



Ki-passives in Budai Rukai

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Overview

- Most Formosan languages, Austronesian languages spoken in Taiwan, use a Philippine-type voice system (Aldridge 2004, Himmelmann 2005, Chen 2017).
- Rukai stands out unique as it uses nominative-accusative alignment with an active-passive voice distinction (Starosta 1995, Zeitoun 2000, 2008, 2023, Chen 2008).
- This study re-investigates the passive construction marked by *ki-* in Budai Rukai (a Rukai variety) and argues that *ki*-passives are not true passives from the perspective of (non-)canonical passives (Legate 2021).
- Major claims:
 - Themes in *ki*-passives pattern with grammatical subjects in AV.
 - Themes in *ki*-passives are base-generated as thematic subjects.
 - Agents in *ki*-passives are demoted to optional adjuncts.
 - Ki*-passives are non-canonical passives.

Themes as grammatical subjects

- Themes in *ki*-passives are **grammatical subjects in A-positions**.

- Themes serve as controlled PRO.

- (1) a. Kay Lavurase, ma-lrase [PRO lrumay ki valake].
this Lavurase STAT.AV-REAL-hate [PRO hit OBL child]
‘Lavurase hates hitting children.’
b. Kay Lavurase, ma-lrase [PRO ki-lrumay ki sini].
this Lavurase STAT.AV-REAL-hate [PRO PASS-hit OBL teacher]
‘Lavurase hates being hit by the teacher.’
c. Ma-kiwc=aku [PRO kai ki-tukucingalre].
STAT.AV-REAL-afraid=1SG.NOM [PRO NEG PASS-value]
‘I am afraid of not being taken seriously.’

- Themes bear nominative, like active subjects but not objects.

- (2) a. Wa-lrumay ki tawpungu **ka Lavurase**.
AV-REAL-hit OBL dog **NOM Lavurase**
‘Lavurase hit the dog.’
b. Ki-a-lrumay ki Lavurase **ka tawpungu**.
PASS-REAL-hit OBL Lavurase **NOM dog**
‘The dog was hit by Lavurase.’

- Themes license floating quantifiers, like active subjects but not objects.

- (3) a. Wa-senay **makanaelre** ka la-sinsi (✓) i-gaku (✓).
AV-REAL-sing **all** NOM PL-teacher (**all**) LOC-school (**all**)
‘All the teachers sang at school.’
b. Kay sini, wa-lrumay **makanaelre** ki la-panudhu (✓) i-gaku (✗).
this teacher AV-REAL-hit **all** OBL PL-student (**all**) LOC (***all**)
‘This teacher hit all the students at school.’
c. Ki-a-lrumay **makanaelre** ka la-panudhu (✓) i-gaku (✓).
PASS-REAL-hit **all** NOM PL-student (**all**) LOC-school (**all**)
‘All the students were hit at school.’

- Themes can be topicalized, like active subjects but not objects.

- (4) a. **Ka Lavurase**, wa-lrumay ki tawpungu.
NOM Lavurase AV-REAL-hit OBL dog
‘Lavurase hit the dog.’
b. ***Ki tawpungu**, wa-lrumay ka Lavurase.
OBL dog AV-REAL-hit NOM Lavurase
‘Lavurase hit the dog.’
c. **Ka tawpungu**, ki-a-lrumay ki Lavurase.
NOM dog PASS-REAL-hit OBL Lavurase
‘The dog was hit by Lavurase.’

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- Themes can undergo *wh*-movement with finite verbs, like active subjects but not objects. If objects are moved, the object voice (OV) with a bare verb has to be used.

- (5) a. Aneane ka **wa-lrumay** ki tawpungu?
who NOM **AV-REAL-hit** OBL dog
‘Who hit the dog?’
b. Manemane ka (***wa-lrumay** ki Lavurase?
what NOM (***AV-REAL-)****OV.hit** GEN Lavurase
‘What did Lavurase hit?’
c. Manemane ka **ki-a-lrumay** ki Lavurase?
what NOM **PASS-REAL-hit** OBL Lavurase
‘What was hit by Lavurase?’

- Themes can be relativized with finite verbs, like active subjects but not objects. If objects are relativized, the object voice (OV) with a bare verb has to be used.

- (6) a. M-u<a>bere ka **wa-lrumay** ki tawpungu ka lasu.
AV-<REAL>escape NOM **AV-REAL-hit** OBL dog REL male
‘The man that hit the dog escaped.’
b. M-u<a>bere ka (***wa-lrumay** ki Lavurase ka tawpungu.
AV-<REAL>escape NOM (***AV-REAL-)****OV.hit** GEN Lavurase REL dog
‘The dog that Lavurase hit escaped.’
c. M-u<a>bere ka **ki-a-lrumay** ki Lavurase ka tawpungu.
AV-<REAL>escape NOM **PASS-REAL-hit** OBL Lavurase REL dog
‘The dog that was hit by Lavurase escaped.’

