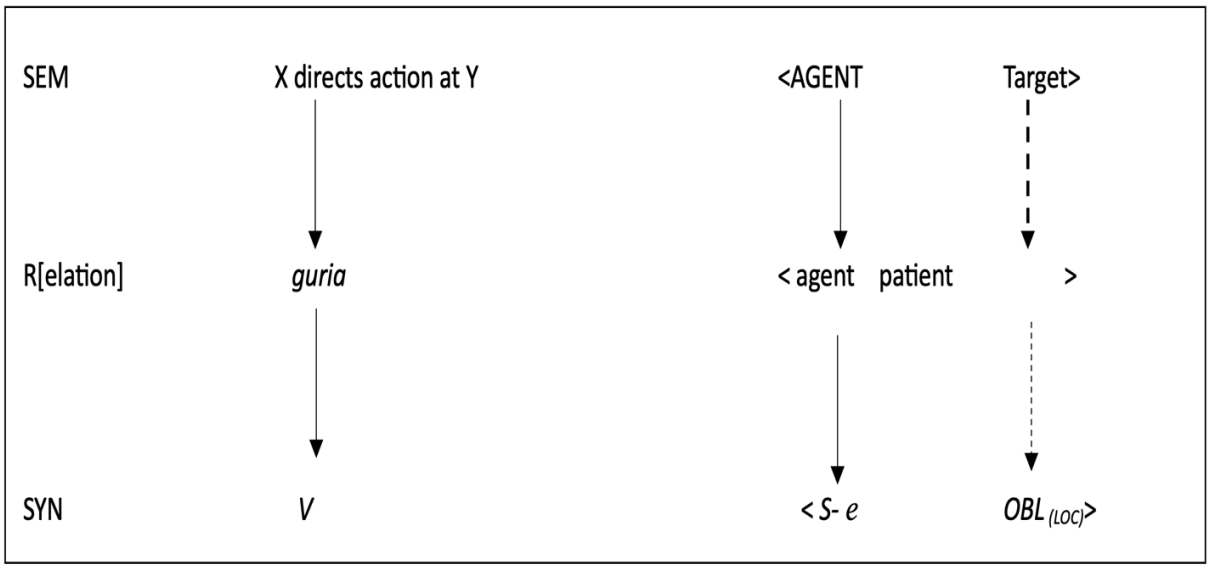


Fig. 3.10. 'guria' (kick) + the Conative construction

The participant roles of the verb 'guria' (kick) include an 'agent' and a 'patient'. However, when used in this construction, the 'agent' role is fused with the 'Agent' argument role, the 'patient' role is not fused with the 'target' argument. Therefore, the 'target' is added by the construction, i.e., case of 'coercion'.

3.2.5 The copula construction (The subject complement construction)

The Assamese copula construction is a partially filled construction, '*S Comp*$_s$ *ha*'. The *'ha'* element is a true copula in the language, as the construction is only compatible with the meaning of relating a theme with a property/attribute, as illustrated in the following examples:

42. *ram ejon daktor (ha-i)*
    ram e-jon daktor (ha-i)
    Ram one-CLF doctor (COP-PRES)
    '*Ram is a doctor.*'

43. *ram bohut sapor*
    ram bohut sapor
    ram very short
    '*Ram is very short.*'

Assamese has four types of copulas: the zero copula, *'ha,' 'as,'* and *'thak.'* The examples in (42) and (43) illustrate the zero copula. As noted by Nath (2009), "(t)he zero copula in Asamiya [Assamese] can surface either as *'ha'* or *'as'*. It surfaces as *'ha'* with negative predicates and as *'as'* with affirmative predicates."

The construction '*S Comp$_s$ ha'* is a partially filled construction as the 'subject complement' (Comp$_s$) is exclusive to this construction and the 'subject complement' always occurs with the verb '*ha*'.

3.2.5.1. The interaction of 'ha' with the copula construction

The copula construction is partially filled with the verb 'ha', and the empty slots are for the subject and the subject complement. Either an NP or an AP complements the subject, as in (42) and (43). The verb 'ha' relates (the referent of) the subject to (the referent of) the subject complement.

