Tagalog voice revisited

Introduction. In Tagalog, a picture NP reflexive can be bound either by a recipient or by an agent in the same clause regardless of the voice type of the sentence (e.g. AV (1a), LV (1b), CV (1c)):

(1) a. Nag-bigay **si**   **Joy** kay   Aya ng sarili niyang larawan.   *Actor Voice (AV)*
             AV.**PRF**-give **PN.PIVOT** **Joy** PN.ACC Aya | ACC self   3s.POSS picture |

      b. B<in>igy-**an**   ni   Joy **si**   **Aya** ng sarili niyang larawan.   *Locative Voice (LV)*
             <PRF>-give-**LV** PN.NOM Joy **PN.PIVOT** **Aya** | ACC self   3s.POSS picture |

      c. **I**-b<in>igay   ni   Joy kay   Aya **ang**   **sarili niyang larawan**.*Circumstantial Voice (CV)*
             CV-give<PRF> PN.NOM Joy PN.ACC Aya | PIVOT self   3s.POSS picture |

         'Joy$_{<k>}$ gave Aya$_{<j>}$ a picture of herself$_{<k/j>}$.'

Linear order does not play a role in the binding relations above. A reflexive must be properly bound by a c-commanding antecedent (2); it may, on the other hand, precede its binder as long as the c-command requirement is satisfied (e.g. (1b'): B<in>igy-an ni J$_k$ ***ng sarili niyang larawan***$_{j/k}$ **si A**$_j$).

(2) *P<um>atay kay   Juan ang   sarili niyang anak.   *Actor Voice (AV)*
        <AV>kill   PN.ACC Juan | PIVOT self   3s.POSS child |

         (intended: 'The son of himself killed Juan.') (ungrammatical regardless of the order of the two DPs.)

Claims. The data in (1) cast new light on three central questions in Austronesian syntax: **a)** Is Tagalog an ergative language (Aldridge 2004 et seq.)?, **b)** Is the pivot-marker (*ang/si*) a marker of subjecthood or topichood (Shibatani 1998; Richards 2000)?, and **c)** Are Tagalog voice affixes case-agreement morphology that inflects for the Case of the *ang/si*-phrase (Rackowski & Richards 2005)?

I demonstrate that the binding evidence from (1) necessitates a new analysis for the Tagalog voice system, in which **1)** Tagalog is a topic-prominent nominative-accusative language whose topic marker (*ang/si*) overrides morphological case, and **2)** its four-way voice morphology is the spell-out of **four different bundles of Agree relations that probe the topic of a clause**, rather than Case-agreement morphology (Rackowski & Richards 2005) or transitivity/applicative affixes (Aldridge 2004 et seq.).

| Claim 1: Tagalog *ang/si* do not mark ABS Case | The ergative view of Tagalog relies on three intertwining assumptions: **(I)** *ang/si* marks structural Case from T (absolutive), **(II)** in LV/CV clauses, the *ang/si*-phrase is an applied object licensed as the **highest internal argument**, with the putative Appl^0 spelled out as LV/CV morphology (Aldridge 2004 et seq.; see Rackowski & Richards 2005 for a similar claim, that the pivot (*ang/si*-phrase) in LV/CV clauses is the highest IA inherently Case-licensed by an Appl^0, whose Case status is spelled out as LV/CV morphology), and **(III)** in LV/CV clauses, the external argument is inherently Case-licensed and does *not* compete for absolutive Case with the pivot (highest IA).

(1a-c), however, falsify Assumption II. The invariable binding relation in (1a-c) suggests the absence of voice-conditioned argument structure alternation, casting doubt on the assumption that the highest internal argument in (1b) and (1c) is the *si*-marked recipient and the *ang*-marked theme, respectively. Binding diagnostics on productive causatives (3) posit the same challenge, as it reveals a fixed c-commanding relation between the causee and the theme of the caused event (henceforth *causand*) even when the latter is *ang/si*-marked (3a), indicating that the applicative approach to CV clauses is difficult to hold.

(3) a. **I**-p<in>a-li-linis=ko   (ulit)   kay   Sue **ang**   **kanyang sarili** (nang palihim). *CV*
           CV-CAU<PRF>RED-clean=1s.NOM (again) PN.ACC Sue **PIVOT 3s**   **REFL** (CONG secretly)

         'I made Sue$_k$ clean herself (again$_k$) (secretly$_k$).'

      b. P<in>a-pa-ligo=ko   si   Maria **ng sarili niya**.   *PV*
           CAU<PRF.PV>RED-bathe=1s.NOM PN.PIVOT Maria ACC REFL   3s

         'I am making Maria bathe herself.'

The invariable binding relation observed in (1) and (3), at the same time, argues against Assumption I. For that analysis to hold, the *ang/si*-phrase in LV/CV clauses must be the **highest Caseless internal argument**. Now, the fact that the pivot-marked causand in (3a) is c-commanded by an intervening causee indicates that the pivot is *not* the highest internal argument. This reveals that the licensing of *ang/si*-marking in (3a) does *not* respect locality, skipping a Caseless external-argument causee and marks the causand, contradicting the structural Case analysis of *ang/si* (Assumption I). Evidence for the intervening causee as *not* inherently Case-marked comes from its behaviors as a typical external argument—evidenced by its compatibility with agent-oriented adverbs and the adverb of frequency *again* and its ability to bind into the causand (3a), which indicates that it is licensed in the specifier of the embedded VoiceP (see (7a)), where *no* inherent/non-structural Case is available. I conclude accordingly that Tagalog's pivot-marking (*ang/si*) does not mark absolutive/nominative Case.

