Chapter 5

Conclusion

Ditransitive construction has been one of most popular topics of linguistic research in the last few decades. English, as one of most well-studied languages in the world, is reported to have two surface representations of ditransitive construction – one is DOC and the other is *to*-dative construction. These two constructions look alike, but differ in various aspects, such as the structural position of the goal argument, the presence/absence of causative interpretation, etc. All of these differences are found mainly through the study of English ditransitive construction. Linguists have been studying the ditransitive construction of various languages of the world over the last two decades. Languages such as Greek and Japanese are reported to have object alternation similar to that of English dative alternation. Greek and Japanese, unlike English (which relies on word order to exhibit grammatical relation) employ case markers to show grammatical relation. Mandarin, a language without a fixed word order or a case marking system, is also reported to have object alternation similar to that of English dative alternation. Languages with different linguistic typology are reported to have dative alternation. Therefore, the question of whether Yami, a language with a rich case marking system, has similar alternation in ditransitive construction has been raised and has motivated our study of ditransitive construction in Yami. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the existence of dative alternation in Yami – a language that not only has a very rich case marking system but also has a very unique 'voice' system which can promote different nominals into the subject position. Previous works done in Yami have not focused attention on ditransitive construction and some of the basic linguistic properties have not been clarified.

Therefore, chapter three and the first half of chapter four deal with some controversial issues regarding its very unique 'voice' system and its linguistic typology. The 'voice' system and its interaction with degree of transitivity, place of predicate, thematic structure, and event classes are investigated to examine the case marking of core and peripheral arguments. It has been found that the case marking of the nominal and the thematic structure of the verb are interrelated, while degree of transitivity, place of predicate, and event class do not have any influence on the overt marking of nominals. This finding leads us to re-analyze the 'focus' system as 'voice' system, which shares certain properties with the English active-passive voice system: promotion of argument to the subject position and reflection of sentence voice on verbal morphology. However, there are also some differences, such as the existing number of voice alternations. After identifying 'focus' as 'voice', our examination of the proposal of Ho and Deng (to consider Yami as ergative with AF construction to be antipassive construction) has led us to argue for a valency-neutral analysis of the Yami 'voice' system. After these linguistic properties have been clarified, trivalent verbs are investigated to verify the existence of dative alternation in this language.

In investigating verbs that subcategorize three arguments, only two verbs are discovered to have object alternation similar to English dative alternation. While most of the criteria that have been employed to show the difference between English DOC and *to*-dative construction are not applicable to Yami data, the verbal morphology and case marking of nominals have provided some grounds to prove the existence of dative alternation. Although limited data and applicable criteria for testifying dative alternation with Yami might have rendered our findings somewhat tenuous, our comparison within and across languages has shown, unequivocally, the difference between trivalent verbs with and without dative alternation through the asymmetrical

c-command relation between the Goal and Theme argument, the subtle meaning difference between PF and LF constructions, etc. The confirmation of dative alternation in Yami is not only in accordance with Harley's proposal of the co-existence of verbal *HAVE* and dative alternation, but also implies that dative alternation is not language-specific. It also suggests that dative alternation might exist among other languages of the Austronesian language family. However, this hypothesis requires further study of ditransitive construction in other Austronesian languages.