When Philippine-type voice meets Indo-European-style voice: Insights from Puyuma

Introduction. Following the division of Voice and μ, the active/passive voice contrast has been captured through the postulation of different “flavors” of Voice (e.g. Harley 2013; Legate 2014). Philippine-type Austronesian languages have been claimed to bear a similar and more elaborate voice system, whereby different “flavors” of Voice⁰ and ApP⁰ enable not only internal arguments but also adjunct-like phrases (e.g. locative, benefactor) to be promoted to Subject (Rackowski 2002; Aldridge 2004, 2012, 2017; a.o.).

We argue instead that Austronesian-type “voice” has nothing to do with Voice⁰/(ApP⁰), despite what its name suggests. Our evidence comes from Puyuma, an Austronesian language that exhibits both a Philippine-type four-way voice system and a two-way voice contrast akin to active and passive. We show that the two types of “voice” can co-occur, because Philippine-type “voice” is not the morphological reflex of any functional head hosted within the core verbal projection (VoiceP), but instead agreement morphology hosted at C. This undermines the ergative/valency-indicating approach to Philippine-type voice (De Guzman 1988; Mithun 1994, Aldridge 2004, 2017; a.o.), and lends new support to the A’-agreement approach to voice in similar languages (Chamorro: Chung 1994; Malagasy: Pearson 2005).

The phenomenon. Puyuma possesses an understudied affix u-, which, when attached to a 2-place verb marked in Philippine-type Actor Voice (1a), denotes a passive-like construction (1b): the external argument is obligatorily absent, and the theme exhibits subject-marking, akin to unaccusative subjects (1c).


The dog ate the yam.’ ‘The yam was eaten.’ ‘The yam fell (to the ground).’

When present in a causative construction, u- must appear between Philippine-type Actor Voice morphology (m-) and causative morphology (pa-), with the causer obligatorily absent, as in (2a-b).


The weed was made interspersed.’ ‘The cigarette was made inflamed.’

Claim 1: u- is a detransitivizer. Despite their superficial similarity, the u-construction is not a passive, given its incompatibility with agent-denoting PPs (by-phrases) (3) and agent-oriented adverbs (4b).

(3) M-u-deru na kuraw (*kandrina wakal/*dra traw/*dra kadaw/*dra karayag).

The fish (was) cooked (*by that child/*by someone/from sunshine/fromfoehn).’

(4) a. (*Tremakatrakaw) m-e-kan na njayaw kana kuraw. 2-place AV-construction

(secretly.av) AV-eat PIXIVP cat力量 ACC fish

‘The cat ate the fish (secretly).’

b. (*Tremakatrakaw) m-u-e-kan na kuraw. AV-marked u-construction

(secretly.av) AV-eat PIXIVP fish

‘The fish was eaten (secretly).’

The u-construction is also not an anticausative, given its compatibility with a wide range of agent-oriented verbs (e.g. catch, comb, cheat, buy, bury, fold, fill, collect), which are known to disallow inchoative counterparts across languages (Haspelmath 1993; Reinhart 2000; Alexiadou et al. 2006). It is also distinct from middles, given the obligatory presence of the detransitivizing affix u-, as middles are typically morphologically unmarked (e.g. Kemmer 1993; Kaufmann 2007). Finally, it is not an impersonal, given the mandatory “promotion” of the internal argument to Subject status as evidenced by case-marking (’pivot’) (cf. (1a-c). We conclude that u- is an external-argument eliminating affix that marks an under-studied type of detransitivization process distinct from all four common types of derived intransitive.

Claim 2: u- is the morphological reflex of Voice. We argue that the detransitivizer u- is the morphological reflex of a deficient Voice, which does not introduce an external argument or Case-license its internal argument—as opposed to the external argument-introducing Voice⁰ in the 2-place construction (1a), which is zero-marked. Consequently, the internal argument in the u-marked construction (1b) checks Case with T, akin to unaccusatives (1c). The co-occurrence of u- (reflex of Voice) and pa- (reflex of vcaus) in (2a-b) lends new empirical support to Voice and v as two distinct functional heads—the former as responsible for external argument-introducing and the latter for introducing causative semantics (e.g. Pylkkänen 1999; Marantz...
Crucially, the linear order of the two affixes (u-<em>p</em>a-root) follows from the prediction of the Mirror Principle (Baker 1980), in which u- (reflex of Voice) surfaces to the left of pa- (reflex of v) and the root (V).

