FOCUS IN PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES [1]

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0. PRELIMINARIES

In a number of grammatical descriptions of Philippine languages, an active-passive dichotomy is used to categorize sentences and verbs. This is misleading and erroneous. Moreover, the active-passive dichotomy is inadequate for the task it is supposed to perform, namely: to categorize various grammatical forms brought about by a certain linguistic phenomenon in Philippine languages.

Let us begin by examining the active and passive sentences in Indo-European languages, specifically English: 1) the verb of a sentence in either the active or the passive voice is transitive and the function, object, occurs; 2) in the active voice, the subject is the doer of the action; the object, the recipient of the action, with the former occurring before the verb and the latter, usually but not always, occurring after the verb; 3) in the passive voice, the object in the active sentence is the grammatical subject and is acted upon by the logical subject which is now the agent introduced by the preposition 'by'. There are other differences between the active and the passive sentences, but for the pur- poses of this paper, this list will suffice.

1. THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICES IN PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES

Ernesto Constantino defines his active and passive sentences in Philippine languages as follows (1965):

> In an active sentence, the predicate verb is an active verb. An active verb is one which co-occurs with an *actor subject*. . .; if the verb has an affix, it is an active affix.
> Passive sentence is a verbal (definite) sentence in which the predicate verb is a passive verb. A passive verb co-occurs with a *non-actor subject* and has a *passive actor complement* in addition to the complements that occur with the active verb . . . .

Consider the following sentences in Tagalog:

1) *Namatay si Pedro sa sakit.* 'Pedro died of sickness.'
2) *Ikinamatay ni Pedro ang (kanyang) sakit.* '(His sickness caused Pedro's death.'

Sentence 1 is said to be active while sentence 2 is said to be passive. Note that there is no change in syntactical structure in terms of a distributional change of

the sentence constituents as what happens in English when an active sentence is transformed to the passive.

The verbs in sentence 1 and 2 are not transitive and it follows that there is no object as recipient of the action in the active sentences nor is there a subject acted upon by an agent in the passive sentence.

It is absurd to say that *si Pedro* is the doer of the action or is an actor subject in sentence 1 or the passive actor complement in sentence 2. *Si Pedro* is no more an actor nor doer of an action as *Si Maria* is in the sentence *Maganda si Maria* 'Mary is pretty'. It is equally absurd to say that *ang kanyang sakit* 'his sickness' is acted upon by the passive-actor complement *si Pedro*. *Ang kanyang sakit* is no more acted upon by an agent as *ang pagdating mo* in the sentence *Ikinatuwa niya ang pagdating mo* 'Your arrival made her glad' or *ang pera* in the sentence *Ipinamili ni Juan ang pera* 'The money is what John used for buying'.

Sentences in Philippine languages, this paper maintains, cannot be categorized on the basis of the presence of an actor-subject or of a passive-actor when an actor is not present at all in the sentence.

One may argue that the sentence *Ipinamili ni Juan ang pera* is indeed passive because *Juan* can be called an actor and the sentence has a passive verb (as defined by Constantino), i.e. a verb that occurs with a non-actor subject and has a passive actor-complement. This seems to be an over simplification which is misleading. Consider the following sentences:

3) *Naglaba ang tao ng kumot.* 'The person laundered a blanket.' (Tagalog)
4) *Linabhan ng tao ang kumot.* 'The blanket was laundered by the person.' (Tagalog)
5) *Ipinanlaba ng tao ang sabon.* 'The person used the soap for laundering.' (Tagalog)
6) *Ipinaglaba ng tao ang ale ng kumot.* 'The person laundered a blanket for the woman.' (Tagalog)
7) *Pinaglabhan ng tao ang batya ng kumot.* 'The person laundered a blanket in the basin.' (Tagalog)
8) *Kapayvasávasa pa.* 'Laundering has just started.' (Ivatan)

Sentence 8 belongs to a type that seems to have been neglected in the studies of Philippine languages, except in Cesar A. Hidalgo's work (1969). This verbal sentence cannot be categorized as either active or passive based on the definitions offered by Constantino. This points out further the inadequacy of the active-passive dichotomy.

Sentence 3 is said to be active and sentences 4 to 7 are said to be passive. Since the categorization based on the presence of an actor subject or of a passive actor is not deemed useful because it is inapplicable to a number of cases, and since structural change equivalent to the passive transform in Indo-European languages do not occur, why should there be just a dual distinction of active-

passive when in each sentence, a change in grammatical forms (specifically in the verb affix and the function markers) co-occur with a change in sentence meaning? Is not the active-passive category based on the change in one sentence constituent alone, namely the so-called "actor subject"? Why ignore the other sentence constituents?

