

The transitivity of Philippine-type Actor voice: Evidence from detransitivization

**Introduction.** 2-place Actor voice (AV) clauses in Philippine-type languages such as (1a) have been analyzed as antipassive constructions that involve an intransitive subject and an oblique internal argument (e.g. Payne 1982, Mithun 1994, Aldridge 2004). This paper investigates a hitherto underexplored construction (1b) in four Philippine-type languages (Puyuma, Thao, Seediq, Bunun), where the alleged intransitive subject is obligatorily absent, leaving the alleged antipassive object as the sole argument. The latter bears obligatory ‘Pivot’-marking, i.e., the morphological marking indicating A’-extraction eligibility (1a).

- (1) a. m-ekan na walak kana bu’ir. b. m-**u**-ekan na/\*kana bu’ir. [Puyuma]  
 AV-eat DF.PIVOT child DF.X taro AV-**U**-eat DF.PIVOT/\*DF.X taro  
 ‘The child ate the taro.’ <Actor voice> ‘The taro was eaten.’ <MU-clause>

In this study, I first show that the construction in (1b) is a result of detransitivization of the 2-place AV-clause in (1a). Building on this analysis, I argue that 2-place AV clauses must be syntactically transitive with a structurally Case-licensed internal argument. This analysis has three core implications: (i) Philippine-type languages do not impose a ban on extracting transitive subjects, given that the Pivot-marked external arguments in the transitive clause (1a) may A’-extract, (ii) the AV affix *m-* (and its allomorphs) does not realize intransitive Voice<sup>0</sup> (Aldridge 2004, 2016), since it appears in transitives (1a), and (iii) the absence of transitivity distinction and extraction asymmetry between AV and non-AV clauses suggests the absence of ergativity at either morphological or syntactic level. I present new evidence for an accusative analysis of the four Philippine-type languages, and argue based on the Mirror principle that the ordering between the AV affix *m-* and the detransitivizer *u-* in MU-clauses suggests that the former is best analyzed as encoding subject agreement (e.g., Richards 2000, Pearson 2005).

**The data.** Across Puyuma, Thao, Seediq, and Bunun, AV-marked 2-place verbs disallow the omission of either the external or internal arguments. The X-marked internal argument cannot bear Pivot-marking or undergo A’-extraction ((1a), (2a)), and has been analyzed as non-structurally Case-licensed by lexical oblique Case from V<sup>0</sup> (Aldridge 2004, 2016). In contrast, MU-marked 2-place verbs ((1b),(2b)) involve an additional affix *u-* following the AV affix *m-*, and they cannot employ an external argument. The internal argument bears obligatory Pivot-marking, and is A’-extractable.

- (2) a. m-a-adaw=ku kana tralrun. b. m-**u**-adaw la na tralrun. [Puyuma]  
 AV-IMPF-weed=1S.PIVOT DF.X grass AV-**U**-weed PRF DF.PIVOT grass  
 ‘I am weeding the grass.’ <Actor voice> ‘The grass has been weeded.’ <MU-clause>

The 1-place MU-clauses are not passives, and they show typical traits of a detransitized construction, as the presence of a *by*-phrase-like adjunct with an animate/definite complement results in ungrammaticality, while a similar adjunct with an inanimate and indefinite-marked complement is compatible with a subclass of MU-clauses, but far from productive (3)-(4). This shows canonical traits of adjuncts that encodes a cause in detransitized constructions across languages (e.g. Marantz 1984, Roeper 1987, Reinhart 2000, Alexiadou et al. 2006).

- (3) m-**u**-deru na padraka (✓dra kadaw/\*kana walak/\*kan Senten). [Puyuma]  
 AV-**U**-cook DF.PIVOT meat (✓ID.X sun/\*DF.X child/\*SG.X Senten)  
 ‘The meat cooked (✓from the sun/\*by the child/\*by Senten).

**Analysis.** I argue that the *u-* component in MU-constructions is the morphological realization of a detransitivizer that is independent from the *m-* component, i.e., an AV affix. This analysis is built on the observation that the *m-* component in MU-clauses exhibits exactly the same aspect-conditioned morphological alternation as the canonical AV affix. In Puyuma, the AV affix

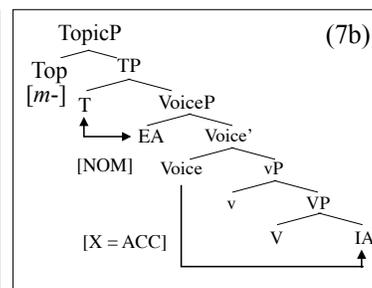
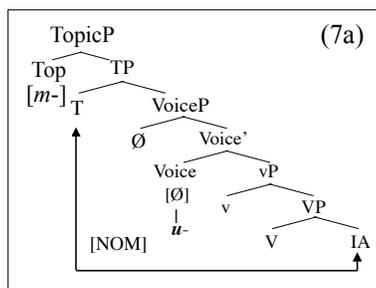
<sup>1</sup> The AV prefix *m-* in MU-clauses is a reflex of Proto-Austronesian AV \*<um>. The allomorphy condition that changes the AV infixes <um> in Puyuma to a prefix *m-* follows a phonotactic condition reconstructable to PAN: AV \*<um> → \**m-* / \_\_\_\_ V. Namely, when an AV affix appears in pre-vocalic environment (e.g. before the detransitivizer *u-*), it will surface as a prefix *m-*, as seen also in (1a) and (2a) for the same environment.

