



9

Kurdish *-râ* as an Anti-Actor marker

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Abstract: This paper will examine the semantic and syntactic roles of the *-râ* morpheme in Kurdish in the light of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) (Van Valin, Jr & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin, Jr 2007; Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins 1996). Crucial to RRG is the notion of two semantic macro-roles: Actor and Undergoer. In this work, we argue that the *-râ* morpheme in Kurdish can be analysed as Anti-Actor in the sense that this morpheme is attached to verbal roots in order to prevent their semantic Actor macro-roles from being realized as DPs in the syntax. Moreover, we show that the presence of the *-râ* morpheme in a sentence results in forming a non-active clause in many Kurdish dialects. It is also shown that when *-râ* occurs in intransitive unergative sentences with a compound verb containing an Actor role, it causes the absence of the DPs with Actor roles. Based on this evidence, we claim that the Kurdish *-râ* suffix can only be present when an Actor role is semantically present, but syntactically absent.

1 Introduction

The term *non-active structure* refers to several almost identical structures in which certain external arguments are not manifested as DPs in the syntactic level. Alexiadou & Doron (2012) state that cross-linguistically, there are at least five non-active structures: (1) Anticausatives, i.e. spontaneous events ('break', 'open'); (2) reflexives, which are mostly limited to verbs of body care ('wash', 'comb') and naturally reciprocal events ('meet', 'kiss'); (3) dispositional middles (*This book sells well*), (4) medio-passives; (5) passives. In

Kurdish,¹ a morphologically derived non-active structure is marked by the morpheme *-râ*², which attaches to verbal stems. There are two allomorphs of *-râ*: *-rê* and *-râ*, which are sensitive to tense, though the rules are somewhat opaque; cf. Footnote 4 below for discussion. The allomorphs are glossed here with *rê.PRS* and *râ.PST*, respectively. The examples³ in (1a–4a) and (1b–4b) provide evidence for a distinction between the active and non-active structures in Kurdish respectively.

- (1) a. *Sârâ sew-ak-ân=i xwârd.*
Sara apple-DEF-PL=3SG eat.PST
'Sara ate the apples.'
- b. *sew-ak-ân xwârd-râ-ân.*
apple-DEF-PL eat.PST-râ.PST-PL
'The apples were eaten.'
- (2) a. *bâ darka-ka=y dâxist.*
wind door-DEF=3SG close.PST
'The wind closed the door.'
- b. *darka-ka ba bâ-i dâx-râ.*
door-DEF with wind-OBL close.PRS-râ.PST
'The door was closed by the wind.'
- (3) a. *Sârâ samâ=i kird.*
Sara dancing=3SG do.PST
'Sara danced.'
- b. *samâ kir-râ.*
dancing do.PRS-râ.PST
'Dancing was done.'
- (4) a. *Sârâ kitêb-i dâstân bâš da-firoš-e.*
Sara book-EZ fiction well PROG-sell.PRS-3SG
'Sara sells the fiction book well.'

¹By *Kurdish* in this work, we mean the Sorani Kurdish dialects spoken in the central parts of the Kurdistan regions in Iran and Iraq. The data are mainly from the Mahabadi Kurdish dialect.

²This morpheme is represented as *-yâ* in Southern Kurdish dialects.

³Abbreviations: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, OBL = oblique case, DEF = definite, PRS = present, PST = past, EZ = ezafe, PL = plural, PROG = progressive and SG = singular.

- b. *kitêb-i dâstan bâş da-firoş-rê.*
 book-EZ fiction well PROG-sell.PRS-rê.PRS
 ‘The fiction books sell well.’

As it is shown in (1b), attaching *-râ* to the verb causes the omission of the verb’s external argument (*Sârâ*); resulting in an intransitive structure. In example (2a), *wind* as a natural force is the subject of the active structure and the clause (2b) shows that attaching *-râ* to the verb causes the elimination of the underlying subject of the clause. This indicates that attaching the *-râ* suffix to the verbal root causes the suppression not only of animate agents but also of inanimate causers. An important issue is the fact that it is possible to attach the *-râ* suffix to intransitive complex predicates consisting of a noun and a light verb as illustrated in (3b). In example (4), the so-called ‘middle construction’ is formed by adding the *-rê* suffix⁴ to the present stem of the verb.