Consider again the sentence *Maganda si Maria* 'Mary is pretty'. One may argue that *maganda* 'pretty' is an adjective and not a verb, hence *maganda si Maria* is not a verbal sentence and should not be made to fit in the active-passive framework. But a "passive" form equivalent to the verb *ikinamatay,* which incidentally is used as an example for a passive verb by Constantino, occurs when the cause for Mary's being pretty is "subject" of the sentence as in the Ivatan sentence *Ichinavid ñi Marya u laylay na* 'Her dress (is that which) makes Mary pretty.' What category would this belong to? Since the passive category is explicitly stated to apply to verbal sentences, another category will have to be postulated for non-verbal sentences to account for the same linguistic phenomenon occurring with verbal sentences.

2. FOCUS DEFINED

An insightful description of language A depends to a great extent on a description based not on some other property of some unrelated language B after which the description of language A is patterned but on an intrinsic property of language A. Consequently, FOCUS is here suggested as an intrinsic characteristic of Philippine languages to explain the linguistic phenomenon illustrated in sentences 3 to 8.[2] In each sentence in 3 to 8, a constituent is brought into sharp perspective so that the attention of the listener is drawn closer to that constituent which is presumably in the speaker's mind. This element which is in sharp perspective, or which is in focus, we call topic.[3] The topic in sentence 3 is *ang tao* 'the person'; in 4, *ang kumot* 'the blanket'; in 5, *ang sabon* 'the soap'; in 6, *ang ale* 'the woman'; in 7, *ang batya* 'the basin'; and in 8, *kapayvasa-vasa* 'laundering just started'. If the predicate function (manifested by *naglaba, linabhan, ipinaglaba,* etc.) and the non-predicate functions: subject (manifested by a function marker (fm) + *tao*), object (manifested by fm + *kumot*), instrument (manifested by fm + *sabon*), benefactive (manifested by fm + *ale*), and the locative (manifested by fm + *batya*) are constituents of sentences,[4] then the focus of a sentence indicates the relation between the predicate and a

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[2] The term *focus* has counterparts in the terminologies of other linguists. Robert Longacre uses orientation (cf. *Discourse, Paragraph, and Sentence Structure in Selected Philippine Languages* (Santa Ana, California: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1968), p. 196; Howard McKaughan uses voice (cf. *The Inflection and Syntax of Maranao Verbs* (Manila, 1958), pp. 13-24). The term is borrowed from Kenneth L. Pike (cf. "A Syntactic Paradigm," *Language,* 39 (1963), 216-230).

[3] The topic is the focus complement to Kenneth Pike (cf. "A Syntactic Paradigm") and the subject to Ernesto Constantino (cf. "The Sentence Patterns of Twenty-Six Philippine Languages," *Lingua,* 15 (1965). This term is borrowed from Lawrence Reid (cf. *An Ivatan Syntax,* Honolulu, Hawaii: Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 2, 1966).

[4] These functions, however, are not the only ones in Philippine languages.

particular non-predicate constituent of the sentence, wherein the non-predicate element is in sharp perspective so that the attention of the listener is drawn closer to this constituent than are the other sentence constituents or in which none of the non-predicate constituents is in sharp perspective so that the predicate itself is foremost in the speaker-hearer's attention.[5] A sentence is said to be in x focus if constituents x is that which is in sharp perspective. Sentence 3 then is subject focused; 4, object focused; 5, instrument focused; 6, benefactive focused; 7, locative focused; and 8, predicate focused.

The topic of a sentence, and thus the focus of a sentence, may be signalled by the function marker preceding a nominal serving a non-predicate function. In Tagalog, the topic function marker is *ang* before common nouns and *si* before personal proper nouns. In Ivatan, it is *u* before common nouns and *si* before personal proper nouns. In the case of predicate focused sentences, these topic function markers do not occur at all before any non-predicate constituent. Notice also that in the case of a predicate-focused sentence (cf. sentence 8) only an aspect particle may occur with the predicate.

Function markers, however, may not always be relied on to identify the topic of a sentence. In Ivatan, the topic which functions in portmanteau with the function locative may be preceded by *du* or *ji* as in the sentence *Pawalan mu ava ji Said* 'Do not pasture (animals) in Said'. But a locative may be preceded by *du* or *ji* even when it is not in focus as in *Mapawal aku ji Said* 'I pasture (animals) in Said'.[6]

Although the focus of a sentence is made known by the function marker before the non-predicate topic, the focus of a sentence is mainly signalled by the predicative [7] affix. Consider the following Tagalog sentences wherein non-predicate functions are manifested by pronouns so that no topic function marker occurs.

