

# **Grammatical Analysis Situated in the Structural Environment: the Case of the Perspective-Shifting Construction in Nootka<sup>1</sup>**

Toshihide NAKAYAMA

ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

([nakayama@aa.tufs.ac.jp](mailto:nakayama@aa.tufs.ac.jp))

## **1. Introduction**

For descriptive linguists it is important to capture the form and the nature of the grammatical phenomena as they are, and therefore they make conscious effort to avoid bringing into the description of a language preconceived notions and categories that are external to the grammatical facts of the language. Some believe that by not participating in a theoretical enterprise their studies are free of theoretical preconceptions or biases. However, for good or bad, descriptive studies are filled with theoretical decisions and are commonly shaped by theoretical considerations. Then, what we need to strive for is not to make description ‘theory-neutral’, but to make our theoretical decisions closely in line with the general structural characteristics of the language. In order to attain this goal, it is necessary to analyze the phenomenon within the internal dynamics of the language, rather than to describe (conveniently) selected aspects of the phenomenon without situating the observations in the larger structural environment.

In this paper I would like to illustrate this point by taking as an example the construction in Nootka that has often been characterized as ‘passive’.

## **2. Facts about the Nootka -’at construction**

The -’at construction in Nootka shows resemblances to constructions that are typically classified as ‘passive’: i.e., (i) subject pronominal suffixation being

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my consultants the late Dr. George Louie and Mrs. Caroline Little for their most generous assistance in various aspects of data collection and analysis. This study is supported in part by Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, under a Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Priority Areas (A) for the project ‘Urgent Research of “Moribund Languages” of the Pacific Rim’ headed by Osahito Miyaoka (#11171101).

In this paper I will use the following abbreviations: COND=CONDITIONAL MOOD; DISTR=DISTRIBUTIVE; DUR=DURATIVE ASPECT; FIN=FINITE EVENT; FUT=FUTURE; IND=INDICATIVE MOOD; INDEF=INDEFINITE MOOD; MOM=MOMENTANEOUS ASPECT; MOMCAUS=MOMENTANEOUS CAUSATIVE; POSS=POSSESSIVE; REP=REPETITIVE; SHIFT=PERSPECTIVE-SHIFTING.

controlled by the undergoer; (ii) undergoer-focused meaning; (iii) discourse-focus on the undergoer.

## 2.1. Grammatical configuration in the Nootka *-'at* construction

In a typical transitive predication, a participant with high agency (actor) occurs as the subject, controlling the subject pronominal suffixation, and a participant with low agency (undergoer) occurs as the object. This is illustrated in (1).

(1) 1 PLURAL (ACTOR) > 2 PLURAL (UNDERGOER)

*ha:ʕanʔaqniš*      *si:ħat*.  
*ha:ʕan -ʔaq -niš*    *si:ħat*  
 invite -FUT -1pl you.all  
 we.will.invite      you.all

‘We will invite you all.’ [elicited (7.24.91-77)]

However, in the *-'at* construction it is the undergoer, not the actor, that takes control of the subject suffixation.

(2) 3 SINGULAR (ACTOR) > 1 SINGULAR (UNDERGOER)

*ha:ʕanʔanits*.  
*ha:ʕan -'at -it -s*  
 invite -'AT -PAST -1sg  
 he.invited.me

‘I was invited; He invited me.’ [elicited (7.24.91-81)]

(3) 3 PLURAL (ACTOR) > 1 PLURAL (UNDERGOER)

*ma:ma:matñiqsapatna*  
 DUP- *mamatñiq -sa-p*      *-'at -na*.  
 DISTR- speak.English -MOMCAUS -'AT -1pl  
 they.made.us.speak.English

‘They made us speak English.’ [LanguageChange 6]

(4) 3 PLURAL (ACTOR) > 1 SINGULAR (UNDERGOER)

*naʔu:kʔaqʕatsiš,*  
*naʔu:k -ʔaqʕ -'at -si-š*  
accompanying -FUT -'AT -IND.1sg  
they.will.accompany.me

‘They will come with me.’ [FirstFire 26]

Thus, in terms of the morphological marking on the predicate, the undergoer in the -'at sentence is given a special grammatical status that it does not otherwise have, and the actor in the -'at sentence lacks the special status that it otherwise has.

## 2.2. Semantic configuration in the Nootka -'at construction

In the -'at construction, the whole predication is expressed from the perspective of the undergoer, unlike in the non-'at transitive construction where the predication is made from the actor's perspective.