In this paper, following Alexiadou & Doron (2012) and Schäfer (2008), we refer to the sentences in (1b–4b) as non-active constructions. We will examine the syntactic and semantic roles of the *-râ* morpheme in Kurdish in the light of the Actor role in RRG, introduced by Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins (1996), Van Valin, Jr (2007), Beavers (2011) and Beavers & Zubair (2013). This work proceeds as follows: In the next section, we will provide a brief overview of the theory of RRG. In Section 3, the semantic macro-roles, i.e. Actor and Undergoer, of RRG theory will be introduced and slightly redefined. The function of the *-râ* morpheme in various intransitive and transitive constructions will be discussed in Section 4. The final section provides a brief summary.

2 An overview of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG)

In RRG theory (Van Valin, Jr & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin, Jr 2007), the semantic macro-roles have a central and important function, putting the theory in

⁴The general rule for forming the non-active is that it is always based on the present stem, to which *-rê* is added to form the present non-active, and *-râ* is added to form a past non-active. However, there are certain verbs which have an irregularly formed non-active, such as *dâxistin* ‘to close’, *firoştin* ‘to sell’, *kawtin* ‘to fall’, *dân* ‘to give’, *gutin* ‘to say’, *girtin* ‘to hold’, *kirdin* ‘to do’, *dîtin* ‘to see’, and especially when the verb base (of the infinitive form) ends with *-din*, such as *xwârdin* ‘to eat’, as can be seen in (1). Accordingly, not only can *-râ* attach to the present stem (2b, 4b) but it can also attach to the past stem of verbs, as in (1b). For some verbs, it seems that both stems are possible hosts, for example *kir-râ/kird-râ*. This is a topic requiring further research.

a good position to account for the data under investigation. RRG grew out of an attempt to answer two basic questions, which were originally posed during the mid-1970s: (1) What would linguistic theory look like if it were based on an analysis of languages with diverse structures such as Lakhota, Tagalog and Dyirbal, rather than on the analysis of English?, and (2) How can the interaction of syntax, semantic and pragmatics in different grammatical systems best be captured and explained? According to RRG theory, one of the most important ways in which languages differ from each other is the manner in which discourse-pragmatics interacts with the linking between syntax and semantics (Van Valin, Jr 2007: 2). The RRG theory of semantic roles is rather different from that of other theories. According to RRG, semantic roles are assumed to be at work at three distinct levels of generality. At the first level, they are what may be called ‘verb-specific’ semantic roles, e.g. runner, killer, hearer, broken, etc. At the second level are thematic relations, which are generalizations across the verb-specific roles, e.g. agent, instrument, experiencer, theme, patient. At the third level are generalized semantic roles referred to as semantic macro-roles, i.e. Actor and Undergoer, which are generalizations across thematic relations. *Actor* is a generalization across agent, experiencer, instrument and other roles, while *Undergoer* is a generalization subsuming patient, theme, recipient, and other roles. *Agent* is the prototype for Actor, and *patient* is the prototype for Undergoer (Van Valin, Jr 2007: 53).

The number of macro-roles that a verb takes is generally predictable from its logical structure and there are only three possibilities: 0, 1, 2. If a verb has two or more arguments in its logical structure, e.g. [**do** (*x*, \emptyset)] CAUSE [BECOME **be-at** (*y*, *z*)] or **hear** (*x*, *y*), then the unmarked situation would be to have two macro-roles. If a verb has only a single argument in its logical structure, e.g. **do** (*x*, [**walk** (*x*)]]) or BECOME **open** (*y*), then the unmarked situation would be to have only one macro-role. Verbs with no arguments, e.g. (**do** \emptyset [**snow**]), have no macro-roles. The nature of the macro-roles is also a function of the verb’s logical structure. If a verb takes two of them, then they must be Actor and Undergoer. For verbs which have a single macro-role, the default choice follows directly from the logical structure of the verb: if the verb has an activity predicate in its logical structure, the macro-role will be Actor; otherwise, it will be Undergoer (Van Valin, Jr 2007: 62–63).