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[5] Cf. Cesar A. Hidalgo, "Ivatan Grammar: a Tagmemic-transformational Analysis," Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1969.

[6] When Cesar A. Hidalgo and I presented a paper "On Grammatical Relations" at the Diliman Linguistic Circle on October 31, 1969, someone pointed out that perhaps *Said* does not manifest the function locative, which has a syntactic relation to the predicate, since another locative preceded by the topic function marker *u* may potentially occur before *ji Said* so that *ji Said* in this sentence has only the function attributive to the potential *u*-topic even when this *u*-topic does not occur. This is parallel to saying that the phrase "in Manila" is never in locative relation to "live" in the sentence "I live in Manila" because the phrase "in a house" may potentially occur before the phrase "in Manila" so that even when "in a house" does not occur in the sentence, "in Manila" still has an attributive relation to the potential phrase "in a house" and never has a locative relation to the to the verb "live".

I believe that if a common noun preceded by *u* occurs before *ji Said*, then that common noun serves the function topic and *ji Said* is in attributive relation to it. If an *u*-topic does not occur, then *ji Said* serves the function locative having such a relation to the predicate. To deny this is to say that a locative with a predicate-locative relation can never be served by a proper noun. Proper nouns conveying the meaning of 'a place' are always preceded by *ji* in Ivatan.

[7] Henceforth, the term predicative is used instead of the term verb. The predicate of sentences in Philippine languages is manifested by forms with varying categories of roots: verbs, concrete nouns, abstract nouns. These roots have a common morphological feature when they serve the function predicate. The term predicative is considered more inclusive than the term verb; hence, it is preferred here.

9) *Ayaw ko siyang maglaba.* 'I don't like her to launder.'
10) *Ayaw ko siyang ipaglaba.* 'I don't want to launder for her.'
11) *Ayaw kong labhan ito.* 'I don't want to launder this.'
12) *Ayaw kong ipanlaba ito.* 'I don't want to launder with this.'
13) *Ayaw kong paglabhan ito.* 'I don't want to launder in this.'

The topic of the predicates manifested by *maglaba* and *ipaglaba* (9 and 10) are both manifested by *siya*. The semantic interpretation does not stop, however, at just a consideration of its being topic, for *siya* in each sentence has a different referent. In sentence 9, *siya* is the doer of the action, the grammatical subject; while in 10, *siya* is the person for whom the action is done, the grammatical benefactive. Sentence 9, then, is subject focused and sentence 10 is benefactive focused. In sentences 11, 12, and 13, *ito* is not interpreted merely as a topic manifestation. In 11, *ito* is that which is to be laundered or the grammatical object; in 12, it is that which is used for laundering or the manifestation of the function instrument; in 13, it is the place where the laundering is to be performed, the manifestation of the function locative. Sentence 11 is object focused; 12 is instrument focused; and 13 is locative focused. These non-topic functions of the topics are formally signalled by the predicative affixes which we call focus affixes. The focus affix identifies which of the syntactic functions is the topic among the sentence constituents that may occur with the predicative. In this manner, the focus affix indicates the focus of the sentence to the listener, although to the speaker, the focus he decides to use in the sentence, determines the affix.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS

The identification of syntactic functions has been a problem in the analysis of Philippine languages. Noam Chomsky (1965) reconstructs the syntactic relations in English carried by such functional notions as subject-of, object-of in a formal grammar by introducing category symbols such as NP, VP, S, etc. in the base phrase structure rules which define the system of grammatical relations that determine semantic interpretation. The base structure rules specify the underlying phrase markers of the sentences wherein the syntactic relations are defined as the relations between the category symbols within the phrase markers. Thus, in the phrase marker, the functional notion subject-of is the relation between an NP and an immediately dominating VP.

This Chomskyan reconstruction of syntactic relations is inadequate for English, as pointed out by Charles Fillmore (1966). Fillmore observes that the syntactic relations with which semantic rules must operate are not simply those of subject and object as presented in Chapter 2 Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). There are such expressions as 'in the kitchen', 'with a knife', or 'for my mother' whose relational information as location, instrument, and benefactive, respectively, must be presented besides their categorial informa-

tion 'prepositional phrases'.[8]   Fillmore further observes that in the case of a rule, A → B (C) (C) as in Chomsky's VP → V (NP) (Prep Phrase) (Prep Phrase) (Manner), the choice of either the first or the second C results in the same B + C so that different choices in the base component do not 'correspond to differences in the language'. Fillmore comes up with his case grammar wherein functional notions (cases) are assigned categorial status and mapped into a formal grammar. The function of a nominal in a particular case is identified by the preposition preceding it.