Thus, the argument role of the construction involves a 'theme' as the subject which possesses an 'attribute' in the form of a subject complement, which is the other argument role. The representation of the form-meaning pairing of copula construction is shown in Fig. 3.11 below:

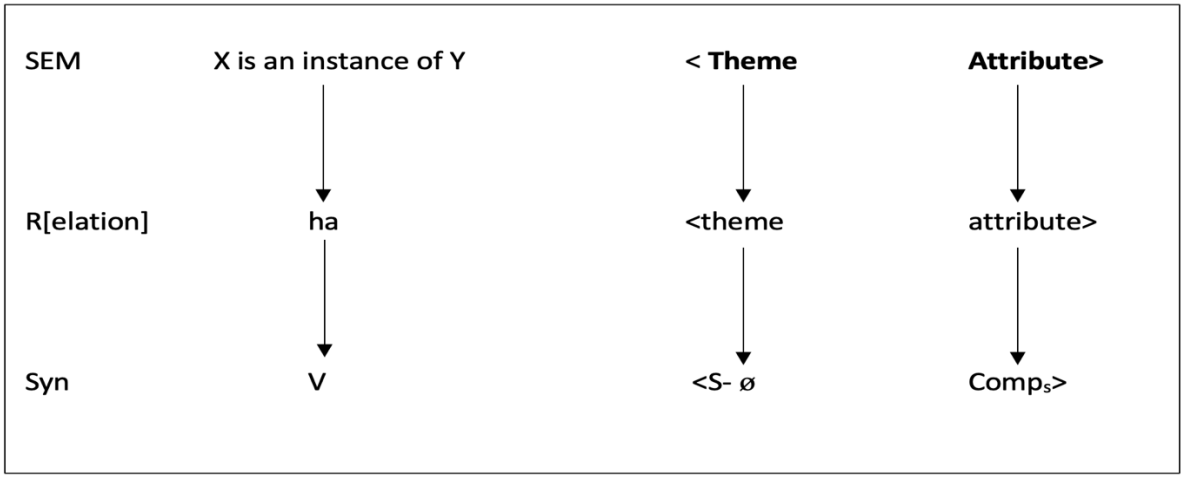


Fig. 3.11. Form-meaning pairing of copula construction

As said, the copula verb 'ha' is a permanent element of the construction, so it is a partially filled construction. The variables are the subject and the attributes, denoted by an NP or an AP.

3.3. Non-canonical Intransitives

This section deals with those constructions where the subject is marked not by –e or -ø, the canonical subjects, but by oblique case markers, i.e., the genitive '-r'; the dative '-loi'; the locative '-t, and the animate object marker '-k'. In such cases, the subject does not act but is passively involved or is being affected. The involved verbs are compound verbs (CV) or conjunct verbs (CjV), forming a complex predicate. The use of non-canonical subject marking is mostly seen with the transitive constructions (see section 4.3).

CVs are composed of two verbs, termed as V1 and V2. When used independently, they denote different actions, but when used together they denote a single occurrence, each of which contributes a certain amount of information to the whole. The V1 is inflected for the non-finite marker '-i', and the V2 inflects for tense, aspect, and person. (see also Buragohain (2008), Konwar (2020), Chowdhary (2021) for CVs in Assamese).

CjV are composed of either an adjective or a noun, and a verb. The verb inflects for tense, aspect, and person. The semantics of the verb adds an extra shade of meaning to the meaning of the noun or the adjective. As expected, the noun or the adjective in the CjV has an eventative aspect.

The following sub-sections will deal with events where the only participant is marked with oblique cases, i.e., non-canonical intransitive subjects.

3.3.1 The genitive subject

The subject in the genitive subject construction is marked by the genitive case. In such cases, the subject is an experiencer subject, i.e., the subject experiences the internal mental or bodily state. "The experiencer is almost always human" (Croft, 2022:490).

The structure of the genitive subject construction is 'S-r Cj V'. The typical V that occurs with the genitive subject are 'lag' (attach), 'ha' (COP), 'as' (exist) as in (44)-(47) below:

44. *mur [jor ut^{h}ise]*

mur	jor	ut^{h}-is-e
my	sick	climb-ING.PROG-3

'*I am sick.*'

45. *ramor [duk^{h} lagise]*

ram-or duk^{h} lag-is-e

Ram-GEN sad attach-ING.PROG-3

'*Ram is sad.*'

46. *ramor [bemar hoise]*

ram-or bemar ho-is-e

Ram-GEN unwell happen- ING.PROG-3

'*Ram is unwell.*'

47. *ramor [b^{h}al hol]*

ram-or b^{h}al hol

Ram-GEN bhal ho-PERF

'*Good things happened to Ram.*'

In the constructions, the nouns, 'jor', 'duk^{h}', 'bemar' and the adjective 'b^{h}al' are used with the main verbs 'ut^{h}', 'lag', 'ha', respectively. These verbs define the state or nature of the referents denoted by the nouns and the adjective.