Themes as thematic subjects

- Themes in *ki*-passives are not raised from a thematic object position but **base-generated in a thematic subject position**.

- Themes are assigned an affectee theta-role; hence unaffected themes are disallowed.

- (7) a. ??Ki-a-dreele ka taetale.
PASS-REAL-see NOM chair
‘The chair was seen.’
b. *Lu ikay Amilrika, ki-a-kawriwa ka Amilrialrikane.
when LOC America PASS-REAL-speak NOM English
‘English is spoken in America.’

- Themes can be strengthened to agentive interpretations, allowing an agent-oriented adverb or a rational clause.

- (8) a. Ki-a-pwalra **ranaw** ki kisace ka Lavurase.
PASS-REAL-catch **intentionally** OBL police NOM Lavurase
‘Lavurase intentionally got arrested by the police.’
b. Ki-a-pwalra ki kisace ka Lavurase [pakay ku a-mwa-ane ki tinse].
PASS-REAL-catch OBL police NOM Lavurase [for OBL FUT-go-NMLZ OBL TV]
‘Lavurase got arrested by the police in order to show up on TV.’

- Themes are not restricted to patients/themes in actives, but can be goals with an affectee interpretation in unaccusative constructions.

- (9) a. Wa-kela ki Lavurase ka Muni.
AV-REAL-come OBL Lavurase NOM Muni
‘Muni comes to Lavurase (uninvited).’
b. Ki-a-kela ki Muni ka Lavurase.
PASS-REAL-come OBL Muni NOM Lavurase
‘Lavurase was affected by Muni’s uninvited coming (to him).’

Selected references

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Agents as oblique

- Agents in *ki*-passives are **demoted ‘by-phrase’ adjuncts**.

- Agents in *ki*-passives bear oblique case, different from genitive agents in OV.

- (10) a. Ka Muni, ki-a-ka-dalame **nakwane**.
NOM Muni PASS-REAL-STAT-like **1SG.OBL**
‘Muni is loved by me.’
b. Ka Muni, ka-dalame=**li**.
NOM Muni STAT-OV.like=**1SG.GEN**
‘I love Muni.’

- Agents in *ki*-passives are optional, different from obligatory agents in OV.

- (11) a. Ki-a-ka-dalame (ki Lavurase) ka Muni.
PASS-REAL-STAT-like (OBL Lavurase) NOM Muni
‘Muni is loved (by Lavurase).’
b. Ka-dalame *(ki Lavurase) ka Muni.
STAT-OV.like *(GEN Lavurase) NOM Muni
‘Lavurase loves Muni.’

- Agents in *ki*-passives are freely ordered with themes, different from agents in OV.

- (12) a. Ki-a-ka-dalame [ki Lavurase] [ka Muni] (✓).
PASS-REAL-STAT-like [OBL Lavurase] [NOM Muni] (Lavurase)
‘Muni is loved by Lavurase.’
b. Ka-dalame [ki Lavurase] [ka Muni] (✗).
STAT-OV.like [GEN Lavurase] [NOM Muni] (*Lavurase)
‘Lavurase loves Muni.’

- Covert agents in *ki*-passives are interpreted existentially not pronominally, as they can be questioned and do not introduce discourse referents.

- (13) a. Ki-a-lrumay ka tawpungu, ay kai=naku wa-thingale lu ka aneane.
PASS-REAL-hit NOM dog but NEG=1SG.NOM AV-REAL-know COMP KA who
‘The dog was hit, but I don’t know by whom.’
b. Dreel-a ki Lavurase! Ki-a-lrumay #(iniane) ka tawpungu.
see-IMP OBL Lavurase PASS-REAL-hit 3SG.OBL NOM dog
‘Look at Lavurase! The dog was hit #(by him).’

- Agents cannot be extracted via *wh*-movement or relativization, either with a finite verb expected of subjects or with a bare verb expected of objects.

- (14) a. *Aneane ka {ki-a-lrumay / ki-lrumay} {ka / ki} tawpungu?
who NOM {PASS-REAL-hit / PASS-hit} {NOM / GEN} dog
‘By whom was the dog hit?’
b. *M-u<a>bere ka {ki-a-lrumay / ki-lrumay} {ka / ki} tawpungu ka lasu.
AV-<REAL>escape NOM {PASS-REAL-hit / PASS-hit} {NOM / GEN} dog REL male
‘The man by whom the dog was hit escaped.’

Analysis

- The morpheme *ki-* is a syntactic head selecting a base-generated argument with an affectee theta-role as its specifier and a passive vP as its complement.

- Ki*-passives in Budai Rukai thus partially pattern with Vietnamese *bi*-passives (Bruening and Tran 2015) and Mandarin *bei*-passives (Huang 1999).

- Ki*-passives in Budai Rukai are non-canonical passives, with only morphological marking and agent demotion but not theme promotion from object position (Legate 2021).