3 Redefining the Actor and Undergoer

Van Valin, Jr (2007: 61) states that it must be emphasized that the label ‘Undergoer’ should not be taken literally; the same is true for the label ‘Actor’. The Actor of the verb *see* does not do anything, but is nevertheless an Actor in the sense intended here (i.e. the logical subject). The Actor is the participant which is responsible for the state of affairs in the sense that it is impossible to have an action without an entity doing the action, a perceptual situation without a perceiving entity, or a cognitive or emotional situation without a participant experiencing the cognitive or emotional state. Similarly, the Undergoer of a verb like *see* does not necessarily undergo something in the same way as the Undergoer of a verb such as *kill*, but it is still the Undergoer of the verb, i.e. the logical object. In general, the Undergoer represents the non-instigating, affected participant in a state of affairs. Accordingly, Beavers & Zubair (2013: 12) suggests that agentive causation contrasts with non-agentive causation in that in the former, a causer is responsible for causation, while in the latter, a property (state) is the initiator of causation. Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins (1996) assume that the typology of argument properties relevant to ‘Agency’ assignment in natural languages is as depicted in Figure 1.

We mentioned earlier that Undergoer is a generalized semantic role subsuming thematic roles such as theme and patient, but we posit that the nature of Undergoer is closely related to the notion of affectedness. Affectedness has been linked to many important linguistic domains (Tenny 1994; Beavers 2011). Beavers adopts a two-dimensional space for the encoding of affectedness: the types of change and the degree of change. With respect to the degree of change, Beavers (2011: 2) mentions that, in the following example sentences (5a–5d), the patient (the *apple*) is increasingly less affected.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| (5) | a. John ate the apple up. | (Apple is completely gone) |
| | b. John cut the apple. | (Apple cut, not necessarily to a particular degree) |
| | c. John kicked the apple. | (Apple impinged, not necessarily affected) |
| | d. John touched the apple. | (Apple manipulated, not necessarily impinged) |

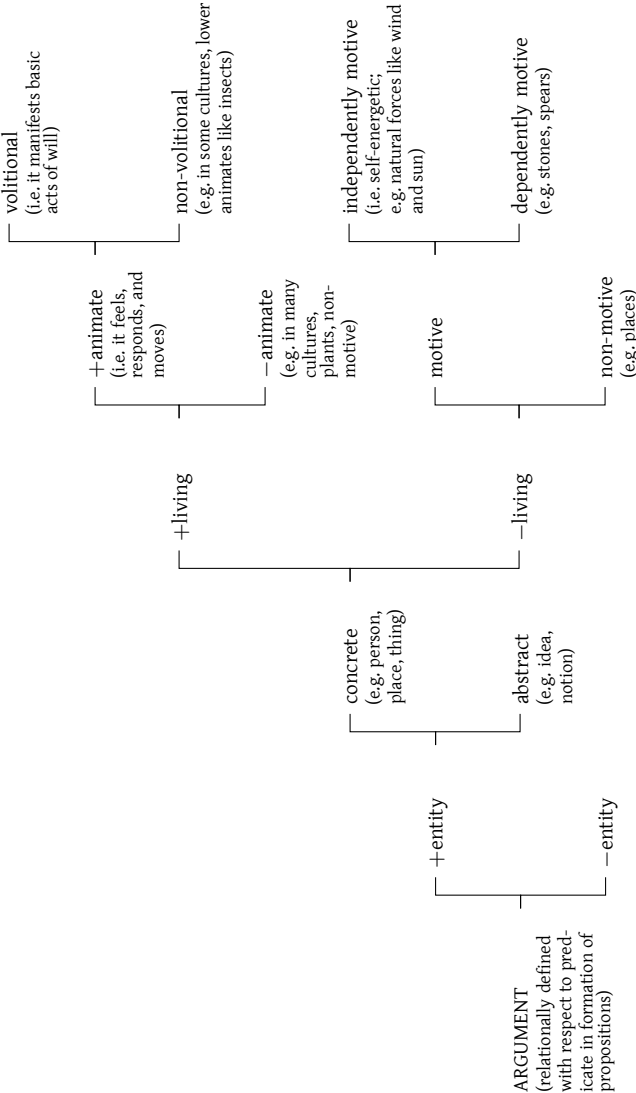


Figure 1: Typology of argument properties relevant to Agency (Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins 1996: 314–315)