However, one might argue that the possessor (e.g. 'mur' meaning my) and the possessed (e.g. 'jor' meaning fever) are functioning as a phrase, i.e. as a one single unit (i.e. 'mur jar') as the subject of the verb (e.g. 'ut^{h}ise' meaning has risen). But such an argument seems to be misleading. Phonologically, the possessor and the possessed are pronounced separately. Further, when the possessor is dropped the sentence still remains grammatical, as in (48) below:

48. *(mur) jor ut^{h}ise*

(mur) jor ut^{h}-is-e

(my) sick climb-ING.PROG-3

'*I am sick.*'

Another interesting fact about the genitive subject construction is that the person agreement does apply to the construction. Consider the following example.

49. *mur/tumar/tar/ramor* *jor* *ut^{h}ise*
mur/tumar/tar/ram-or jor ut^{h}-is-e
My/you/his/ram-GEN sick climb-ING.PROG-3
'*My/you/he/ram is sick.*'

In Assamese, '-e' is the third person agreement marker. But as the example shows the person marker does not agree with the subject. This implies that the subject in such a construction does not initiate or is in control of the event, rather it is affected in the event.

3.3.1.1. The interaction of the verbs with the genitive subject construction.

As observed above, in the 'S-r Cj V' construction, the subject is an effected subject, not an initiator of the event. Rather, the subject is a participant affected by the event.

Verbs compatible with this construction are those verbs which participant roles involve an affected subject. This explains why the verb person does not agree with the subject.

The representation of the form-meaning pairing of genitive subject construction is shown in Fig. 3.12 below.

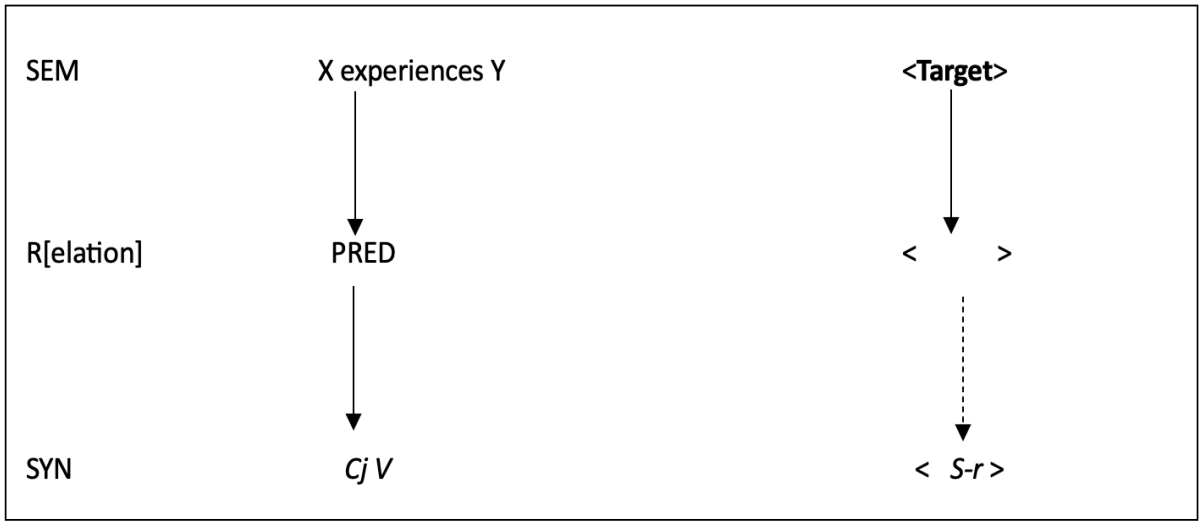


Fig. 3.12. The form-meaning pairing of genitive subject construction

The dotted line in the figure above indicates that the genitive subject is a non-canonical subject and is, therefore, less salient. The integration of the conjunct verb (duk^{h} lagise) in (45) with the genitive subject construction is represented in Fig. 3.13. below.