(5) *ʕa:wuʔšišiʔaʕat.*  
*ʕawa -uʔ -šiš -'aʕ -'at*  
near -place.of -MOM-FIN -'AT  
they.get.close.to.him

‘He was approached by them.’ [Deer Killed Wolf 15]

(6) *šiši:ʕukʔapʔat*                      *čawa:ʔathʔapʔat.*  
*šiši:ʕuk -'ap -'at*                      *čawa:-'ath -'ap -'at*  
move -MOMCAUS-'AT                      one -residing -MOMCAUS-'AT  
they.made.her.move                      they.made.her.live.alone

‘She was made to move to live alone.’ [Dog Children 8]

## 2.3. Discourse-informational configuration in the Nootka -'at construction

The discourse-informational status of the participants in the two-participant -'at construction also parallels the undergoer-centered pattern observed in the morphosyntactic and semantic configurations. The -'at construction can be used

only when the undergoer is higher in discourse salience than the actor. The pattern of use can be summarized as Table 4.

Table 4: Pattern for Use of *-'at*

Participant Configuration ACTOR → UNDERGOER	Use of <i>-'at</i>
<u>1, 2</u> → 3	NO
3 → <u>1, 2</u>	YES
1, 2 → 1, 2	NO
<b>topical 3</b> → non-topical 3	NO
non-topical 3 → <b>topical 3</b>	YES

Note: Underlining indicates the participant that is higher in discourse salience

The following excerpt from a text illustrates the use of the *-'at* construction triggered by relative discourse salience of third-person participants. In this excerpt the protagonist, a mink called Kwaaxtii, who killed the wolf chief, is being pursued by packs of wolves that are eager to take revenge. Notice that the *-'at* construction is used in (c) and (d), when peripheral characters, i.e., wolves, are acting on the protagonist Kwaaxtii.

(7) [Mink 165–172]

a. protagonist > peripheral

*naʔaaʔ kʷaaxtii,*

*naʔa: -'aʔ*

hear -FIN NAME

heard Kwaaxtii

‘Kwaaxtii heard them [the wolves that were howling].’

- b. protagonist > peripheral

*wik'aλ haʔukʷiλ.*  
*wik-'aλ haʔu -kʷi(λ)*  
 not -FIN respond -MOM  
 didn't answer.to

'He didn't answer them [the wolves].'

- c. peripheral > protagonist

*ʔuuktisʔaλatʔiš* *kʷaaxtii,*  
*ʔu -ktis -'aλ -'at -ʔi.š*  
 it -acting.by.ref.to -FIN -'AT -IND.3 NAME  
 they.are.following.it Kwaaxtii

'They [the wolves] were following Kwaaxtii.'

(1 line omitted)

- d. peripheral > protagonist

*misʔuuqsʔiḡat* *ʔin wawik*  
*mis -ʔu-qs -ʔi-ḡa -'at ʔin wax -'ik*  
 smell-smelling.of- too.much -'AT because break.wind -one.who.always.does  
 they.could.smell.him.so.clearly because one.who.always.breaks.wind

'They could smell the odor [of Kwaaxtii] so clearly since he kept breaking wind.'

(1 line omitted)

- e. protagonist > peripheral

*ʔayisaqsiṭawitasʔaλ* *čaastimcmit.*  
*ʔayisaq-siṭa -witas -'aλ ča:stimc-mi-t*  
 deceive -acting.like -about.to -FIN mink -son.of  
 he.is.going.to.trick Son.of.Mink

'The Son of Mink [Kwaaxtii] was going to trick them.'

### **3. History of the passive analysis of the -'at construction**

On the basis of the resemblances illustrated above the -'at construction in Nootka has commonly been characterized as 'passive', although the degree of commitment to that characterization varies across researchers.

Sapir and Swadesh (1939) were the first to use the term 'passive' for the -'at construction, but they did not provide detailed discussion of the construction. Thus, characterization as 'passive' started out as relatively uncommitted observation that the construction show functional resemblances to what was known as passive in other languages.

Rose 1981 and Rose and Carlson 1984 basically accept the previous characterization as 'passive' but noted a deviation of the -'at construction from the prototypical syntactic passive. They characterize the construction to be 'base-generated,' highlighting the fact that it is difficult to derive the -'at construction from an active counterpart through a regular syntactic operation.