Beavers (2011: 5) identifies and introduces the following types of affectedness for some entity *x*, as in (6):

- (6) a. *x* changes in some observable property (clean/paint/delouse/fix/break *x*).
 b. *x* transforms into something else (turn/carve/change/transform *x* into *y*)
 c. *x* moves and stays at some location (move/push/angle/roll *x* into *y*).
 d. *x* is physically impinged (hit/kick/punch/rub/slap/wipe/scrub/sweep *x*).
 e. *x* goes out of existence (delete/eat/consume/reduce/devour *x*).
 f. *x* comes into existence (build/design/construct/create *x*).

Therefore, based on Foley & Van Valin (1984), Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins (1996) and Van Valin, Jr (2007), as well as Beavers (2011) and Beavers & Zubair (2013), we slightly redefine the two semantic macro-roles, i.e. Actor and Undergoer, as follows:

Actor: Actor refers to the first force (*x*) causally involved in the state of affairs. Thus, *x* can be [\pm entity], [\pm concrete], [\pm living], [\pm animate], [\pm volitional], [\pm rational], [\pm intentional].

Undergoer: Undergoer refers to a non-controlling participant (*y*) that undergoes a change (change-of-state, change-of-emotion, creation/consumption,) or undergoes no change (surface contact) in an event.

According to this definition, an Actor role is taken to be all specific roles, e.g. human, animal, natural force, etc., and includes all ‘verb-specific’ semantic roles, e.g. dancer, runner, killer, etc. Additionally, an Actor role may do something accidentally or intentionally.

4 The semantic and syntactic roles of *-râ*

In this section, we elaborate on the semantic and syntactic roles of the *-râ* morpheme. The function of the *-râ* morpheme in clauses with intransitive complex predicates will be explained in Section 4.1, and the role of the *-râ*

morpheme in clauses with transitive predicates will be elaborated on in Section 4.2. We will extend the analysis of the function of *-râ* to other constructions in Section 4.3. It is worth mentioning that *-râ* cannot be attached to the roots of stative verbs⁵ (e.g. ‘know’, ‘hate’, ‘believe’), so this work is only concerned with eventive or activity verbs. We should also note that in RRG semantic transitivity refers to the number of macro-roles, while syntactic transitivity refers to the number of the direct core arguments. The number of macro-roles is formalized by $[MR_\alpha]$, with values $[MR_0]$, $[MR_1]$ and $[MR_2]$.

4.1 Intransitive complex predicates

Sorani complex predicates (CPs) consist of a nonverbal element (a noun, an adjective or a prepositional phrase) and a light verb to form a single predicate. Some of the most common light verbs in Sorani are *kirdin* ‘to make/to do’, *bun* ‘to become’, *dân* ‘to give’, *girtin* ‘to hold’ and *xwârdin* ‘to eat, to collide’, as well as *gutin* ‘to say’. Intransitive predicates are usually classified into two broad categories based on the thematic roles of their subject arguments: unergative and unaccusative predicates. Unergative predicates (e.g. ‘run’, ‘swim’, ‘dance’) have an agent argument, while unaccusative predicates (e.g. ‘fall’, ‘die’, ‘bloom’) have a non-agent argument. As illustrated in (7–9), the *-râ* morpheme can be attached to the light verbs in unergative complex predicates such as *mala kirdin* (‘swim’ + ‘do’) ‘to swim’, *samâ kirdin* (‘dance’ + ‘do’) ‘to dance’ and *gôrânî gutin* (‘singing’ + ‘say’). Note that *-râ* cannot occur with simplex unergative verbs (7d).