It is difficult or perhaps impossible to identify and then reconstruct syntactical relations in Philippine languages in terms of the Chomskyan reconstruction due to the structure of natural order sentences in Philippine language: VP + NP$_1$ . . . NP$_2$. The identification in Philippine languages of the function of a nominal in a sentence depends usually on the function marker preceding it. It should be emphasized that function markers alone are notoriously undependable for this task because isomorphism does not always occur between the various syntactic functions and the function markers. In Tagalog, for instance, /naŋ/ may precede the indefinite object as in *Kumain ako /naŋ/ mangga* 'I ate a mango' or may precede the situational actor (the grammatical subject in this paper) as in *Kinain /naŋ/ tao ang mangga* 'The man ate the mango' or an attributive as in *Tumakbo siya /naŋ/ matulin* 'He ran fast' or the possessive as in *Ang aklat /naŋ/ bata ay nawala* 'The book of the child was lost'. In Tagalog also, the function marker *sa* may precede a locative as in *Bumili siya ng isda sa palengke* 'She bought fish from the market,' or precede a definite object as in *Sino ang kumain sa mangga?* 'Who ate the mango?', or the indirect object as in *Nagpabili ako sa kanya ng isda* 'I caused her to buy fish'. In identifying the syntactic functions in Philippine languages, one cannot depend on the function markers alone.   The whole environment must be considered—the sentence predicate, its predicative manifestation (its stem type and affixes occurring), and the other sentence constituents proposed or postposed to the function marker.

Focus affixes can aid in the identification of syntactic functions. Consider the following sentences in Ivatan:

14) *Sya u ipanutung ñi Marya.* 'It is she that Mary cooks for.'
15) *Sya u manutung ñi Marya.* 'It is she who cooks for Mary.'

Marya in both sentences is preceded by the function marker *ñi.* In these cases, focus affixes may be used to identify the syntactic functions of Marya. Focusing the sentence to *Marya* in 14, the sentence would be: *Si Marya u manutung ña* 'It is Mary who cooks for her' where *Marya* is identified by the predicative affix as subject of the sentence. Focusing the sentence to *Marya* in sentence 15, the sentence would be: *Si Marya u ipanautung na* 'It is Mary for whom she cooks' where the predicative affix identifies *Marya* as benefactive.

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[8] This observation, of course, is not new. The tagmemicists have recognized this long before Fillmore read his paper in 1966 at Georgetown University.

4. CONSTRAINTS ON FOCUS PARTICIPATION

Not all sentence types can be characterized by focus. Existential sentences like Ilocano *Ada balay idjay* 'There is a house there,' or Ivatan *Ara ava si ina* 'Mother is not in,' or Tagalog *Mayroon akong munting bahay* 'I have a little house' do not have focus. Neither do the so-called equational sentences like Tagalog *Tao siya* 'He is a person' or Ivatan *Mavakes si Kwana* 'Jane is a girl'.

The focus participation of a sentence depends upon the type of predicative manifesting the predicate and the type of certain non-focus affixes in the predicative. A sentence with a predicative having a root type such as Tagalog *laba* 'launder' and a sentence with a predicative having a root type such as *ibig* 'love' have different focus participations, with the latter having less focuses than the former. The extent to which a predicative root inflects for focus suggests the types of functions that may occur in the sentence in which that particular predicative root is a part.

The occurrence of certain non-focus affixes in the predicative may restrict or increase focus-type participation. Thus, certain constraints on the occurrence of certain functions in syntax are attendant to the occurrence of some non-focus affixes as well as some focus affixes (e.g. *ito* 'this' in the sentence *Itakbo mo ito sa kanya* 'Bring (run) this to him' cannot occur when the predicative is subject focused *tumakbo* 'run' and the sentence type is situational.[9] In Ivatan, the predicative root *-rutung* 'cook' participates in five types of focuses with the occurrence only of the focus and transitive affixes (*manutung, rutungan, ipanutung, panutungan, kapanutung*). It participates, however, in only four types of focuses with the occurrence of certain non-focus affixes such as the causative affix *-pa* (*maparutung, panutungen, kaparutung*). On the other hand, the Ivatan predicative root *-avid* 'beauty' participates in only three types of focuses with the occurrence only of the focus affix (*mavid, ichavid, kavid*) but participates in five types of focuses if certain non-focus affixes occur (*mapavid, paypaviren, ipaypaved, paypaviran, kapaypavid*).

Perhaps a more insightful study of the structure of the syntactical component of Philippine languages is possible if a more thorough study of the structure of predicatives (the focus and non-focus affixes and the stem type) of these languages is undertaken.

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[9] Constantino, *op. cit.*

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