Applicative Constructions

Applicative constructions involve predicates with morphological markers that allow the introduction of a participant in object function, which in the absence of such marking cannot be encoded as a core argument of the base verb (cf. Creissels 2004). Bresnan and Moshi (1990:148–149) argue that applicative constructions result from a derived verb (“applied verb”) that introduces a new object argument to the base verb. Similarly, Peterson (2007:1) and Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000b:13) define the applicative as a syntactic construction signaled by overt verbal morphology that permits the encoding as a grammatical object—i.e., core argument—of what would otherwise be an adjunct or a peripheral argument for the basic form of the verb.1

As I argued in a prior work (Capistrán 2006a), the P’orhépecha suffixes -ku for 3rd person and -chi for 1st and 2nd person are applicative morphemes:

(1) a. pyá-s-∅-ti tsúntsu-ni para María
    buy-PRF-PRS-3IND pot-OBJT for Maria
    ‘S/he bought a pot for Maria.’

    b. pyá*(-ku)-s-∅-ti tsúntsu-ni María-ni
    buy-3APPL-PRF-PRS-3IND pot-OBJT María-OBJT
    ‘S/he bought Maria a pot.’

(2) a. Xwánu wantónskurhi-sín-∅-ti xí-n=rini xinkóni
    Juan talk-HAB-PRS-3IND 1SG-OBJT=1SG.OBJ POSP
    ‘Juan talks with me.’

    b. Xwánu=rini wantónskurhi*(-chi)-sín-∅-ti
    Juan=1SG.OBJ talk-1/2APPL-HAB-PRS-3IND
    ‘Juan talks to me.’

1 This position differs from that of Baker (1988a, b) and of Marantz (1993) among others, who maintain that the applicative affix may lack overt realization, as well as from that of Pylkkänen (2002), who employs the term applicative for any construction type with an IO added to the argument structure of the verb.
In (1a), *Maria* is an adjunct (non-argumental beneficiary) introduced by the Spanish loanword *para*, while in (1b) *Maria* appears in core function bearing the objective case marker *-ni*. In (2b) there is also a syntactic valence increase in the derived verbal stem; the goal argument of the verb *wantónskurhini* ‘to talk, chat’ in (2a) is flagged by the comitative postposition, but in (2b) it is encoded in core function by way of the object enclitic *=rini*. In both (1) and (2) the occurrence of a new argument in object function is due to the presence of the suffixes *-ku/-chi* on the verbal stem, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (1b) and (2b) if these morphemes are omitted. Accordingly, as shown in (1b), the addition of *-ku* to a monotransitive verb generates a double object construction.

This chapter deals with the morphological and semantic characteristics of applicative marking in Porhépecha, as well as with the properties of double object applicative constructions. In 4.1, the formal properties of *-ku* and *-chi* are discussed. The alternative between the introduction of a participant in object function by an applicative suffix and its encoding as oblique is analyzed. The semantic roles that can bear applied arguments are examined and explained based on the relationship between the subject/agent and the applied argument conveyed by Porhépecha applicative morphemes. In 4.2, the morphosyntactic behavior of applied arguments that display PO properties is analyzed. The allomorphy shown by *-ku/-chi* when combined with the reciprocal, passive, and indefinite object morphemes is accounted for, as well as the ungrammaticality that results from the addition of the middle/reflexive suffix *-kurhi* to verbal bases which have undergone applicativization. Finally, in 4.3, the unexpected occurrence of *-ku* in internal possession constructions is examined.

### 4.1 Formal and Semantic Properties of Applicative Marking

#### 4.1.1 Applicative Marking with *-ku/-chi*

As stated above, the addition of *-ku/-chi* to monotransitive verbs results in double object constructions, which exhibit the characteristics of applicative constructions. However, since the suffixes *-ku* and *-chi* mark the person (3rd vs. 1st/2nd person) of the applied object, it might be argued that these morphemes are agreement or pronominal markers of semantically “dative-like” arguments (i.e., arguments such as the recipient, goal, source and beneficiary), which, as is the case in certain languages, also may be used to add participants in object function (see Peterson 2007:179–181). Nevertheless, there is evidence that *-ku* and *-chi* lack pronominal functions on the one hand, and that, on the other, these affixes are not agreement markers of semantically