⁵The reason that *-râ/-rê* cannot attach to stative verbs, as illustrated in (i) and (ii), is because of the fact that these verbs do not have an actor macro-role in their argument structure which could be suppressed by *-râ/-rê*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (i) a. <i>Sârâ Kurdi da-zân-e.</i>
Sara Kurdish PROG-know.PRS-3SG
‘Sara knows Kurdish.’ | (ii) a. <i>Sârâ riq=i la Târâ ya.</i>
Sara hate=3SG from Tara be.PRS
‘Sara hates Tara.’ |
| b. * <i>Kurdi</i>
Kurdish
<i>da-zân-rê.</i>
PROG-know.PRS-rê.PRS
‘Kurdish is known!’ | b. * <i>la Târâ riq ya-rê.</i>
from Tara hate be.PRS-rê.PRS
‘Tara is hated!’ |

- (7) a. *Sârâ mala=y kird.* ACTIVE
Sara swim=3SG do.PST
'Sara swam.'
- b. *mala kir-râ* NON-ACTIVE
swim do.PRS-râ.PST
'Swimming was done.'
- c. *Sara pêkan-i.*
Sara laugh.PST-3SG
'Sara laughed.'
- d. **pêkan-râ.*
laugh.PST-râ.PST
'Laughing was done.'
- (8) a. *Sârâ samâ=y kird.* ACTIVE
Sara dance=3SG do.PST
'Sara danced.'
- b. *samâ kir-râ.* NON-ACTIVE
dance do.PRS-râ.PST
'Dancing was done.'
- (9) a. *Sârâ gôrânî=y gut.* ACTIVE
Sara sing=3SG say.PST
'Sara sang.'
- b. *gôrânî gut-râ.* NON-ACTIVE
song say.PST-râ.PST
'It was sung.'

Comparing the data in (7a–9a) with those in (7b–9b), it is apparent that attaching the non-active marker *-râ* to the verbal roots in (7b–9b) results in the omission of the 'verb-specific' semantic roles such as 'swimmer', 'dancer' and 'singer' or the verb's external argument (*Sârâ*) and thus non-active constructions are formed. This means that the number of macro-roles of each logical structure has been reduced from 1 to 0. Therefore, if a verb has only a single argument in its logical structure, e.g. do '(x, [mala'(x)])', then by attaching *-râ* to the verb, no macro-role is left for that verb. So, the above non-active structures have no macro-role, but they contain a nonverbal element as an

NP in the subject position. This phenomenon seems to be in line with the Extended Projection Principle (Chomsky 1981) according to which clauses must contain an NP in the subject position.

Interestingly, the *-râ* morpheme can only be attached to unergative complex predicates. This property of the *-râ* morpheme might be related to the nature of transitivity in Kurdish. Haig (2002: 12) states that the notion of transitivity is crucial to the Kurdish verb system. He distinguishes between lexical transitivity, a property of individual simplex lexical verbs, and syntactic transitivity, a property of clauses. He argues that in Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji), CPs such as *can dan* ‘die’, lit. ‘spirit give’, e.g. *wî jî can dan* ‘He too died’, and *dest pê kirin* ‘begin’, lit. ‘hand to.it put’ in a clause like *biharê dest pê kirîye* ‘Spring has begun’ express single-participant events, and entail semantically a single argument. However, the lexical verbs *kirin* ‘do’ and *dan* ‘give’ are in themselves lexically transitive, and consequently trigger the ergative construction, regardless of whether an object argument is entailed or not. Thus, according to Haig, unlike syntactic transitivity, lexical transitivity does not necessarily imply a direct object in syntax, but is rather a property of verb roots, reflected in their ability to trigger ergative morphosyntax. Gündoğdu (2016) also proposes that unergative CPs, in Kurmanji Kurdish, are underlyingly transitive structures in which an agentive LV selects a noun element for its nominal object and argues that the noun elements in these CPs are not true direct objects despite fulfilling the argument requirements of the CPs.

It is also worth noting that Sorani displays the phenomenon of tense-sensitive alignment. Alignment in present tenses is nominative/accusative, while the alignment of transitive clauses in the past tense is non-nominative/accusative, and clitics play an important role here. Haig (2008: 289–90) posits that the general rule for clitic placement is that clitics are attached to the leftmost constituents of the verb phrase as in (10), which indicates that, in Sorani, clitics are suffixed to the object (if present) and display person and number features (φ features) of the Actor.

- (10) a. *Sârâ sew-ak-ân=i xwârd.*
 Sara apple-DEF-PL=3SG eat.PST
 ‘Sara ate the apples.’
- b. *Awân sew-ak-ân=yân xwârd.*
 they apple-DEF-PL=3PL eat.PST
 ‘They ate the apples.’