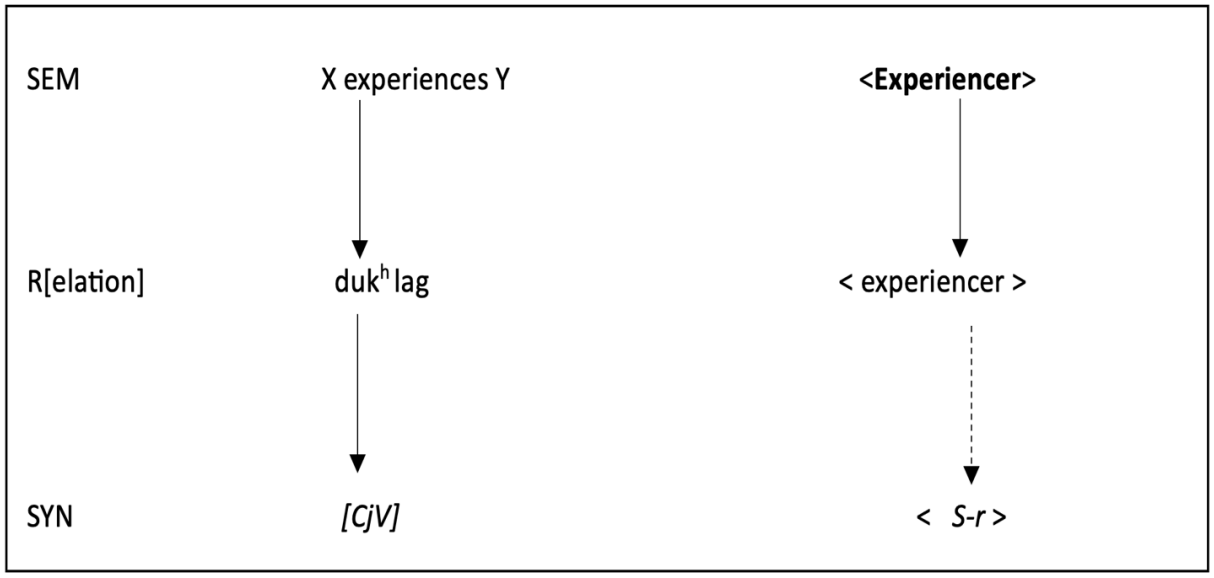


Fig. 3.13. [*duk*^{h} *lag*] + Genitive subject construction

It is often suggested that verbs of emotion, perception, and cognition are associated with this construction. However, this may vary across languages. For instance, while both 'remember' and 'forget' are cognitive verbs. 'Remember' involves an affected subject as in (50), while 'forget' involves an agentive subject, as in (51) below. Note that while (50) is associated with the transitive genitive subject construction, (51) is associated with the Transitive construction. These two examples imply that in Assamese cognitive verbs may not always be associated with the genitive construction.

50. *ramor kothatu [monot ase]*

ram-or	kotha-tu	monot	as-e
Ram-GEN	fact-CLF	remember	EXIST-3

'*Ram remembers the fact.*'

51. *rame kothatu pahoril*e

ram-e	kotha-tu	pahor-il-e
Ram-ERG	fact-CLF	forget-PERF-3

'*Ram has forgotten the word.*'

3.3.2. The passive construction

The passive construction in Assamese is a part of the intransitive constructions that uses non-canonical subject marking. In the passive voice, the object (of the active voice sentence) becomes the subject. In Assamese, the subject in the passive construction is marked by the differential object marker.

52. *baghtuk mora hol*

bagh-tu-k mor-a ho-l

Tiger-CLF-OBJ kill-NMZ COP-PERF

'*The tiger was killed.*'

53. *surtuk dhora hol*

sur-tu-k dhor-a ho-l

theif-CLF-OBJ catch-NMZ COP-PERF

'*The thief was caught.*'

Note that similar to the copula construction, the passive construction is partially filled, as only the verb 'ho' is compatible with the construction.

3.3.2.1. The interaction of verbs with the passive construction

As observed, in the passive construction, the argument role of the subject is an affected object, which was originally the object of the transitive verb, now syntactically a subject. Verbs compatible with the passive construction are those that involve an 'agent' and a 'patient' or a 'theme'. When these verbs are used in the passive voice, only the patient or theme participant is compatible with the subject role. Thus, the agent can be demoted or dropped.

The representation of the form-meaning pairing of passive construction is shown in Fig. 3.14 below.

