The interrogative words based on the notions of WHAT, HOW, WHERE, and HOW MANY, in Amis, an Austronesian language spoken in eastern Taiwan, can be used as verbal predicates. They either show up as the only verb or are followed by a lexical verb, forming an interrogative verb sequencing construction (IVSC) as in (1) and (2).

(1) maan-en ni panay (a) mi-padang kuya wawa
    do.how-PV GEN PN LNK AV-help that.NOM child
    ‘How does Panay help that child?’

(2) icuwa-en ni ofad (a) mi-simed ku paysu
    V.where-PV GEN PN LNK AV-hide NOM money
    ‘Where does Ofad hide the money?’

The present paper investigates the structural relationship between the interrogative verb and the lexical verb in this construction and argues that (1) and (2) involve different structures of verb sequencing and distinct syntactic operations.

The presence of the optional linker in (1) and (2) suggests that an IVSC should not be analyzed as a serial verb construction, where the two verbs are not separated by any overt linker, coordinator, or subordinator. This also indicates that an IVSC is distinct from VP coordination as no linker is allowed in an Amis VP coordinate structure. Instead, the structural relationship between the interrogative verb and the lexical verb is subordination with the interrogative verb as the main verb. First of all, the interrogative verb must precede the main verb. Secondly, the tense/aspect markers can only be attached to the interrogative verb. Thirdly, the case-marking pattern of the nominal arguments is determined by the voice marker on the interrogative verb. Finally, the lexical verb is restricted to the agent voice marking (AV-restriction), which, in Amis, is an indication of a non-finite reduced subordinate clause.

Nevertheless, (1) and (2) exhibit significant semantic and syntactic differences in terms of their subordination types. Based on the diagnostics established by Bierwisch (2003) and Dowty (2003), we argue that the lexical VP in (1) is a complement to the interrogative verb, whereas that in (2) is adjoined to the interrogative verb phrase. **Maan** ‘do how’ can be conceived of as a semantic predicate that selects for an action as its complement. The VP headed by **mi-padang** ‘AV-help’ in (1) can saturate an argument position of the main interrogative verb. The obligatory presence of the lexical verb further confirms its complement status. The deletion of **mi-padang** in (1) would result in a sentence that has a totally different interpretation, i.e., ‘What does Panay do to that child?’. Without **mi-padang**, the meaning of **maan** is incomplete. Moreover, the lexical verb phrase can be syntactically realized as the nominative argument as in (3).

(3) maan-en ni panay [ku pi-padang tuya wawa]
    do.how-PV GEN PN NOM PI-help that.OBL child
    ‘How does Panay help that child?’ (How is he helping that child done by Panay?)

This corroborates our analysis that the lexical verb phrase is an argument of **maan**.

By contrast, **icuwa** ‘V.where’ in (2) does not semantically select for an event because the question does not concern where the event takes place but where the theme argument is. Instead, it is the main verb, **icuwa**, that saturates an argument position of the ditransitive lexical verb, which requires a location argument. According to Bierwisch (2003), an adjunct is able to discharge an argument position to the head. If the ditransitive VP in (2) is analyzed as an adjunct to the main verb, **icuwa** ‘V.where’, we can resolve the conundrum of how the location argument of the ditransitive verb is saturated. Moreover, the
lexical verb is optional. Its deletion does not alter the basic meaning of (2) but only changes it to a less specific question, i.e., ‘Where does Panay put the money?’. This further shows that the lexical verb in (2) functions like a modifier and merely specifies the action involved in the ditransitive event.

Another critical difference between (1) and (2) is that *maan* does not share the theme argument with its following lexical verb, but *icuwa* does. The nominative argument in (1) is interpreted as the theme argument of the embedded lexical verb, not of the matrix interrogative verb. This thematic feature suggests that the theme argument is base-generated as the complement of the lexical verb, but it must move to the matrix clause for case checking because nominative case in Amis is checked by a finite T (4).

(4) \[\text{maan-en \quad GEN=AGENT \quad [\_coomplement AV-lexical verb } t_i \quad \text{NOM=THEME}]\]

The raising analysis of (1) can explain why the theme argument can occur in the matrix clause even though it is not an argument of the matrix interrogative verb.

In contrast to (1), the nominative DP in (2) is interpreted as the theme argument of both the interrogative verb and the lexical verb. This indicates that there is a PRO in the lexical VP and it is controlled by the nominative DP (5).

(5) \[\text{icuwa-en \quad GEN=AGENT \quad [\_adjunct AV-lexical verb PRO] \quad \text{NOM=THEME}]\]

The PRO analysis of (2) however is not theoretically tenable. The PRO in (5) does not occur in an ungoverned position, violating the PRO Theorem. It is not controlled by the closest c-commanding DP, in violation of the Minimal Distance Principle. In view of these problems, we propose an alternative analysis based on the Movement Theory of Control (Hornstein 1999) and argue that adjunct control in (2)/(5) results from Sideward Movement of the theme argument from the adjunct clause to the matrix clause to check the theta-feature on the interrogative verb (Hornstein 1999; Nunes 2001). It also moves to Spec, TP to check nominative case. The deletion of its lower copies is due to Chain Reduction for linearization purposes.

In conclusion, Amis interrogative verb sequencing constructions do not form a homogeneous class in terms of their structure and syntactic operations. The findings have both empirical and theoretical implications. Empirically, this study shows that when an interrogative verb co-occurs with a lexical verb, the interrogative verb can be the primary predicate (cf. Hagège 2008). The peculiar patterns of complementation and adjunction in different types of interrogative verb sequencing constructions imply that our current syntactic treatment of complements and adjuncts needs a thorough re-examination (Bierwisch 2003; Dowty 2003).

References