The same rule applies in the nominal part of unergative complex verbs. The examples provided in (11) and (12) indicate that the nominal elements, *samâ* ‘dancing’ and *gorâni* ‘singing’ in the unergative complex verbs like *samâ kirdin* ‘dance’ and *gorâni gutin* ‘sing’ are considered direct object-like arguments in the syntax. In other words, Noun-Verb CPs behave like transitive predicates with respect to the rules of clitic placement, despite the lack of real direct objects in examples like (11–12).

- (11) *Ama samâ=mân kird.*
 we dance=1PL do.PST
 ‘We danced.’
- (12) *Awân gorâni=yân gut.*
 they singing=3PL say.PST
 ‘They sang.’

Therefore, based on the evidence and discussions above, the attachment of the *-râ* morpheme to unergative complex verbs to form non-active voice as in (7b–9b) without the external arguments functioning as subjects in (7a–9a) demonstrate that the presence of the *-râ* morpheme causes the deletion of the external arguments which can be called Actors. We refer to these arguments as Actors because according to Figure 1 they are [\pm entity], [\pm concrete], [\pm living], [\pm animate], [\pm volitional], [\pm rational], [\pm intentional]. If we are on the right track to call these arguments Actors, then it is plausible to label *-râ* an Anti-Actor morpheme whose presence results in the suppression of Actors. The relationship between *-râ* and the macro-roles in (7–9) is summarized and depicted in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between *-râ* and Actor macro-role (MR_{α}) of unergative complex verbs

One-argument predicates	MR_{α}	thematic relations	semantic roles	verb + <i>râ</i>	MR_{α}
<i>mala kirdin</i> ('swim')	1	do '(x, [swim' (x)])	x = swimmer	<i>mala kir-râ</i>	0
<i>samâ kirdin</i> ('dance')	1	do '(x, [dance' (x)])	x = dancer	<i>samâ kir-râ</i>	0
<i>gôrânî gutin</i> ('sing')	1	do '(x, [sing' (x)])	x = singer	<i>gôrânî gut-râ</i>	0

Although, as shown so far, the *-râ* morpheme may appear in unergative CPs, it cannot be suffixed to verbs in unaccusative complex predicates (13–14) such as *naxwoš kawtin* ‘get sick’, lit. ‘sick to fall’, and *giyân dân* ‘to die’, lit. ‘soul to give’. However, as example (15) indicates, the light verb of *dân* ‘give’ can combine with *-râ* if the verb has an activity predicate in its logical structure, where the macro-role is Actor.

- (13) a. *Sârâ naxwoš kawt.*
Sara sick fall.PST
‘Sara got sick.’
- b. **naxwoš kawt-râ.*
sick fall.PST-râ.PST
‘It got sick!’ (lit.: *Sick was gotten.)
- (14) a. *Sârâ giyân=i dâ.*
Sara soul=3SG give.PST
‘Sara died.’ (lit.: Sara gave up her soul.)
- b. **giyân d(i)-râ.*
soul give.PRS-râ.PST
‘It was died!’ (lit.: Soul was given up.)
- (15) a. *Sârâ jinev=i ba min dâ.*
Sara swearing=3SG with me give.PST
‘Sara swore at me.’ (lit.: Sara gave swearing at me.)
- b. *jinev=im pe d(i)-râ.*
swear=1SG at give.PRS-râ.PST
‘It was sworn at me!’ (lit.: Swear was given at me.)

According to our definitions of Actor and Undergoer, the subject arguments in (13a–14a) can be considered Undergoers, but not Actors. The fact that *-râ* in (13b–14b) cannot co-occur with verbs with Undergoer macro-roles (in contrast to what we saw in (7b–9b)) supports our claim that *-râ* is an Anti-Actor morpheme, the presence of which depends on an Actor macro-role. In other words, this Anti-Actor morpheme only appears to suppress an Actor argument as in cases like (7–9); however, it cannot be present when there is no Actor argument to be syntactically suppressed, as in (13b–14b).

