A reexamination of the Philippine-type voice system and its implications for Austronesian primary-level subgrouping

Victoria Yen-hsin Chen

In this talk, I revisit the nature of the Philippine-type voice system, which is key to two long-standing questions in Austronesian syntax: 1) the alignment of Philippine-type languages, and 2) the nature of Austronesian noun/verb homophony. A careful look at these two questions provides direct implications for whether the proposed morphosyntactic innovation “Nominalization-into-verb” (Starosta, Pawley, and Reid 1981) is a valid criterion for Austronesian primary-level subgrouping (Ross 2009; Aldridge 2016).

I investigate the case patterns in (i) syntactic causative, (ii) ditransitive, (iii) restructuring, and (iv) raising-to-object shared across Philippine-type Formosan languages with novel data from Puyuma, Amis, and Seediq, three languages from different Austronesian higher-level branches. Based on the shared case patterns in (i)-(iv) among Formosan languages, I reexamine the Case-licensing mechanism in Philippine-type voice systems, and discuss why it is incompatible with an ergative analysis (Payne 1982; Aldridge 2004). I propose an alternative to the voice system of Puyuma, Amis, and Seediq with the following claims (1).

(1)  
a. Two-place and three-place Actor voice clauses are not intransitives/antipassive constructions, but true transitives with structurally licensed internal arguments.

b. The morphological marking on the Pivot does not mark Absolutive/Nominative, but a topic/focus marker that overrides morphological case.

c. The morphological marking conventionally labeled as ‘genitive’ and ‘oblique’ exhibits the hallmark of Nominative and Accusative Case, respectively.

Based on (1a-c), I revisit the nature of noun/verb homophony in Formosan languages, and discuss its implications for the Nominalization-into-verb Hypothesis (Starosta, Pawley, and Reid 1982). Based on evidence from (i)-(iv), I propose that Austronesian noun/verb homophony does not derive from the reanalysis of nominalization-into-verb, but a reflection of agreement marking embedded under nominal and verbal environments.

References