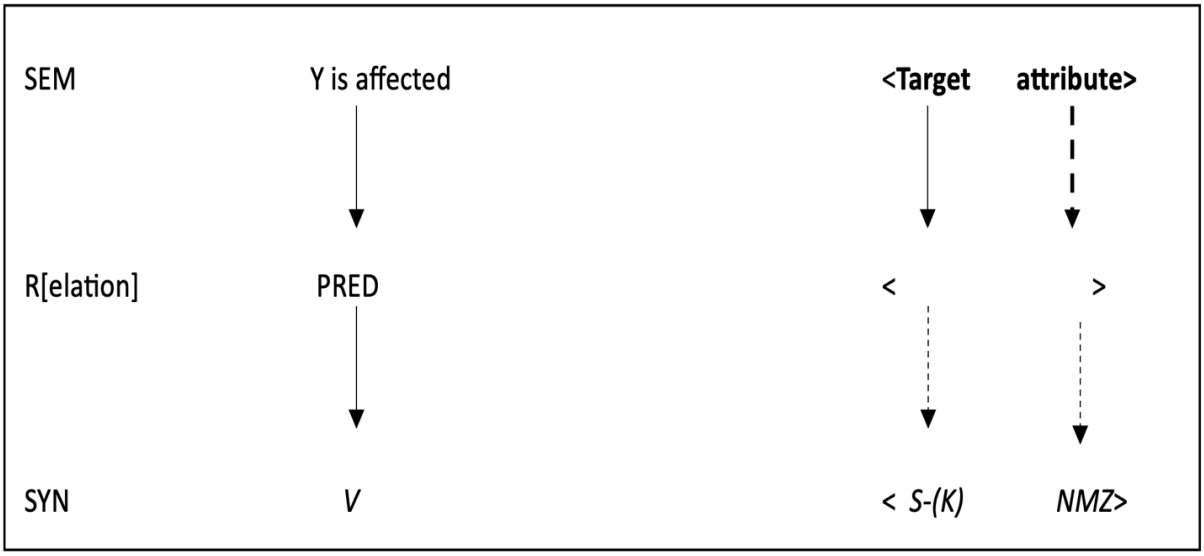


Fig. 3.14. The form-meaning pairing of passive construction

In the figure, the left-hand dotted line indicates that the subject is a non-canonical one. The right-hand dotted lines indicate that the transitive verb used in the passive construction is not in its original form, but in a nominalized form.

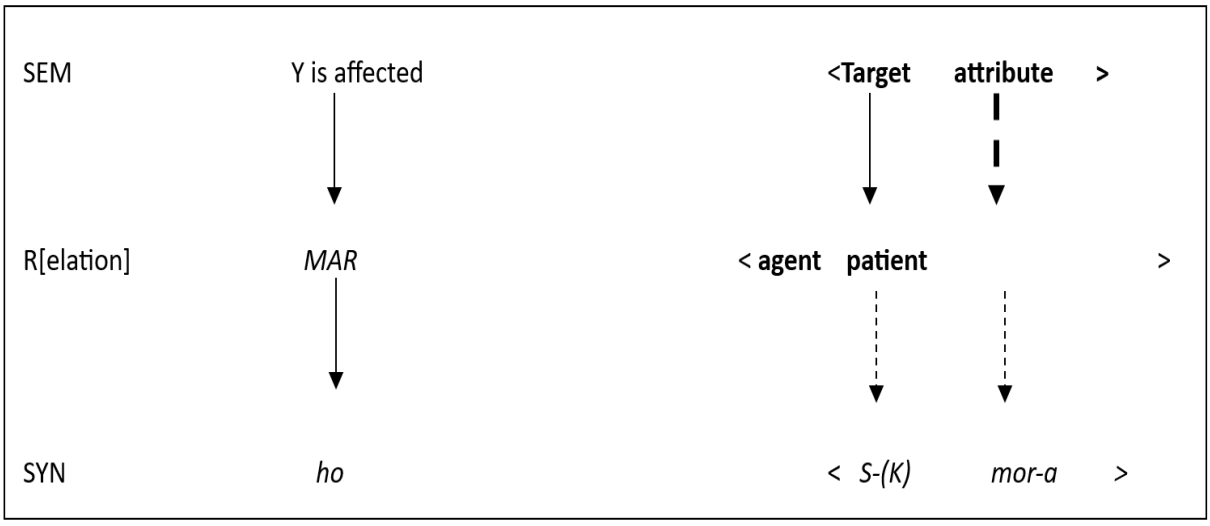


Fig. 3.15. '*mar*' (kill) + passive construction

Here, the verb '*mar*' is integrated or used in the passive construction. The participant role of the verb includes an 'agent' and a 'patient'. When used with the construction only the

role of ‘patient’ is syntactically realized, as it is an instance of the ‘target’ argument role. The nominalized argument, which denotes the main event, is added by the construction hence bold dotted lines.