**Claim 3: Philippine-type AV morphology does not mark Voice.** Assuming the Mirror Principle holds, that Philippine-type AV morphology <em>m</em>- surfaces to the left of the reflex of Voice (u-) and <em>v</em> (pa-) (2) suggests that it is hosted at a projection higher than Voice and outside of the core verbal projections. Support for this comes from the affix’s obligatory insertion into the progressive prefix (Ca-reduplication), which indicates that Actor Voice is encoded into morphology after that of ASPECT<sup>0</sup>. This lends new support to a family of A-agreement approaches to Philippine-type voice (Chung 1994; Pearson 2005; Chen 2017), according to which AV morphology is hosted at C, realizing an Agree relation between [u] and the nominative DP. This accounts for its presence regardless of the valency of the verb: intransitives (1c), de-transitives (1b), transitives (1a). [The AV affix <em>m</em>- has three allomorphs: <em><em>c</em>em</em> (pre-C<sub>non-bilabial</sub>), me- (pre-liquid); <em><em>c</em>em</em> (5b) (pre-bilabial) (5a).]

**Claim 4: Philippine-type voice is not hosted within the verbal complex.** This observation, at the same time, undermines the ergative analysis of Philippine-type voice. Under that approach, AV and PV marker is the spell-out of intransitive and transitive Voice<sup>0</sup>, respectively, while Locative Voice (LV) and Circumstantial Voice (CV) each mark an Applicative marker that licenses the Subject (pivot-marked phrase) as the highest internal argument (Aldridge 2004). In this view, 2-place AV-clauses like (1a) are antipassives whose intr. Voice<sup>0</sup> is spelled out as <em>m</em>-<em>v</em>. Now, the fact that the alleged antipassive (1a) is compatible with detransitivization (1b) argues against the antipassive view of (1a). Two pieces of evidence reinforce that the AV morphology is not a reflex of intransitive Voice: its presence in unaccusatives (5a)—which in principle does not contain a Voice<sup>0</sup> as it neither introduces an EA nor assigns structural Case to its IA—as well as (5a)’s 2-place causative counterpart (5b), which is incompatible with an intransitive analysis.

(5) a. Me-redek na walak i renenradran. <em>Unaccusative</em>
   DF.pivot child loc playground
   ‘The child arrived at the playground.’

b. P<em>c</em>en>a-redek naWalak kana ladru i renenradran. <em>Causative counterpart of (5a)</em>
   DF.pivot child df.acc mango loc playground
   ‘The child threw (lit. made arrive at) the mango to the playground.’

The compatibility of AV morphology with both intransitives and transitives indicates that Philippine-type AV and PV affixes are not transitivity-indicating morphology hosted at Voice<sup>0</sup>.

**Puyuma LV/CV affixes are not applicative markers.** We demonstrate that Puyuma LV/CV affixes also behave like agreement morphology, rather than an applicative marker (reflex of Applicative) that licenses the pivot phrase in the highest internal argument position (Aldridge 2004; Rackowski & Richards 2005 for Tagalog). First, evidence from binding reveals that the pivot phrase in a CV-clause can be interpreted as a bound variable of another internal argument (6a), indicating that it is not introduced in the highest IA position—contra the baseline assumption of the ergative analysis. Second, the fact that LV/CV morphology obligatorily cliticizes to the highest predicative of a clause (6b-c)—e.g. an adverb (6c)—reinforces the agreement approach to LV/CV affixes and argues against analyzing them as applicative markers.

   [IS.GEN=give-CV] [3.ROSS.PIVOT=wages] [ACC 3s.Poss.mother lk laborer every]
   ‘I gave every laborer<em>’</em>s mother his/her<em>’</em> wages.’ (distributed reading available)

b. Ku=beray-anay kana walak na aputr.
   [IS.GEN=give-CV] SG.ACC child DF.PIVOT flower
   ‘I gave the child the flowers.’

c. Ku=trakatraw-anay beray kana walak na aputr.
   [IS.GEN=secretly-CV] give.default.av df.acc child DF.PIVOT flower
   ‘I secretly gave the child the flowers.’ (cf. (6b))

**Conclusion.** We argue that Philippine-type “voice” is fundamentally different from the traditional sense of “voice” (i.e. valency-indicating morphology hosted at Voice), hence its compatibility with true cases of voice morphology (e.g. u-Det<em>c</em>). Crucially, the presence of the Voice<sup>0</sup>-realizing detransitivizer u- (and an accompanying active/detransitive alternation) in at least three other Philippine-type Austronesian languages (Bunun, Thao, Saaroa) indicates that the current observation is not specific to only Puyuma.