

Patterns of relativization in Austronesian and Tibetan

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Today I discuss the grammars of “Philippine-type” Austronesian languages — illustrated here with Tagalog — and Tibetan and highlight one striking similarity (at least on the surface):

- ▶ Both languages/groups use **verbal affixes to mark the choice of relative clause pivot**.

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- ▶ Both languages/groups use **verbal affixes to mark the choice of relative clause pivot**.

(1) **Agent and theme relatives in Tagalog:**

- a. bata=ng [**b<um>ili** ng tela]
child=LK <PRF.AV>buy GEN cloth

‘child who bought cloth’

- b. tela=ng [**b<in>ili-Ø** ng bata]
cloth=LK <PRF>buy-PV GEN child

‘cloth that the child bought’

(2) **Agent and theme relatives in Tibetan:**

- a. [deb 'bri-mkhan] mi
book write-MKHAN person
‘person(s) who wrote/writes book(s)’
- b. [pad.ma-s 'bri-pa]-’i dep
Pema-ERG write-PA-GEN book
‘book(s) that Pema wrote’

Each language/group is known for having a rich inventory of such affixes:

(3) **Verbal morphology on relativized verbs, by choice of pivot:**

a. Tagalog: (perfective)

<um>	agents
-an	locatives/goals
i-	instruments/ben.
-∅	themes

a. Tibetan: (perfective)

-mkhan མཁན་	agents
-sa ས་	locatives/goals
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However, the parallels between these systems have not been investigated before, as these patterns have been described under very different banners:

- for Philippine-type languages, as part of these languages' *voice systems*;
- for Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman languages, as *nominalizations*.

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§2 Relativization in Philippine-type languages

§3 Relativization in Tibetan

§4 Synthesis and discussion

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Austronesian voice systems

The morphological alternation observed in Tagalog relative clauses above reflects a more general alternation between different clause types:

(4) **Tagalog voice alternation:**

a. Actor Voice (AV):

B<um>ili **ang bata** ng tela sa palengke para sa nanay.
<PRF.AV>buy ANG child GEN cloth DAT market for DAT mother
'**The child** bought cloth at the market for mother.'

b. Patient Voice (PV):

B<in>ili-Ø ng bata **ang tela** sa palengke para sa nanay.
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- ▶ Every verb has one of these “voice” markers, *not just in relative clauses*.
 - The choice of voice marker correlates with the choice of ***ang*-marked argument** (4), which I call the “**subject**” today.
We could think of *ang* as **nominative** (or, for some authors, absolutive) case, which appears to override an underlying case marker. But there is significant debate on these points...
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Clause-embedding verbs

Clause-embedding verbs such as ‘say’ also participate in voice alternations.

(5) **Voice alternation of clause-embedding verb:**

a. **Nag-**sabi ang kalabaw [na masarap ang bulaklak].
PRF.AV-say ANG water.buffalo that delicious ANG flower
‘The water buffalo said [that the flower is delicious].’

b. S<in>-abi- \emptyset ng kalabaw [na masarap ang bulaklak].
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Long-distance relativization

Now consider relativization over an embedded clause argument —
“*long-distance*” relativization:

(6) Long-distance (LD) relativization of an embedded goal:

kalabaw [na ...said the teacher

water.buffalo that

[na bi-bigy-an ng lalaki ng bulaklak __]]

that ASP-give-LV GEN man GEN flower

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1. Relative clauses in Philippine-type Austronesian languages reflect the choice of pivot because of (a) their rich inventory of “voices,” including options for some oblique arguments to be “subject,” together with (b) a “subject-only” restriction on relativization.
2. In LD relativization, the embedded clause is required to be the higher verb’s “subject”; i.e. the subject-only restriction holds for each verb in a complex chain of relativization.

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§3 Tibetan

The Tibetan verb complex

Verbs in Tibetan end with a series of auxiliaries — glossed AUX together here — encoding tense/aspect/evidential values (Tournadre and Jiatso 2001, Vokurková 2008). Relativization involves a distinct verb form where the auxiliaries are replaced by a “nominalizer” ending.

- (7) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་དབ་འབྲི་གི་དུག། (8) དབ་འབྲི་མཁན་མི་
- bkra.shis-kyis deb 'bri-gi.dug. → [RC ___ deb 'bri-mkhan] mi
- Tashi-ERG book write-AUX book write-MKHAN person
- ‘Tashi is writing a book.’ ‘person who wrote/writes/is writing a book/books’

A genitive marker (-'i) appears between the RC and pivot noun, except after *-mkhan* (DeLancey 1999).

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The “nominalizers”

(9) **“Nominalizers” by choice of pivot:** expanding on (3a)

-*mkhan* མཁན་ agents/subjects

-*sa* ས་ locatives/goals

-*yag* ཡག་ instruments and imperfective themes

-*pa* པ་ perfective themes

- There is an interaction with aspect for theme relativization, which will be relevant later.

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(10) **-sa locative relative:**

པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་སའི་ས་ཆ་དེ་

[_{RC} pad.ma-s ___ mog.mog bzo-**sa**]-’i sa.cha de
Pema-ERG dumpling make-SA-GEN place DEM

‘the place that Pema made/makes dumplings’

-sa.’i > -se

-sa reflects a gap with e.g. dative/locative (-la) or relative (-nas) case.