Whistler 1985 moves away from the passive analysis of the -'at construction. Whistler notes that the fact that the syntactic relation of subject is not very robust in Nootka and argued that it weakens the basis for identifying the construction as 'passive'. Furthermore, the distributional constraint with respect to the discourse-informational configuration (as discussed in 2.3 above) is reminiscent of the distribution of the inverse marker in languages with the inverse system. Whistler therefore concludes that the Nootka construction is closer to the inverse construction like that reported in Algonquian languages (cf. Dahlstrom 1986)

Emanatian 1988 makes a counter-proposal against Whistler 1985. She argues that the -'at construction is in fact a prototypical syntactic passive which manipulates the syntactic subject through transitivity alternation.

### **4. Examination of passive analysis of Nootka -'at construction**

What prompted the passive analysis is undoubtedly the grammatical configuration of the actor and the undergoer in the -'at construction: i.e. the undergoer has control of the pronominal index on the predicate, whereas the actor does not. The analysis of the construction has then been guided by the passive prototype formed in the studies of the European-type syntactic passive construction, i.e. a structural alternation that affects the syntactic configuration of the clausal arguments. Structural features typically associated with the passive prototype include the following:

(8)

- a. the passive clause structurally alternates with the 'active' clause
- b. the active object is syntactically promoted to the subject (= assumes the syntactic privileges of the subject); the active subject is syntactically demoted (= loses the syntactic privileges of the subject)
- c. the valency of the passivized predicate is reduced compared to that of the non-passivized predicate

In this section I will examine the validity of the examples and arguments presented in the previous studies in support for the passive analysis of the -'at construction.

#### 4.1. The -'at construction participates in a structural alternation

The pair of examples such as (9) and (10) below seem to suggest that the -'at construction indeed participates in a structural alternation similar to the passive alternation in English.

(9) 1 PLURAL (ACTOR) > 2 PLURAL (UNDERGOER)

*ha:ʕanʔaqniš*      *si:ħaʔ.*

*ha:ʕan -ʔaq -niš*      *si:ħaʔ*

invite    -FUT - 1pl    you.all

we.will.invite      you.all

'We will invite you all.' [elicited (7.24.91-77)]

(10) 3 SINGULAR (ACTOR) > 1 SINGULAR (UNDERGOER)

*ha:ʕanʔanits.*

*ha:ʕan -'at -it -s*

invite    -'AT -PAST -1sg

he.invited.me

'I was invited; He invited me.' [elicited (7.24.91-81)]

However, the Nootka -'at clause is not fundamentally a construction derived from a transitive clause. It can be formed on an intransitive predicate.

- (11) *ʔiihʔat kʷiishii*  
*ʔi:hʷ-ʔat kʷis -hi*  
 very -ʔAT be.strange -DUR

‘People were very strange to him.’ [Qawiqqaalth 20]

- (12) *huuʔakat ʔacšiʔat,*  
*hu:ʔak-ʔat ʔac -ši(ʃ) -ʔat*  
 early -ʔAT go.fishing -MOM -ʔAT  
 being.early go.out.fishing

‘Go out fishing early.’ [Canoe 92]

The predicates in (11) and (12), *ʔi:hʷ kʷis-hi* ‘being very strange’ and *hu:ʔak* ‘being early’, are one-participant predicates and there is no corresponding ‘active’ clause for (11) and (12)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is not reasonable to characterize the above ‘intransitive’ *-ʔat* clauses as a syntactic configuration derived from the corresponding transitive (= two-place) configuration through the application of a regular syntactic process. Below are additional examples:

- (13) *ʔupči:ʔukʰʷat.*  
*ʔup-či-ʔ -uk -ʔat*  
 one -days.long -DUR -ʔAT  
 it.took.one.day

‘It took one day [to reach Port Alberni]’. [CL 216]

---

<sup>2</sup> Notice that (11) and (12) in fact represent two different types of intransitive *-ʔat* clauses, i.e. what we can call the undergoer-focusing type and the actor-defocusing type. In the undergoer-focusing *-ʔat* clause (illustrated by (11)), the undergoer that is not subcategorized for the main predicate is introduced as the grammatically central argument. On the other hand, in the actor-defocusing *-ʔat* clause (illustrated by (12)) the actor that is subcategorized for the main predicate is removed, leaving the clause as an impersonal construction.