Claim 2: Tagalog *ang/si* as a topic (rather than subject) marker. I propose that *ang/si* is a topic marker that overrides morphological case, drawing on new data on pivot placement in question-answer sequences. This proposal, in line with previous topic analyses for *ang/si*-phrases (Schachter 1976; Shibatani 1998; Richards 2000), makes two testable predictions. **First,** *ang/si*-phrases should behave like an A'-element, showing both reconstruction effects and Weakest Crossover effects (Lasnik & Stowell 1991). **Second,** Tagalog should display evidence for a subject position distinct from the pivot/topic position. The first prediction is borne out with (1c) and (4), which demonstrate that the *ang/si*-phrase is interpreted at its theta position, and (5), which shows the hallmarks of the Weakest Crossover effect, revealing that a pivot phrase may bind into an external argument with marginal acceptability (cf. its ungrammatical AV counterpart (2), which contains an intended internal-argument binder that is *not* pivot-marked).

(4) I-p<in>ang-lu-luto=ko [ng isda ng bawat nanay] [**ang kanilang palayok**]. *CV*
CV<PRF>RED-cook=1s.NOM [ACC fish POSS every mother] [**PIVOT 3P.POSS pot**]

'I cook every mother$_{<k>}$'s fish with her$_{<k/j>}$ pot.'

(5) $^?$P<in>atay ng sarili niyang inay **si Riza**. *Patient Voice (PV)*
<PV.PRF>kill CN.NOM self 3s.POSS mother **PIVOT Riza**

(marginally acceptable: 'The mother of himself$_{<k>}$ killed Riza$_{<k>}$.') (cf. (2))

Finally, Tagalog does display evidence for a [uφ]-driven nominative position, evidenced by the the case-marker *ni* borne by both non-pivot external arguments (1c) and the internal argument in unaccusatives (6). This marker, though traditionally regarded as inherent ergative case, shows typical traits of structural nominative, given its unavailability to external arguments in nonfinite clauses (e.g. causee in causatives) and its compatibility with unaccusative subjects. This undermines Assumption (iii).

(6) H<in>ulug-an **ni/*kay Raul** ang swimming pool. *Locative Voice (LV)*
fall<PRF>**LV PN.NOM/*PN.ACC/DAT Raul** PIVOT swimming pool

'Raul fell into the swimming pool.'

Claim 3: Tagalog voice as four different bundles of Agree relations. I argue that Tagalog's four-way voice distinction is best analyzed as the spell-out of **four different bundles of Agree relations** that probe the **topic** of a clause (i.e. a phrase with a [TOP] feature, whose case-marking is overridden by *ang/si*):

{
"AV" morphology: the bundle of topic-agreement and Subject agreement
"PV" morphology: the bundle of topic-agreement and Object agreement
"LV" morphology: the bundle of topic-agreement and the Agree relation between P$_{locative}$ and DP$_{locative}$
"CV" morphology: topic-agreement (when the topic is *not* under other Agree relations)
}

This analysis offers a simple account for three core traits of Tagalog voice. **First,** AV morphology is compatible with both intransitives/unaccusatives and clear cases of transitives (e.g. trivalent causatives), with *ang/si*-marking present on the highest argument. **Second,** with PV morphology, the *ang/si*-phrase must be **the highest DP below the first Voice^0** (e.g. the internal argument in basic transitives (5); the causee in causatives (3b)). **Third,** to mark an internal argument that is *not* the highest DP below Voice^0 as the pivot (e.g. the theme in ditransitives (1c); the causand in productive causatives (3a)), **CV morphology** is the only option.

This typologically unusual pattern, I argue, is the outcome of Tagalog voice being the spell-out of the bundle of **topic-agreement and other Agree relations that target the same goal (topic)**—except for CV morphology, which is the spell-out of topic-agreement when the topic is *not* under Agree relation with other probes. This offers a simple account for PV morphology's compatibility only with pivot-marking present on the causee and *not* the causand (3b) although

(7a) "PV"-morphology

Figure 1. Map of South Sudan, in which Dinka is spoken high

(7b) "CV"-morphology

both DPs presumably bear the same Case (ACC), as well as CV morphology's compatibility with various types of phrases including DPs that are **structurally low** and non-locative adjuncts (e.g. causand (3a), theme in ditransitives (1c), benefactor (4)). Importantly, the current treatment of PV morphology patterns with the crosslinguistic observation that (overt) Object agreement is restricted to the **highest object within VoiceP**, targeting the causee and *not* the causand in causatives (Baker 2012; Deal 2019, a.o.).
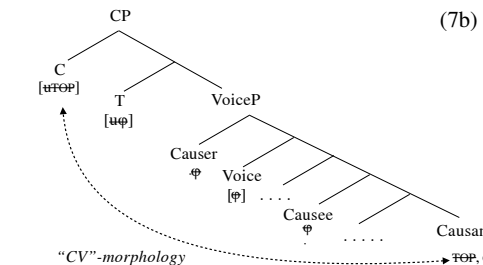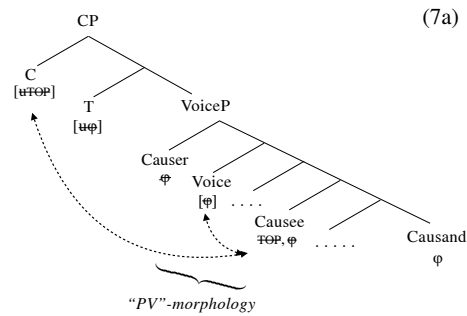
Conclusion. In this view, Tagalog constitutes a typical **discourse configurational language** (Li & Thompson 1976; É Kiss 1995; Miyagawa 2010, 2017), which employs agreement for topics, and not subjects.