appears as a prefix *m-* in perfective (5b), while is morphologically null in future imperfective (5b). The same observation is attested in MU-clauses (6a-b): the affix *m-* precedes *u-* in perfective, while in the future imperfective sentence (6b), the 2-place verb ‘drink’ combines merely with the affix *u-* and bears an obligatory 1-place structure. This suggests that (i) the affix *m-* in MU-clauses is an AV affix, and (ii) the affix *u-* is independent from *m-*, and is responsible for the absence of the external argument of 2-place verbs.

- (5) a.  $\boxed{m-}$  ekan i Isaw kana kuraw. b.  $\emptyset$ -a-ekan i Isaw kana kuraw.  
 AV.PRF-eat SG.PIVOT Isaw DF.X fish AV-IMPR-eat SG.PIVOT Isaw DF.X fish  
 ‘Isaw ate the fish.’ [PERFECTIVE] ‘Isaw will eat the fish.’ [FUT. IMPF.]
- (6) a.  $\boxed{m-}$  u-trekel na eraw. b.  $\emptyset$ -u-a-trekel na eraw.  
 AV.PRF-DETR-drink DF.PIVOT alcohol AV-DETR-IMPR-drink DF.PIVOT alcohol  
 ‘The alcohol was drunk up.’ [PERFECTIVE] ‘The alcohol will be drunk up.’ [FUT. IMPF.]

I propose that the detransitivizing affix *u-* morphologically encodes a deficient Voice<sup>0</sup> (7a), which is capable of licensing neither an external  $\theta$ -role nor structural accusative Case (e.g.,

Kratzer 1996, Harley 2013, Legate 2014). Therefore, the internal argument in MU-clauses checks structural Case with C/T (7a). Building on this analysis, I argue that 2-place AV-clauses are true transitives with accusative-licensed internal arguments (7b). As discussed below, I propose that the AV affix *m-*



is hosted above Voice<sup>0</sup>, and is best analyzed as encoding nominative-agreement with Topic<sup>0</sup> (7).

**Supporting evidence.** As predicted under (7a), unergative verbs are incompatible with a MU-construction, while both causative/inchoative and activity verbs productively form MU-clauses:

- (8) a. \**m-u-kawang/senay na traw.* b. *m-u-{\textit{pese}'/\textit{rega}'/\textit{trima}}* na takilr.  
 AV-DETR-walk/sing DF.PIVOT person AV-DETR-{\textit{break/crack/sell}} DF.PIVOT cup  
 (‘The person was walked/sang.’) (‘The cup broke/cracked/sold.’) [Puyuma]

Under (7), the Pivot-marked internal argument in MU-clauses bears abstract nominative Case (7a). I argue that this abstract Case is morphologically invisible in AV-clauses (including MU-clauses), under the analysis that (i) ‘Pivot’ is a topic marker that overrides morphological case, and (ii) in AV-marked clauses, the nominative DP bears a topic-feature, therefore, it carries Pivot-marking, which overrides nominative case (e.g., Richards 2000, Chen 2016). This analysis predicts that whenever a nominative DP is non-Pivot-marked (namely, in non-AV clauses), it will bear overt nominative case. I will present novel evidence supporting this prediction.

**AV affix marks subject agreement.** A final question to be answered is the nature of the AV affix *m-*. The antipassive analysis of 2-place AV clauses, which analyzes the AV affix *m-* as the reflex of intransitive Voice<sup>0</sup>, fails to derive the output [*m-u-*], as a Voice<sup>0</sup> analysis of the AV affix is incompatible with the detransitivizing function of the affix *u-*. Under the Mirror Principle (Baker 1985, Harley 2013), the affix *m-* morphologically encodes a syntactic operation that applies after the merger of *u-*, the Voice<sup>0</sup>, as it precedes *u-* in linear order. As *m-* is clearly independent from aspect-indicating morphology, and appears to the left of it (e.g., *m-a-* in progressive (2a)), the implication from the MP lends support to the A'-agreement approach to Philippine-type voice affixes. I argue that the AV affix *m-* realizes subject agreement between Topic<sup>0</sup> and the nominative DP (Richards 2000, Pearson 2001), which is incorporated after the completion of valency-related affixes, hence the output: [CP *m-* [VoiceP *u*-ROOT]]. **Conclusion.** That languages with a MU-construction belong to four different Austronesian primary branches suggests that the observed phenomenon is not language-specific. A crucial implication from this analysis is that the Philippine-type A'-extraction restriction cannot be attributed to a ban on extracting transitive subjects (i.e., syntactic ergativity).