The intransitive-based constructions of both types, undergoer-focusing and actor-defocusing, find parallel constructions in many other languages. The undergoer-focusing construction is reminiscent of some passive constructions in Asian languages such as Japanese (cf. Shibatani 1990 on the ‘adversative passive’ construction in Japanese), and the actor-defocusing construction is similar to those characterized as ‘impersonal passive’ in a wide variety of languages (cf. Keenan 1985).



- (14) *wi:ýa:t*            *kakapx<sup>w</sup>at.*  
*wi:ýa -'at*        DUPCV- *kapx<sup>w</sup>-a*    -'at  
 never -'AT        REP-        boast -REP -'AT  
 never                boast

'Don't boast.' [Transformer 44]

- (15) *ča:paci:tʔaʕatqu:*  
*čapac -i:t -'aʕ -'at -qu:*  
 canoe -make -FIN -SHIFT -COND.3  
 when.one.makes.a.canoe

'When one makes a canoe ...' [Canoe 29]

- (16) *?i:hcamisuk<sup>w</sup>it*                            *ía:tánaʕat.*  
*?i:ḥ<sup>w</sup> -camis -uk -it*            *ía:tña -na·k -'at*  
 important -thing -POSS-PAST    children -having -'AT  
 it.was.important                        have.children

'It was important to have children.' [Indian Marriage 37]

Such non-derivable -'at clauses are in fact quite common. Thus, the regular correspondence between the -'at clauses and their transitive counterparts is hardly a defining characteristic of the -'at construction. If we are to treat the -'at clause based on a two-place (transitive) predicate and that based on a one-place (intransitive) predicate as a single construction type, which seems to be a reasonable assumption, the -'at clause must be considered a syntactically independent, not derived, construction. This is in fact suggested by Rose 1981 and Rose & Carlson 1984 in their generative characterization of the construction as 'base-generated' (as opposed to transformationally generated). This characterization represents a step in the right direction.

#### 4.2. The -'at construction manipulates the syntactic status of arguments

As we noted above, the argument for the passive analysis is based on the assumption that the change in the morphological marking pattern coincides with a syntactic reorganization of clausal arguments. However, as it turns out, syntactic patterning in Nootka does not align itself with morphological marking in the same way as in

European languages, and the structural rearrangement involved in the *-'at* construction cannot be characterized as syntactic.

In the *-'at* construction the way the undergoer interacts with the pronominal indexing differs from that in the non-*'at* construction: the undergoer controls the pronominal index in the *-'at* construction, although it does not otherwise. Emanatian 1988 argues that the difference in pronominal indexing coincides with a syntactic difference, citing the pattern of coreferentiality between a complement-taking predicate and its complement. When a complement-taking predicate has a coreferentiality constraint over its complement, the constraint seems to refer to the ‘subject’ of the complement clause regardless of its semantic role. Consider the example (17) and (18) below (examples are from Rose 1981: 87).

(17) [KYU]

a.	<i>ḥamaṭšḥintiis</i>	<i>ʔuʔaaḥ</i>	<i>Joe</i>
	<i>ḥamaṭ-š(i)(ḥ)-int</i>	<i>ʔu</i>	<i>-'i(ḥ) -'aḥ Joe</i>
	try -MOM -PAST -INDEF.1sg	it -invite..-FIN	
	I.ried	invited	

‘I tried to invite Joe.’

b.*	<i>ḥamaṭšḥintiis</i>	<i>ʔuʔaaʔt</i>	<i>Joe</i>
	<i>ḥamaṭ-š(i)(ḥ)-int</i>	<i>ʔu</i>	<i>-'i(ḥ) -'aḥ-'at Joe</i>
	try -MOM -PAST -INDEF.1sg	it -invite.. -FIN -SHIFT	
	I.ried	being.invited.by	

(intended as: ‘I tried for Joe to get invited.’)

(18) [KYU]

a.*	<i>ḥamaṭšḥintiis</i>	<i>ʔuʔaaḥ</i>	<i>siičit</i>
	<i>ḥamaṭ-š(i)(ḥ)-int</i>	<i>ʔu</i>	<i>-'i(ḥ) -'aḥ si:-(č)it</i>
	try -MOM -PAST -INDEF.1sg	it -invite..-FIN	I -do.to...
	I.ried	invited	me

(intended as: ‘I tried for someone to invite me.’)

b. <i>ḥamałšḥintiis</i>	<i>ʔuʔaaʔt</i>
<i>ḥamał-šü(ḥ)-int -(y)i:s</i>	<i>ʔu -'i(ḥ) -'aḥ -'at</i>
try -MOM -PAST -INDEF.1sg	it -invite.. -FIN -SHIFT
I.ried	being.invited.by

'I tried to get invited.'