3.4. The network of the intransitive constructions

As discussed in Section 2.4, constructions can be organized into networks, forming a ‘construct-i-con’. This sections attempts to show the the network of intransitive constructions in Assamese, drawing on the framework of Janda and Divjak (2015) (see Section 2.4). Figure 3.16 shows the relationships within the intransitive construction family, arranged across five tiers representing varying degrees of semanticity.

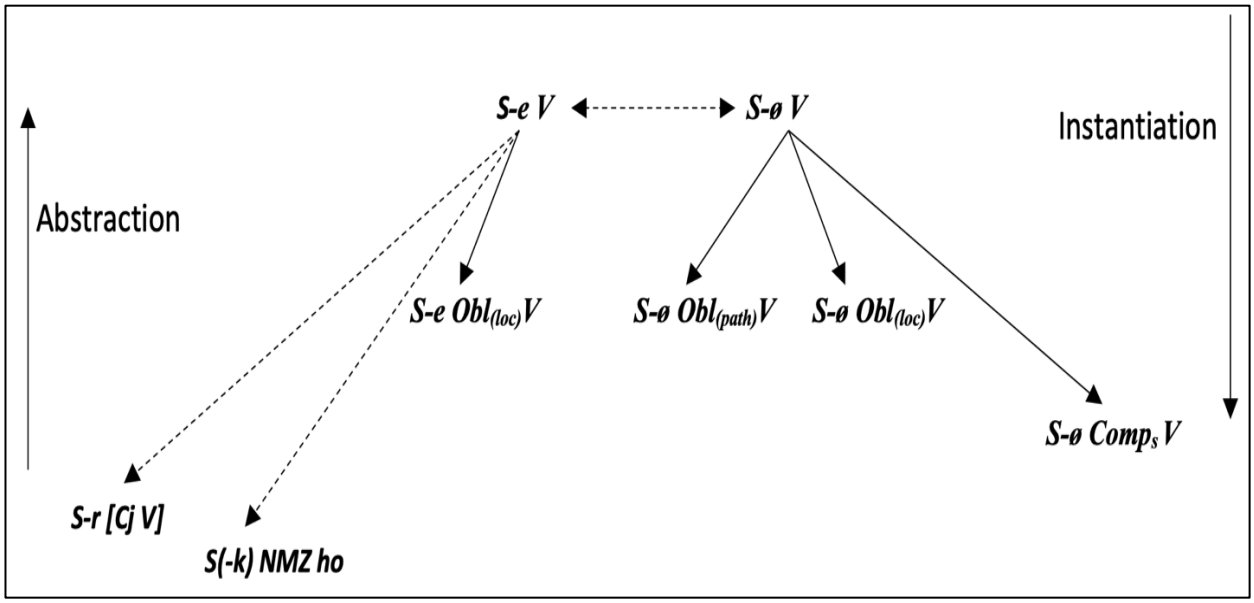


Fig. 3.16. The network of the Intransitive constructions

The two intransitive constructions discussed in Section 3.1 occupy the highest position in the intransitive construction network, making them higher-order schematic constructions.

Both constructions are connected via a dotted line, which signifies a metaphorical link. The ergative cased agentive intransitive distinguishes itself from the simple intransitive, which lacks the ergative case. All other intransitive constructions are linked to these two constructions based on subject marking. For instance, the relationship between the agentive Intransitive and the conative construction is based in subject marking. All these constructions occupy a position below the two basic intransitive constructions, which implies that the constructions are less schematic compared to the two intransitive constructions. Thus, they are extensions of the two basic intransitive constructions.

The relationship between the second tier of constructions and the two intransitive constructions is metonymic. As noted earlier, a metonymic link signifies the presence or absence of specific elements within a construction. The presence of oblique phrases indicates a metonymic link between the constructions. This includes the conative construction 'S-e $Obl_{(loc)}$ V', the intransitive motion construction 'S $Obl_{(path)}$ V', and the intransitive locative construction 'S $Obl_{(loc)}$ V'.

The third tier consists of the copula construction. This is because it is a partially filled construction, making it less schematic than the constructions in the higher tiers.

The fourth and fifth tier consist of the non-canonical intransitive constructions. These constructions are posited at a lower tier because they are non-canonical constructions. The link between the constructions is again metonymical in nature. This is because the presence of the non-canonical subject marking, replacing the ergative marking. The passive construction is placed lower than the intransitive genitive construction because it is a partially filled construction.

The next chapter deals with the Transitive construction and its extensions.