4.2 Transitive predicates

As mentioned earlier, in this sub-section we will examine the function of the -râ morpheme in clauses containing various transitive verbs with two macro-roles. First, let us consider some clauses with various transitive verbs (16–19):

- (16) a. *Sârâ sew-ak-ân=i xwârd.*
 Sara apple-DEF-PL=3SG eat.PST
 ‘Sara ate the apples.’ CONSUMPTION VERB (ACTIVE)
- b. *sew-ak-ân xwârd-râ-ân.*
 apple-DEF-PL eat.PST-râ.PST-PL
 ‘The apples were eaten.’ CONSUMPTION VERB (NON-ACTIVE)
- (17) a. *Sârâ nâma-ak=i nûsi.*
 Sara letter-DEF=3SG write.PST
 ‘Sara wrote the letter.’ CREATION VERB (ACTIVE)
- b. *nâma-ka nûs-râ.*
 letter-DEF write.PRS-râ.PST
 ‘The letter was written.’ CREATION VERB (NON-ACTIVE)
- (18) a. *Sârâ kteb-ak-ân=i dit.*
 Sara book-DEF-PL=3SG see.PST
 ‘Sara saw the books.’ DIRECTED PERCEPTION VERB (ACTIVE)
- b. *kteb-ak-ân dit-râ-n.*
 book-DEF-PL see.PST-râ.PST-PL
 ‘The books were seen.’ DIR. PERCEPTION VERB (NON-ACTIVE)
- (19) a. *Sârâ tawâw=i qalam-ak-ân=i dikâr-kird.*
 Sara all=3SG pencil-DEF-PL=3SG using-do.PST
 ‘Sara used all pencils.’ USE VERB (ACTIVE)
- b. *tawâw-i qalam-ak-ân dikâr-kir-râ-n.*
 all-EZ pencil-DEF-PL using-do.PRS-râ.PST-PL
 ‘All pencils were used.’ USE VERB (NON-ACTIVE)

The above examples demonstrate that the verbs such as *xwârdin* ‘eat’, *nûsin* ‘write’ and *dikâr kirdin* ‘use’ involve an action or event with intention and control, whereas *ditin* ‘see’ does not require any action or effort of any kind on the part of the participant. The active sentences in (16a–19a) indicate that

Sârâ (an Actor) can have all the specific roles of ‘consumer’, ‘creator’, ‘observer’ and ‘user’ at the ‘verb-specific’ level. But in the non-active sentences in (16b–19b), the presence of *-râ* collapses verb-specific semantic roles at the syntactic level, suppressing any argument that qualifies as an Actor. This indicates that attaching *-râ* to the two macro-role verbs [MR₂] at the syntactic level causes the reduction of the number of macro-roles by one, changing the [MR₂] to [MR₁]. The relationship between *-râ* and the macro-roles in the transitive verbs under consideration in terms of logical structure argument positions are presented and summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Relationship between -râ and macro-roles of transitive verbs

Active verbs	Samples	MR _s	thematic relation	Semantic roles	verb + râ	Semantic roles
consumption	xwârdin ('eat')	2	do' (x, _i [eat' (x,y)])	X = CONSUMER Y = CONSUMED	xwârd-râ	y=CONSUMED (MR=1)
creation	nûsin ('write')	2	do' (x, _i [write' (x,y)])	X = CREATOR Y = CREATION	nûs-râ	y=CREATED (MR=1)
directed perception	dîtin ('see')	2	do' (x, _i [see' (x,y)])	X = OBSERVER Y = STIMULUS	dît-râ	y=STIMULUS (MR=1)
use	dikâr kirdin ('use')	2	do' (x, _i [use' (x,y)])	X = USER Y = IMPLEMENT	dikâr ki-râ	y=IMPLEMENT (MR=1)

4.3 *-râ* and the Actor role in some other constructions

In the previous sub-sections, the function of the *-râ* morpheme was accounted for in sentences with mainly agentive Actor arguments specified as [+living], [+animate], [+volitional], [+rational], [+intention]. However, we should note that the external arguments, as depicted in (20–21), might be instruments (20a) or natural forces (21a) which, according to Figure 1 and our definition, can be considered Actor Arguments. The examples in (20b–21b) show that suffixing *-râ* to the verbs in (20–21) results in the formation of non-active clauses and the absence of the external arguments, *čaqo* ‘knife’ and *bâ* ‘wind’, as direct arguments.