It can be observed that the presence of *-'at* affects the coreferential argument: the undergoer argument, rather than the actor argument, is coreferential with the matrix subject. In the argument for the syntactic passive analysis of the *-'at* construction (cf. Emanatan 1988) this change in coreference pattern is taken to be proof for a change in syntactic configuration of the argument structure. However, this coreferentiality constraint may very well be viewed as a pragmatic constraint on perspective consistency between the matrix and complement clauses; and the change triggered by the suffix *-'at* is really pragmatic rather than syntactic in nature. In fact, this latter pragmatic view seems to capture better the true nature of the phenomenon. In Nootka there is no process that manipulates the syntactic arrangement of clausal arguments per se, nor is it possible to identify a syntactic slot that is clearly privileged in purely syntactic terms. Thus, there is not a strong structural motivation for purely syntactic categories in Nootka. (See Whistler 1985 for a similar observation.) It is then not appropriate to characterize the grammatical change concerning the undergoer as a 'syntactic promotion'.

The grammatical realignment of clausal arguments in Nootka *-'at* clauses deviates from the syntactic reorganization associated with the prototypical passive not only with respect to the syntactic status of the undergoer but also to that of the actor. Syntactic demotion of the actor has been claimed for Nootka on the basis of two observations (Rose 1981; Rose & Carlson 1984; Emanatian 1988): the actor (i) loses control over the pronominal index and (ii) is expressed as an 'oblique' argument. Consider the following examples:

- (19) *qaḥsa:p*            *Bill muwič*  
*qaḥ-sa-p*            *Bill muwič*  
 die -MOM.CAUS    NAME    deer  
 kill                    Bill    deer  
 PREDICATE    ACTOR UNDERGOER  
 ‘Bill killed the deer.’ [KYU: Rose & Carlson 1984:3f]

- (20) *qaḥsa:p't*                    *muwič*  
*qaḥ-sa-p*            *-’at muwič*  
 die -MOM.CAUS -’AT    deer  
 is.killed                    deer  
 PREDICATE-’at            UNDERGOER  
 ‘The deer was killed.’ [KYU: *ibid.*]

- (21) *qaḥsa:ḗt*                    *muwič*            *ʔuhʔat*            *Bill.*  
*qaḥ-sa-p*            *-’at muwič*            *ʔuh*            *-’at Bill*  
 die -MOM.CAUS -’AT    deer            being.he -’AT    NAME  
 is.killed                    deer            being.by.him    Bill  
 PREDICATE            UNDERGOER                    (ACTOR)  
 ‘The deer was killed by Bill.’ [KYU: Rose 1981 p.78: #185]

In (20) the actor is left unexpressed, and in (21) the actor is expressed as an object of a combined predicate *ʔuhʔat* ‘being done by; being the one who did ... to ...,’ which is reminiscent of the *by*-phrase in English passive construction. In either case the actor appears to be purged from the core argument structure leaving only the undergoer as an argument. However, the syntactically demoted status of the actor argument cannot be established unequivocally. In the *-’at* sentence with the overt actor argument expressed in the combined clause lead by *ʔuhʔat*, the actor is claimed to be demoted to a non-direct argument status marked by a preposition-like predicate *ʔuhʔat* (Emanatian 1988: 275). Tempting as this account may be, it is not an appropriate description of the structure. The predicate *ʔuhʔat* is neither a grammatical marker of an oblique actor argument nor an integral part of the *-’at* construction. First, what appears to be an oblique ACTOR phrase, *ʔuhʔat* + actor, is a clausal construction used to put a contrastive focus on the agent of an action. When

combined with another clause, as in (22) below, the *ʔuhʔat* clause loses some properties of a full-fledged clause, such as the independent mood and person marking. But it has not yet been grammaticized to the extent that it can be considered an actor phrase within a clause. This is evidenced in the fact that the clause headed by *ʔuhʔat* often occurs as a main clause.