(11) **-yag instrumental relative:**

པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་ཡག་འི་མོག་ཟངས་དེ་

[_{RC} pad.ma-s ___ mog.mog bzo-**yag**]-’i mog.zangs de

Pema-ERG dumpling make-YAG-GEN steamer DEM

‘the steamer that Pema made/makes dumplings with’ -yag.’i > -ye

-yag reflects an instrumental gap, or imperfective theme gap.

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- All data comes from my fieldwork conducted in Dharamsala, India in summers 2018 and 2019, and reflect the judgments of nine speakers.

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bkra.shis-kyis [pad.ma-s mog.mog bzos-song] lap-song.

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‘Tashi said [that Pema made dumplings].’

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mog.mog de-tso

dumpling DEM-PL

‘those dumplings [that Tashi said [that Pema made ___]]’

- ▶ The use of *-pa* for theme relativization is expected. **But *-pa* appears on both the higher and lower verbs!**

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On the word order of LD relatives

(14) **Embedded clauses generally cannot be postposed:**

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Intended: 'Tashi said [that Pema made dumplings].' =(12)

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[bkra.shis-kyis ___ lap-**pa**]-’i

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‘the person [that Tashi said [___ made/makes dumplings]]’

- For LD agent relatives, there is *agent relativization marking -mkhan on the embedded verb, then -pa on the higher verb!*

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[bkra.shis-kyis __ lap-**pa**]-’i [pad.ma-s __ mog.mog bzo-**sa**]-’i sa.cha

Tashi-ERG say-PA-GEN Pema-ERG dumpling make-SA-GEN place

‘place [that Tashi said [Pema made/makes dumplings ____]]’

(17) **LD relativization of an embedded instrument:**

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་ལཔ་པའི་པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་ཡག་འི་མོག་ཟུངས་དེ་

[bkra.shis-kyis __lap-**pa**]-’i [pad.ma-s __mog.mog bzo-**yag**]-’i mog.zangs

Tashi-ERG say-PA-GEN Pema-ERG dumplingmake-YAG-GEN steamer

‘steamer [that Tashi said [Pema made/makes dumplings with __]]’

On the choice of “nominalizer” suffixes

- ▶ So far it seems that (a) the embedded verb’s suffix reflects the type of pivot noun, and (b) the higher verb always ends with *-pa*.

(18) **LD agent relative, with higher *-yag*:**

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- *-yag* appears in (18) because the higher verb ‘think’ is imperfective.

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LD relatives with higher *-yag*

- Recall that theme relatives with perfective descriptions involve *-pa*; with imperfective descriptions involve *-yag*.
- ▶ **The choice of *-pa/yag* on ‘say/think’ behaves as if we are relativizing over the theme of the higher verb, ‘say/think’!** This relativizing morphology appears on each verb along the way in a complex chain of relativization.

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§4 Synthesis and discussion

Both Philippine-type Austronesian languages and Tibetan utilize verbal morphology to distinguish relative clauses with different pivots.

- At first glance, it appears that this parallel may be only superficial, and due to two very different mechanisms:
 - Philippine-type languages have a “subject-only” restriction on \bar{A} -extraction, together with multiple “voices” to make different arguments the “subject.”
 - Tibetan relative clause forms are distinct from regular finite verbs.

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In LD relativization, each verb reflects the thematic role of its local pivot gap *or* the embedded clause containing the pivot gap.

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An alternative approach to Austronesian voice systems allows for an even clearer unification:

- Voice systems in Philippine-type languages are often described as *argument structure alternations* (e.g. Guilfoyle, Hung, and Travis 1992, Aldridge 2004, 2008, Legate 2012):
 - The choice of voice determines the choice of “subject.”
 - Only the subject can be relativized (Keenan and Comrie 1977).

Towards a unification...

- But there's another approach to voice systems on the market (see e.g. Chung 1994, Richards 2000, Pearson 2001, 2005, Chen 2017, Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk 2017, in prep.):
 - Ⓐ **Philippine-type voice morphemes are *responses to extraction*** (e.g. relativization) of a particular type of argument;
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We can relate ② to the “prefield” requirement in Germanic V2:

(19) **Swedish V2 alternation:**

- a. *Han* känner ___ faktiskt *Ingrid*.
he knows actually *Ingrid*
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Austronesian voice systems and Germanic V2

- ② = A single argument in each clause — by default, a *topic* —
 - (a) in Germanic V2: moves to clause-initial position;
 - (b) in Philippine-type languages: receives a particular marker/case (Tagalog *ang*);
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(20) **Topicalization disallowed within Swedish relative clauses:**

- a. den flicka [_{RC} som har kammat sitt hår]
the girl that has combed her hair
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In Philippine-type languages, assuming that the assignment of *ang* and \bar{A} -extraction underlyingly involve the same process (Chen 2017, Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk 2017, in prep.), and both feed \textcircled{A} , we derive the apparent “subject-only” extraction restriction.

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For earlier comments and discussion that helped shaped this work, I especially thank Kenyon Branan, Hadas Kotek, Theodore Levin, David Pesetsky, Zheng Shen, and Coppe van Urk, and audiences at the University of Helsinki and Sogang University. This work is supported by the Singapore Ministry of Education under the grant “Subjecthood in Southeast Asia: Description and theory.” Errors are mine.

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