- (20) a. *čaqo dast=im=i biri.* ACTOR (INSTRUMENT)
 knife hand=1SG=3SG cut.PST
 ‘The knife cut my hand.’
- b. *dast=im ba čaqo-e bir-râ.* NON-ACTIVE
 hand=1SG with knife-OBL cut.PRS-râ.PST
 ‘My hand was cut with a knife.’
- (21) a. *bâ darka-ka=i dâxist.* ACTOR (NATURAL FORCE)
 wind door-DEF=3SG close.PST
 ‘Wind closed the door.’
- b. *darka-ka ba bâ dâx-râ.* NON-ACTIVE
 door-DEF with wind close.PRS-râ.PST
 ‘The door was closed with wind.’

In addition to the function of *-râ* in suppressing an Actor argument, this morpheme is also able to form middle constructions. A middle construction refers to a clause where the theme or patient of a verb is structurally realized as the subject of the predicate. According to Fagan (1992) and Vendler (1967), the crucial factor for the formation of middles is whether the verb can occur in the present tense, as in *The book reads easily*. Alexiadou & Doron (2012) argue that both passive and middle prevent the insertion of an external argument as subject, but with different properties. They find that cross-linguistically, middle verbs can sometimes be marked as passive (as in Greek) or as active (as in English).

Most scholars agree that the middle construction has the following features that distinguish it from other non-active constructions: (1) middles are generally generic statements, rather than referring to specific events; (2)

middle construction requires the presence of a modifying element, such as an adverbial of manner. The function of *-rê* (the present form of *-râ*) in the formation of middles in Kurdish is illustrated in the following examples:

- (22) a. *Sârâ kitêb-i dâstân bâš da-firoš-e.*
Sara book-EZ fiction well PRG-sell.PRS-3SG
'Sara sells fiction books well.'
- b. *kitêb-i dâstân bâš da-firoš-rê.*
book-EZ fiction well PROG-sell.PRS-rê.PRS
'The fiction books sell well.'
- (23) a. *Sârâ tanâf-i bârik da-piçkir-en-ê.*
Sara rope-EZ slender PROG-cut.PRS-CAUS-3SG
'Sara cuts the slender rope.'
- b. *Tanâf-i bârik zû da-piçkir-rê.*
rope-EZ slender easily PROG-cut.PRS-rê.PRS
'Slender rope cuts easily.'

The sentences in (22b–23b) do not refer to a specific event. They are generic statements containing the manner adverbials of *bâš* 'well' and *zû* 'easy', respectively. What is of significance here is that *-rê* in (22b–23b), like its past form *-râ*, behaves as an Anti-Actor morpheme whose presence causes the deletion of the Actor subject arguments.

Therefore, the data under discussion in Section 4 and the way that the presence of the *-râ/-rê* morpheme changes the argument structure of the clauses suggest the following generalizations:

- If a complex verb has one Actor argument in its logical structure [MR₁], attaching *-râ* to its verbal root causes the absence of its Actor role, resulting in [MR₀].
- If a verb has two arguments in its logical structure [MR₂], attaching *-râ* to its verbal root causes the absence of its Actor role, resulting in [MR₁].

5 Conclusion

This paper has attempted to clarify the semantic and syntactic roles of the *-râ* morpheme in Kurdish in the light of RRG. Crucial to RRG is the notion of

two semantic macro-roles: Actor and Undergoer. Therefore, we first introduced and slightly redefined the Actor and Undergoer macro-roles. Then, we examined the semantic and syntactic functions of the *-râ/-rê* morpheme in various constructions. It has been argued that attaching *-râ* to a verb causes the absence of Actor arguments, resulting in non-active clauses which lack Actor external arguments at the syntax level. Consequently, based on a relatively large and varied body of data, we demonstrated that the presence of *-râ* causes the absence of the arguments with Actor roles (Van Valin, Jr & Wilkins 1996; Van Valin, Jr 2007), in the sentences under study. Accordingly, we suggested that the Kurdish *-râ/-rê* is an Anti-Actor morpheme.

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