(22)

- a. *ʔuhʔaʔat*                      *Mike Lewis, ʔaʔa:tu:ʔat Harold qʷa:yi:*,  
*ʔuh -'aʔ-'at*                      *ʔaʔa:tu: -'at*                      *qʷa:-(y)i:*  
 being.he-FIN -'AT                      ask                      -'AT                      thus -INDEF.3  
 it.was.by.him                      being.asked                      whether

‘It was by Mike Lewis that Harold was asked whether ...’ [CL 239]

- b. *ʔuhʔat*                      *ʔu:ʔaʔukʷat*                      *ʔumʔi:qsakitqu:*  
*ʔuh -'at*                      *ʔu -'aʔuk -'at*                      *ʔumʔi:qsu -ʔa-k -it -qu:*  
 being.she -'AT                      he -looking.after -'AT                      mother                      -POSS -PAST -COND  
 it.was.by.her                      being.looked.after                      his.late.mother

‘It was by his late mother that he was looked after.’ [Qawiqaalth 5]

Second, the actor can be expressed without *ʔuhʔat* as a direct argument in the *-'at* construction (see example (23) below).

- (23) *čičiʔčpʔa:qʔti:s*                      *Linda.*  
*čiči -šiči(ʔ)-čiči-p -ʔa:qʔ-'at -(y)i: -s*                      *Linda*  
 cut-MOM -for -FUT -'AT -INDEF-1sg                      NAME  
 will.cut.for.me                      Linda

‘It’s for me Linda will cut it up.’ [KYU: Rose 1981 p.79: #193]

Expression of the actor as an object of *ʔuhʔat* is an independent structural option, not a part of the obligatory structural pattern of the *-'at* construction in Nootka. Thus, an example like (21) above does not prove the demoted status of the actor argument.

Example (23) incidentally raises another question about the claim regarding the syntactically demoted status of the actor argument. The actor does not need to be

removed from the immediate syntactic environment of the predicate and can be expressed as a direct argument as in the non-*'at* construction.

- (24) *mači<sup>?</sup>ats*                      *maack<sup>w</sup>in*  
*ma -či(λ) -'at -s*      *ma:ck<sup>w</sup>in*  
 bite -MOM -'AT -1sg      mosquito  
 'A mosquito bit me; I was bitten by a mosquito.' [elicited 7.17.91-44]

- (25) *šiči<sup>?</sup>atša*                      *mamašni.*  
*ši -či(λ)-'at -ša*      *mamašni*  
 shoot -MOM -'AT -also      white.man  
 'White men shot at him again; He was shot at by white men again.'  
 [Kingfisher 134]

- (26) *na<sup>?</sup>a:<sup>?</sup>at*                      *nitiina<sup>?</sup>ath*  
*na<sup>?</sup>a:<sup>?</sup>at -'at*      *ni:ti:na<sup>?</sup>ath*  
 hear -SHIFT      Nitinats  
 it.was.heard      Nitinats  
 'Nitinats could hear them; They were heard by Nitinats.' [WolfCeremony 124]

- (27) *na:csa:šat*                      *q<sup>w</sup>ayačiikštaqumł.*  
*na:csa -'aš -'at*                      *q<sup>w</sup>ayači:k-štaqumł*  
 see -FIN -'AT                      wolf -groups  
 watched.him                      wolf.tribe  
 'The wolf tribe were looking at him; He was sought for by the wolf tribe.'  
 [FirstFire 34]

Rose (1981:57) argues for a syntactically peripheral 'oblique' status of the direct actor argument in the *'at* sentences like those above on the basis of limitation in word order flexibility. The actor argument in the *'at* construction, unlike that in the non-*'at* construction, cannot precede the predicate and does not normally precede the undergoer argument associated with the same predicate. However, word order flexibility alone does not provide strong evidence for a syntactic category, especially in a language where word order is normally flexible and is responsive to pragmatic demands. In fact this constraint can very well be explained pragmatically. As can be

independently shown, in Nootka discourse the important information is most likely to be placed in initial position before the predicate. When the *-'at* construction is used in discourse, an actor such as *maack<sup>w</sup>in* in (24) generally occupies a relatively unimportant place within the immediate context. Therefore, it does not make sense to put it into the pragmatically highlighted position, i.e. sentence-initially (= before the predicate). This pragmatic explanation is consistent with the general characteristic of Nootka as a 'pragmatic word order language' (Thompson 1978), and it seems better to view the word order flexibility as a factor independent of the syntactic status of an argument.

