

What's the inverse of an inverse? Transitive constructions in Algonquian and Austronesian

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Morphosyntactic alignment in the Algonquian languages and some Austronesian languages, including those of the Philippine group, is complicated by the existence of two distinct transitive constructions: the DIRECT and INVERSE in Algonquian and the PATIENT VOICE and AGENT VOICE in Philippine languages (Haude & Zúñiga 2016). How similar are the Algonquian and Philippine systems? In this presentation I show that the two systems are **mirror images**: in Philippine languages, the basic alignment is ergative and the additional transitive construction can be regarded as a transitivized antipassive, while in Algonquian, the basic alignment is accusative and the additional transitive construction can be regarded as a transitivized passive. This description captures a range of patterns in which Philippine and Algonquian languages show parallel but opposite behaviour.

The basic alignment patterns of Kapampangan (Philippine) and Cree (Algonquian) are illustrated in (1) and (2).¹ Kapampangan is ergative: intransitive subjects and transitive patients show the same case (ABS) while transitive agents show a distinct case (ERG). Cree is accusative: intransitive subjects and transitive agents are indexed by the same agreement slot (here, the suffix *-w*) while transitive patients are indexed by a different slot (here, the suffix *-ê*).

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| <p>(1) Kapampangan (author's fieldwork)</p> <p>a. ta-taul ya [ing asu]
 REDUP-bark 3s ABS dog
 'The dog barks'</p> <p>b. pagnakwan ne [ning lalaki] [ing kotsi]
 PV.steal 3s:3s ERG man ABS car
 'The man steals the car.'</p> | <p>(2) Cree (Wolfart 1996)</p> <p>a. nipâ -w nâpêw
 sleep -3PX man.PX
 'The man sleeps.'</p> <p>b. sêkih -ê -w nâpêw atimw -a
 scare -3OBJ -3PX man.PX dog -OBV
 'The man scares the dog.'</p> |
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The transitive constructions in (1b) (PATIENT VOICE) and (2b) (DIRECT) are distributionally unmarked (Mithun 1994; Wolfart 1996). Both languages also have a second, distributionally marked transitive construction that shows the opposite alignment: the Kapampangan AGENT VOICE clause in (3) shows accusative alignment (agent is ABS, like the intransitive subject in (1a)) and the Cree INVERSE clause in (4) shows ergative alignment (patient is indexed by *-w*, like the intransitive subject in (2a)).

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| <p>(3) magnako ya [ng kotsi] [ing lalaki]
 AV.steal 3s ACC car ABS man
 'The man steals a car.'</p> | <p>(4) sêkih -ikw -w atimw nâpêw -a
 scare -INV -3PX dog.PX man -OBV
 'The man scares the dog.'</p> |
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The two languages can be described as showing opposite patterns of split ergativity: Kapampangan is default ERG + marked ACC while Cree is default ACC + marked ERG (Déchaine 1999). But the parallels go deeper than just this. In the marked transitives in (3–4), the exceptional case role (Kpn ACC patient, Cree ERG agent) is restricted similarly in both languages: it can only be 3rd person, it is unindexed by agreement, and it is interpreted as indefinite (Kpn) or non-topical (Cree). These restrictions suggest an analysis of the marked transitives in (3–4) as an antipassive and a passive, respectively (Mithun 1994; Wolfart 1991), with the restrictions on the exceptional case roles following from their status as OBLIQUES. Ultimately I will argue for a slightly more nuanced version of this analysis: the mirror-image patterning of alignment in Kapampangan and Cree reflects the fact that both languages have an extra transitive construction that is a *transitivized* version of a valency-reduction construction: Kapampangan has both default ERG-ABS (1b) and a transitivized antipassive (3) while Cree has both default NOM-ACC (2b) and a transitivized passive (4).

¹ AV = agent voice, INV = inverse, OBJ = object, OBV = obviative, PV = patient voice, PX = proximate.

References

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