Given the lack of definitive evidence for its syntactic peripherality, it seems reasonable to conclude that the actor argument in the *-'at* construction is syntactically no less central within the clause than that in the non-*'at* construction.

#### **4.3. The *-'at* construction involves valency reduction through demotion of the actor**

Related to the above issue of syntactic demotion of the actor is the question of valency in the *-'at* construction. The prototypical passive as defined above involves reduction of the valence of the predicate through removal of the actor from the core argument structure. However, as we have already seen, the Nootka *-'at* construction can retain the actor as a direct argument. Although this actor argument does not control the pronominal index on the predicate, it is indistinguishable from the actor in non-*'at* clauses in terms of syntactic privileges. Thus, the *-'at* predicate is just as 'transitive' as the non-*'at* form of the predicate. More accurately, the criterion based on valency change cannot be applied to Nootka in a meaningful way. Nootka grammar is not sensitive to the transitivity of the clause, that is, there is no grammatical marker in Nootka that indicates the transitivity of the clause. Therefore, any application of the notion of syntactic transitivity to Nootka clausal structure is bound to be arbitrary, e.g. based on the number of overtly expressed direct arguments.

#### **4.4. Summary**

Use of the suffix *-'at* has a major effect on the pragmatic and morphological configuration of participants within a sentence that shows a partial resemblance to grammatical voice systems in other languages. It is in fact even possible to gather a

set of examples that suggest that the *-'at* construction fit the profile of the syntactic passive construction. However, upon carefully reexamination, validity of each key feature that had been taken to be evidence for the passive analysis of the *-'at* construction has turned out to be arguable or questionable. Especially, the fact that it is difficult to characterize the effect on the participant configuration in terms of syntactic promotion and demotion suggests that the function of *-'at* should be analyzed to be more lexico-semantic than structural in nature: i.e., *-'at* is used to affect the semantics of the predicate in such a way that the whole predication is framed in terms of the (direct or indirect) effect of an event or state. The fact that the *-'at* construction does not completely conform to the structural profile of the syntactic passive construction in itself is not a serious problem, given the high degree of structural diversity among languages of the world. However, the deviations are rooted in the general structural characteristics of Nootka grammar that transitivity distinction or subjecthood are not clearly defined in purely syntactic terms. Then, the significance of these deviations cannot be taken lightly. Moreover, the observations that have been argued to support the passive analysis need to be reevaluated in the context of the large-scale architecture of the language.

## 5. Conclusion

In our analysis of grammatical phenomena it is important to get the facts right. However, an accurate description of the pattern at the phenomenological level is not always enough to attain the goal of an accurate and insightful account of the phenomenon. If we examine examples and observations in isolation from the network of other structural patterns, even though these 'local accounts' themselves are valid, we can still miss the appropriate characterization of the global phenomenon by misreading what these 'evidence' truly show. Thus, it is important to evaluate the examples and observations against the structural environment of the language.

## References

- Dahlstrom, Amy 1986 *Plains Cree Morphosyntax*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California, Berkeley, California.
- Emanatian, Michele 1988 The Nootka passive revisited. In: W. Shipley (ed.) *In Honor of Mary Haas*, 265-291. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.



- Keenan, Edward L. 1985 Passive in the world's languages. In: Timothy Shopen (ed.) *Language Typology and Syntactic Description, vol.1*, 243-281. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nakayama, Toshihide 2001 *Nuuchahnulth (Nootka) Morphosyntax*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rose, Suzanne M. 1981 *Kyuquot Grammar*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Rose, Suzanne M., and Barry F. Carlson 1984 The Nootka-Nitinaht passive. *Anthropological Linguistics* 26(1): 1-12.
- Sapir, Edward, and Morris Swadesh 1939 *Nootka Texts: Tales and Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexical Materials*. Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America.
- Shibatani, Masayoshi 1985 Passive and related constructions: a prototype analysis. *Language* 61: 821-848.
- Shibatani, Masayoshi 1990 *The Languages of Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swadesh, Morris 1933 Internal Economy of the Nootka Word. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
- Thompson, Sandra A. 1978 Modern English from a typological point of view: some implications of the function of word order. *Linguistische Berichte* 54: 19-35.
- Whistler, Kenneth W. 1985 Focus, perspective, and inverse person marking in Nootkan. In: Johanna Nichols and Anthony C. Woodbury (eds.) *Grammar Inside and Outside the Clause*, 227-265. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.